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Georgic Ideals and Claims of Entitlement
in the Life Writing of Alberta Settlers

by

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Abstract

My study focuses on the diaries, letters, and memoirs of seven British and Anglo-Canadian pioneers who settled in southern Alberta to establish farms and ranches. An exploration of these texts reveals language patterns pertaining to agriculture and animal husbandry practices. The figure of the horse has notable presence in the diaries and memoirs, as does an ethic of stewardship modelled in Virgil's *Georgics*. The authors of the diaries and letters recorded their georgic practices at the time of settlement, while the memoirists recollected stories of pioneer farming later, in georgic literary style. I compare sub-literary and literary depictions of settlement to explore the ways in which settlers transform literal experiences into literary expression, specifically, into utopian and frontier myths in which they emphasize their labour, struggles, and achievement. Significantly, all of these authors downplay the efforts of hired hands, whose help ensured the success of their agricultural operations. Documenting their progress, moreover, the authors enacted or re-enacted the erasure of Indigenous culture and its replacement by the Anglo-Canadian culture that dominated the first prairie communities in Alberta. The purpose of my study is to reveal these manuscripts as colonial discourses that support the writers' claims of entitlement to prairie land.

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Introduction – Prairie Settler Life Writing and Claims of Entitlement

“Since the Centennial Year in Canada,” historian Grant MacEwan maintains, “many local histories” of homesteading families “have been written and published” by community groups in southern Alberta (4). There were also numerous memoirs written when “the celebrations of golden, silver, and diamond jubilees in Western communities” sparked interest in the experiences of prairie settlers (Dempsey, “Local” 171). A distinguishing feature that drew my attention to a number of these memoirs is the similarity in the pattern of land acquisition on the prairies in the early twentieth century and the creation of estates subsequent to enclosure in sixteenth-century England. I found allusions to such practices, as well, in several pioneer diaries and letters written during settlement. Another feature of these accounts is the authors’ portrayal of their lives in the pattern of agrarian cycles and of their agricultural practices within the framework of georgic traditions. These aspects offer models of sustainability, for the georgic “imagines what would now be called a sustainable relationship between production and consumption” (Landry, *Invention* 16). In spite of the value of the manuscripts, the authors marginalize the Siksika and Nakoda, who were displaced to make land available for their farms and ranches, and occlude the contributions of hired hands on whom they depended to ensure their success. The purpose of my investigation is to demonstrate that these examples of pioneer life writing are self-legitimizing discourses that support the authors’ claims of entitlement to colonized land.

My study explores the diaries or journals of Henry Norman Sheppard Sr. and those of two of his sons, Henry Fleetwood Sheppard Jr. and Herbert (Bert)

Sheppard, which, cumulatively, provide unrevised accounts of fifty-four years of the family's ranching experiences between 1907 and 1953, a period of settlement history that is under-represented or has been represented only anecdotally. The Sheppard journals are housed at the Museum of the Highwood in High River, Alberta, where they were left untouched until I began my research on them. I also examine the journal letters of Claude Gardiner written between 1894 and 1896, which are published as *Letters from an English Rancher*; and several letters written between 1896 and 1898, which are accessible in digital form on the Glenbow Museum and Archives website. In addition, I explore Bert Sheppard's unpublished history of the TL Ranch, which is housed at the Stockmen's Foundation Bert Sheppard Memorial Library and Archives in Cochrane, Alberta; his self-published memoirs, *Spitzee Days* and *Just About Nothing: The Hardest Part of Doing Nothing Is Knowing When to Quit*; and three women's memoirs: Monica Hopkins's *Letters from a Lady Rancher*; Joan Key's *The Third Radfords: A Pioneer Adventure*; and Georgina Thomson's *Crocus and Meadowlark Country: Recollections of a Happy Childhood and Youth on a Homestead in Southern Alberta*.

While numerous pioneer accounts were published in the latter part of the twentieth century, I chose these particular examples for the full spectrum of life they offer and for their length, which allows diversity among the topics the authors relate. Henry Sr.'s and Henry Jr.'s journals are exemplary in that respect for each set covers over half of its author's lifespan. I also chose these texts because the authors focus on the settlement era, while other pioneer memoirists begin their life

stories about the period as preambles to narratives about a variety of experiences unrelated to their agrarian lives. An important distinction is that the authors in my study reveal evidence of the georgic ideal that influenced the shaping of their farming practices as mixed farming, a model that integrated the raising of grains for profit with the keeping of small dairy and poultry operations, and the growing of vegetables and fruit for the farm family's nutritional needs (Voisey, *Vulcan* 92-93). I focus particularly on authors who practiced georgic methods, rather than on those who depict farming merely as a means to increase their prosperity. One such diarist is John Frederick Farrar, a businessman who sold his commercial ventures in brick manufacturing and wool processing in England and immigrated to Red Deer in 1890 to grow wheat. Farrar kept account book diaries that, in form, closely resemble Henry Sr's journals. They differ in content, however, for while Farrar refers to farming in terms of economic profit, Henry Sr. portrays the breeding of horses and cattle as a desirable way of life. I also limited my study geographically to allow for an examination of settler accounts written about a common location, but composed in different forms that employ different narrative techniques. Finally, I chose these particular texts, because they afford an examination through both phenomenological and ideological modes of analysis. Specifically, the diaries and letters require phenomenological tools of investigation to comprehend the authors' accounts of their life experiences, while the memoirs lend themselves more to an ideologically-focused analysis of the authors' constructed personal histories. The two modes of investigation complement each other, however, to

provide greater comprehension of settlers' lives than is possible through ideological analysis.

I read the Sheppard journals through a phenomenological lens to avoid “falling into the error diagnosed by Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht, of employing a ‘concept of the human [that] exclude[s] . . . any reference to the human body’” (qtd. in Wolfe 304). The journals resist a reader’s grasp, because they are composed of empirical data, terse notations of events, and sentence fragments referring to physical labour. Imagining and describing human experience “in the sense that it names the embodiment and embeddedness of the human being in not just its biological but also its technological world” (Wolfe xv), makes accessible to readers such reticent entries as the following one from Henry Sr.’s journal: “Hot day Branded 70 head of steers and found it hard work.” In this entry, “70 head” constitutes empirical data; “Branded” refers to a corporeal experience, while heat and fatigue are subjective evaluations of the sensations that accompanied that experience. Examining the entry through a lens shaped by phenomenological conceptions of human conditions reveals it to be a representation of the author’s responses to the materialities of his life.

By incorporating both phenomenological and ideological analytical approaches, I seek to avoid the course Helen Buss sets in her interpretation of the memoirs of pioneer Sarah Ellen Roberts, when she claims that the narrator “assures us that she is as weak and useless at the end of her homesteading experience as at the beginning,” because Roberts adheres to Victorian standards of female behaviour (55). Buss overlooks the fact that Roberts was over fifty years

old and was rheumatic when she and her family members embarked on their homesteading venture. A phenomenological reading of her memoir asks not whether Roberts was willing to participate in farm labour or whether she was unwilling to admit to having done her share, but whether she was actually capable of performing physically demanding tasks. My study discriminates between empirically-based constructions of settlers' self-identities and literary constructions of subjects. Both kinds of self-representation reflect ideologically-determined behaviour.

Regardless of the forms of my primary texts, they are accounts of their authors' daily lives on their prairie farms and ranches. A significant difference is that the writers of the diaries and letters, having recorded the details of their lives tersely and routinely within hours or days of their experiences, convey ideologies¹ that were prevalent at the time of settlement, and the memoirists, recalling their experiences retrospectively, create stories of pioneering that reflect values and ideologies shaped by cultural, political, and historical forces several decades later. Thus, while the memoirists claim that their anecdotes are faithful representations of their pioneer experiences, they are semi-fictional narratives. My study reveals that the memoirists typically mythologize settlement. Robert Bringhurst observes that, generally, "myths are narratives concerned with timeless things" and creatures that are "as a rule elemental" (792). Yet, there are such things as "social"

¹ I employ Louis Althusser's concept of ideology as "a 'Representation' of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (52). Althusser states that ideology functions by "*hail[ing] or interpellat[ing] concrete individuals or concrete subjects*" (55, his emphasis). He conceives of cultural institutions as Ideological State Apparatuses (50).

myths, the kinds that promote “racial superiority, manifest destiny, or the dictatorship of the proletariat, like the ‘myth’ of the New World and its divinely sanctioned conquest” (793). These are the kinds of myths that emerge from the subtexts of settlement memoirs as the authors imbue accounts of their experiences with aesthetic and literary dimensions. Specifically, the memoirists promote myths of the prairie as a utopia—a temperate region in which they could establish lives of plenitude, prosperity, and gentility—or as a frontier, a rugged and even hostile environment. Both myths are foundational to the authors’ justification of their places of privilege in the early prairie communities.

Whether settlement accounts are constructed as utopian myths, which imagine a blissful future, or frontier narratives, which recall a glorious past, they are based on georgic traditions. The “recurrent myth of a happier and more natural past” has been drawn, Raymond Williams observes, “not only from the Christian idea of the Garden of Eden [...] but also from a version of the Golden Age which is more than that of a magically self-yielding nature” (54, 57). It is drawn, Williams asserts, from Virgil’s *Georgics* (57). Georgic traditions are founded on these four books of poems written about 39 BCE. According to L. P. Wilkinson, Virgil’s “*Georgics* was present in every educated man’s mind” in England throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (48). “In the American colonies as well as Europe the *Georgics* was widely read by educated people,” he continues, “especially in Dryden’s translation, and in the last decade of the eighteenth century it was among the specified American college texts” (49). Moreover, Annabel Patterson observes, “Virgil was omnipresent in the Renaissance” (61). She refers

to a “checklist of Renaissance editions of Virgil [which] registers 275 of [his] complete works” (61). Georgic ideals emerge in scientific methodology, she continues, for they exist as an ideological foundation in the work of Sir Francis Bacon, who produced “the *Advancement of Learning*, a text aimed indirectly at the vanity and administrative indolence of James I,” for Bacon saw a parallel of good governorship in Virgil’s verse and proposed “a program of intellectual husbandry, whose fruits [were] great advances in the proximate fields of ethics and politics” (135). Bacon’s promotion of georgic ideals also influenced religion and education in Canada (Gauvreau 70). In his introduction to a new translation of the *Georgics*, David Ferry identifies georgic themes in the poetry of Spenser, Shakespeare, Jonson, Blake, Keats, Milton, William Wordsworth, William Carlos Williams, Walt Whitman, and Robert Frost (xvii-iii).

Georgic traditions are manifested in the agricultural practices of British immigrants, Anglo-Canadian settlers from Ontario, and American cattle ranchers, who brought the first herds of Hereford and Shorthorn cattle to Alberta. Indeed, historian Terry Jordan asserts, the methods of animal husbandry that eventually dominated the cattle ranching industry in North America were based on British traditions (226-27).² Literary critic Donna Landry argues that from the seventeenth century onward, agricultural manuals, “no matter how prosaic, continued to

² Jordan provides a lengthy history of this development, arguing for a synthesis of “three related, yet distinctive pastoral systems” that was, initially, “a contest for survival of the fittest among three equally diverse herding cultures”: the Texan, Californian, and Midwestern cultures (313). He claims that “the Midwesterners [with] their preference for British cattle breeds, obsession with haying and its paraphernalia, desire to build pasture fences and sizeable barns, tendency to irrigate meadows and form stock raisers’ associations, and practice of carefully tending cattle while instilling herd docility” was the culture that finally gained dominance (313).

legitimate themselves [...] as publishably genteel discourse by invoking Virgilian precedent” (*Invention* 17). Voisey recognizes the influence on the development of farms in southern Alberta by settlers’ “progressive notion of scientific management,” but he suggests that “building construction and landscaping” might be explained by the “nostalgic indulgence” of pioneers who “yearned” for the familiarity and aesthetic ambience of their homelands in eastern Canada, United States, or Britain (*Vulcan* 94-95). These are georgic themes and they are found in abundance in the memoirs of Hopkins, Thomson, and Key, in the descriptions of agricultural labour and the improvements the authors made to their farms and ranches. Georgic themes are also found in their portrayals of their interactions with their horses, cows, pigs, and chickens, and in the Sheppard journals, in the authors’ brief records of the labour involved in cattle and horse breeding and herd management.

Alastair Fowler identifies the topics “Virgil’s *Georgics* treat” as “husbandry and seasonal tasks,” “description of landscape,” “unbought provisions,” “retirement,” “the happiness of country life,” “rustic gods,” “hunting,” “the poet’s role,” and “*sponte sua* analogies,” which are depictions of the land freely giving up its bounty (16-17). Georgic themes are preserved in English literary texts like Ben Jonson’s “To Penshurst,” which pays homage to a country house and its owner in a kind of feudal social arrangement. In a Marxist reading of the poem, Williams reminds us that literary representations of agriculture have, for centuries, presented farming and animal husbandry as pastoral narratives that mystify labour and, indeed, mask it or make it invisible by “a

simple extraction of the existence of labourers” (32). “As Virgil demonstrated,” literary critic Ivor Indyk states, “the pastoral form can be made to speak of many things” (837).

Exploring the structure of such narratives, Julian Yates asserts that an important model, Thomas More’s *Utopia*, works by rationalizing the “‘negative feedback’ it produces—that is so many poor, landless, and increasingly criminalized persons alongside all those well-fed [...] leisured landlords,” while it functions, as well, “to recruit and manufacture good humanists [and] model a ‘perfect Commonwealth’” (190). Thus, utopian models “produce a hybridized feudal model of the manor” (195).³ Humanist and nationalist sentiments converge in the colonialist attitudes of British settlers who came in search of land they imagined could become cultivated estates like those in England. As Lewis G. Thomas writes, in the days of Alberta settlement—the late nineteenth and early twentieth century—English immigrants had a “highly romantic view of the west as a land [...] where the best of life in the British Isles [...] could be realized without the restrictions imposed by the density of population and the scarcity and high cost of land” (177).

A central figure in georgic literature is the country house, an image that, Lewis Mumford warns, represents a utopian vision that is exclusionary, for it distinguishes between “gentlemen” and “peasant[s] or artisan[s]” (201-02, 207). In

³ Anthony Rasporich claims that the “social ideals and aspirations” of pioneer settlements in Alberta and British Columbia find “parallels [in] the late nineteenth-century utopian visions of Ruskin, Bellamy, Hudson, and Morris” (129). L. G. Thomas sees a parallel in the aspirations of civil servants like William Pearce, who imagined “elaborate schemes for southern Alberta’s development that combined large land holdings and peasant villages complementing one another in an ordered society that might have done credit to Sir Thomas More or even St. Augustine” (194).

Alberta, the English country house and estate found their equivalents in the ranch house and surrounding ranchland. Following English traditions, these properties were named either to honour their founders, to reflect their geographic features, or to express phonetically the livestock brands affiliated with them. The Sheppards purchased ranches that had already been developed and named: the Cottonwood, the Riverbend, and the TL (the initials of its founder Tom Lynch). Likewise, Gardiner purchased property that had already been patented and named: the Wineglass Ranch. At times, the naming of homesteads created historical continuity for settlers. For example, Hopkins refers to her family's ranch as Enmore, named after her husband "Billie's father's ship" (5); the Petters, Key's family, named their farm the Third Radfords after two previous Radford estates in England (27); and the Thomsons called theirs "'Parkhouse' after a farm in Ontario where [they] had lived" (121). The names of ranches and farms concretized the ownership of homesteads, elevating the owners' status from landless immigrants to a new kind of landed gentry. It also erased the names Indigenous peoples⁴ used to refer to their traditional homelands.

Key, Thomson, Hopkins, Gardiner, and the Sheppards were members of pioneer families that established and developed some of the first ranches or farms in southern Alberta at the turn of the twentieth century. They were well-bred, literary, and educated settlers who endeavoured to create a style of living

⁴ I employ the term Indigenous peoples following the lead of Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel, who take umbrage with the term *aboriginal*, because, they argue, "this identity is purely a state construction that is instrumental to the state's attempt to gradually subsume Indigenous existences into its own constitutional system and body politic since Canadian independence from Great Britain – a process that started in the mid-twentieth century and culminated with the emergence of a Canadian constitution in 1982" (598).

“modelled,” Thomas contends, “on that of the worlds from which they came, or to which they aspired” (161). In *The British Garden of Eden*, Paul M. Koroscil describes such families as *genteel emigrants* (4). Among them “were the British public school boys, retired military officers, university graduates, and aristocrats,” he claims, who “brought their traditional values with them and they attempted to replicate them in their new homeland” (4). “Resplendent in Norfolk jackets, riding boots, and straw boaters, armed with sporting rifles, double-edged axes, and cricket bats,” he observes, “they trooped into the backwoods of Ontario, fanned out across the prairies, and poured into the valleys of British Columbia” (4). They “were prolific writers,” Koroscil continues, “and left their heritage in a variety of literary and documentary sources,” such as “letters to their families and friends, [...] diaries and detailed account books of their ranches, [...] and personal memoirs”; thus, a “biographic method” of study of their settlement experiences offers information to complement anecdotal forms of history (6-7).

The accounts of the pioneers in my study indicate that agrarian life for them was what Herbert Marcuse describes as “an end in itself” and not merely “a means to an end” (17). Unlike other settlers who came to the prairies seeking their fortunes in grain farming, the authors appear to have come in search of lives that afforded them the pleasure of working with horses and raising domesticated animals. Ian MacPherson and John H. Thompson differentiate between those who saw farming as an entrepreneurial activity and those who saw it as ““a way of life”” (475). To the cattle barons, who saw the Alberta prairie as a cheap means of grazing cattle, ranching was a means of investing capital for profit (Evans 90).

Warren Elofson argues that too much history has been written about these celebrated entrepreneurs, A. E. Cross, Senator Matthew Cochrane, Pat Burns, and George Lane, and alludes to the enrichment that might be afforded by considering the experiences of the “grass-roots of society,” the ordinary people who worked directly with the cattle (*Cowboys* xvi). The cattle barons came to southern Alberta not as pioneers to create sustainable lives on the prairies, but to develop an agricultural industry whose success, in the words of Marcuse, marked “the ever-more-effective domination of man and nature, [and] the ever-more-effective utilization of its resources” (17). The small and medium-size ranches that evolved when the open range system gave way to homesteading were operated, Evans observes, not as part of a scheme “to ‘get rich quick,’” but as a means to provide “a viable living for a family in exchange for a lifetime of devotion” (90).

The notion of farming as a noble enterprise “perpetuates a value system,” MacPherson and Thompson assert, that “runs back through W. R. Motherwell, Egerton Ryerson, William Lyon Mackenzie King, Thomas Jefferson, and the eighteenth-century *philosophes*” (475). Harkening back to the classical philosophy of Cicero and Cato, and the moderns, Thomas Carlyle, who believed that ““there is perennial nobleness, and even sacredness in [farm]work,’” David C. Jones calls attention to the veneration of farming by agrarian presses and by a diverse group of agrarian reformers who saw farming not only as a way of life, but as a moral choice over the evils of the city (457, 467). The kind of farming to which these historians allude is technically georgic. Simply defined, georgic discourse refers to farm work. As David Ferry explains, the title of Virgil’s text,

“*Georgica* derives from Greek words for farmer, agriculture, working in the earth (*geo*, earth, and *ergon*, work)” (189). At the expense of clarity and falling short on nuance, the terms *georgic* and *pastoral* have been used interchangeably in the history of settlement. Anthony Rasporich refers to the “pastoral ideals of [John] Ruskin, Carlyle, and [William] Morris” as the intellectual foundation that “shaped the Anglo-Canadian mentality of the early Northwest before World War I” (150). Likewise, he cites the “pastoral vision of happy farm life” as responsible for the naiveté and subsequent failure of some newcomers who, in “their quest for self-fulfillment in nature” in Alberta and British Columbia, did not consider the performance of labour as necessary to agrarian enterprise (134-35). Differentiating between the terms, Landry argues that pastorals present landscape as an aesthetic object, while georgic poems foreground labour (*Invention* 16). In pastorals, she claims, “no one labors and everyone is nourished by a natural plenitude,” while in georgic verse, the farmer feeds his family through his labour (16). My investigation reveals that georgic ideals and not pastoral visions are the basis of the myth of the prairies as an Eden.

“Hard work is a dominant theme” in the *Georgics*, Wilkinson asserts (52). Labour tends to be a dominant theme in all of the pioneer accounts in my study, whether it is documented in fragmented sentences and as empirical data in diaries, or in figurative terms in memoirs. What distinguishes the life writing of my subjects from that of other pioneers is that the labour is performed with horses. With the exception of Thomson, who migrated from Ontario, these writers were members of families for whom the decision to immigrate to Alberta was

motivated, Thomas asserts, by the promise of cultivating a “way of life of which the light horse was at once the symbol and the centre” (88). Abundant evidence of labour based on the georgic traditions of animal husbandry—that is, methods involving regular direct contact with and gentling of farm animals—is found in all of my primary texts.

With the exception of Hopkins’s and Gardiner’s manuscripts, which were edited by Sheilagh S. Jameson and Hugh A. Dempsey, respectively, and introduced in a manner that celebrates the lives of the authors, they have received little attention from historians or literary critics. I examine these materials employing postcolonial tools of analysis to unearth the ideologies rooted in their language. I begin my investigation of the life writing of my subjects and of the roles they played in the development of agriculture and culture in southern Alberta with brief biographies of them and descriptions of their various forms of discourse.

Hopkins’s manuscript is housed at the Glenbow Museum. Hopkins was born Amy Monica Maggs “in Dorset, England in 1884” (Jameson, Introduction viii). Her husband, W. R. Francis (Billie) Hopkins, a horse rancher, “was born in County Wicklow, Ireland, in 1879” and, in 1902, filed on a homestead on Fish Creek, “nine miles southwest of Priddis,” where he built a log cabin (viii). Her memoir is a nostalgic reminiscence of her arrival there in 1909 and the first two years of her life on an Alberta horse ranch. Hopkins wrote it in the form of an epistolary, a collection of letters addressed to a fictional interlocutor named Gill who lives in Australia. Jameson contends that because Hopkins had “remarkable powers of recall,” and “access to original documents”—letters she “had written to

her parents and friends”—her memoir “reflects the flavour of the period with freshness and contemporary feeling” (xv-xvi). “In 1943, when Billie was 62, the couple left their farm and moved to a small house on acreage” owned by a good friend, and it was there, Jameson states, that “Monica rewrote and expanded upon the letters” (xv). With the hope of publishing the collection as a memoir “entitled ‘Log Cabin and We Two,’” Hopkins transcribed these letters “in her own distinctive style” to capture their “essence” (xv). The location or even the existence of the original letters is unknown, however, which precludes the possibility of comparing them to *Letters from a Lady Rancher* to establish how much of their information was embellished and altered to prepare the book for publication.

Hopkins’s anecdotes about life on an Alberta ranch reveal the ideologies of the English equestrians who formed her circle of friends and her presumptions about her place within that elite social group of immigrants. At times, Hopkins justifies her claims of superior social rank in her playful yet condescending comments on the manners of their hired hands, who drop her linen napkins on the floor under the dining table (20). Transforming the men into buffoons emphasizes their low station in the social hierarchy. At other times, Hopkins’s presumptions of superiority are implied in her references to material possessions such as her and Billie’s formal attire, household furnishings, and books. Indeed, E. J. Park recalls in *Our Foothills*, a community history of Priddis, Millarville, Kew, and Bragg Creek, that the Hopkinses “are remembered for all their books – the living room walls lined with shelves and shelves of them” (304). Hopkins imagines receiving

books from Gill on the occasion of her first Christmas on the prairies in 1910, and writes that, after a skating party, she and Billie returned home to read them (37).

Hopkins also demonstrates pride in her possession of horses, explaining that she has five of her own: two brood mares, each of which has a foal, and Snake, her pleasure horse (61). She took the initiative to learn to ride immediately upon her arrival in Priddis. She reasons that women “who do not ride and are dependent on their men folk to take them about evidently do not get taken out very much” (17). “I’ve decided that I’m not going to be dependent on anyone,” she insists, and “so I ride nearly every day” (17). By taking for granted her possession of pleasure horses such as Snake, and later, Salem, Hopkins implies a lack of class consciousness or, perhaps, masks that consciousness, for she must have been aware of the financial means necessary for settlers to afford that luxury.

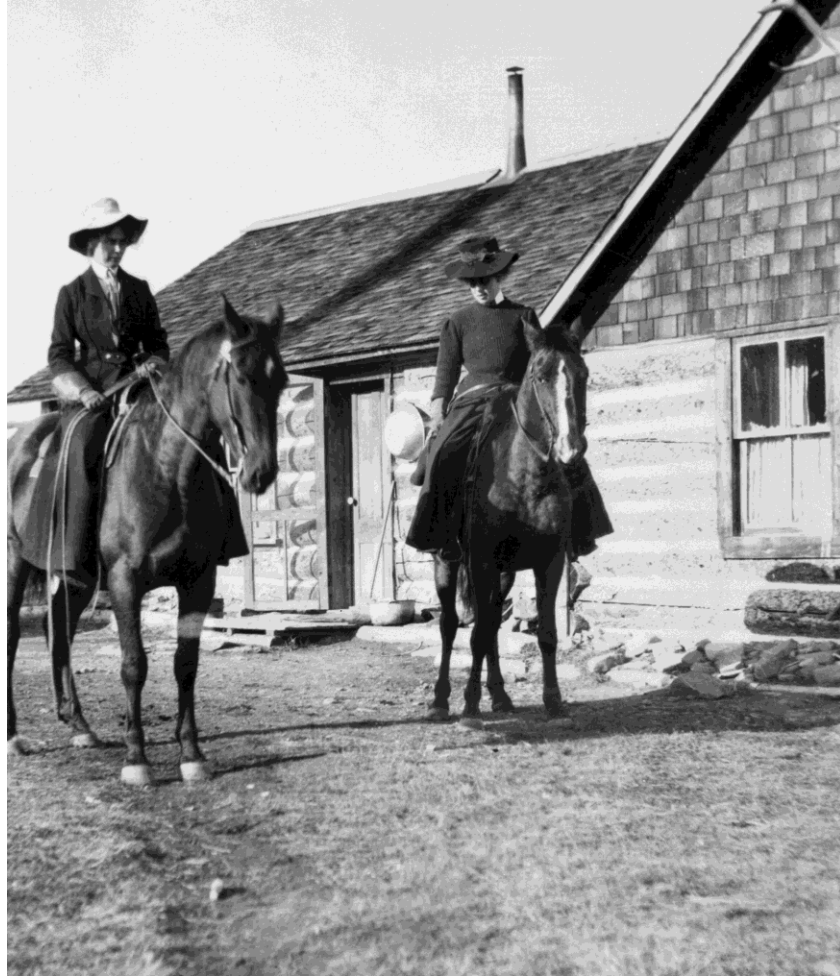


Figure 1: Monica Hopkins
Hopkins and Margaret Champion at the Hopkinses' home, West of Priddis, AB (ca. 1916)
(Photograph used by permission of the Glenbow Museum. NA-2406-3)

Gardiner, another highly literate settler and avid equestrian, left England in 1894 to pursue a career as a rancher and, after a couple of years working as a hired hand, bought the Wineglass Ranch near Pincher Creek (Dempsey, Introduction ix). Dempsey identifies Gardiner as “the only son of Lt. Col. and Mrs. Edward James Gardiner, of London, England” (v). After learning to ride on “his grandfather’s estate in Worcester Park, Surrey,” Gardiner joined the military and became a member of “the Queen’s Westminster Volunteers, rising to rank of lance corporal. This regiment provided the opportunity for him to pursue his love of horseback riding” (v-vi). His letters demonstrate the pride he felt in owning well-bred horses.

Unlike Hopkins, Gardiner did not reacquire his letters; they were discovered in a family home in England after his death (xi). His are *journal letters*, that is, they show evidence that Gardiner wrote them over the course of days and sometimes weeks. For example, he began a letter to his parents on September 2, 1894, added to it a week later, and completed it on September 13 in time for it to be mailed in Pincher Creek (18-19). Contrary to Dempsey's assertion that the "location of the original letters currently is unknown" (Introduction xi), they are now in the possession of the Glenbow Museum and have been digitized, which allows their holographic images to be viewed on the Glenbow website. For the most part, the published letters serve the purposes of my investigation; however, I also examine several letters that Gardiner wrote to his mother between 1896 and 1898. He kept a farm log, as well, in which he recorded the details of his finances, the number of hours his hired hands worked each week, and the number of hours his teams of horses worked when hired out to neighbouring ranchers. I discuss the log only to indicate that it contains numerical accounts without explanation.

Gardiner's letters reveal evidence of his experiences as he endeavoured to realize the utopian myth of prosperity, gentility, and plenitude. His goals are embedded in his expressions of hope to acquire a ranch of his own, in his outlaying of plans to improve that ranch, and in his description of the realization of those plans when he executed the purchase. The formality of Gardiner's writing suggests that he had been a member of the upper middle class in England before he was, temporarily, relegated to the labouring class when he arrived in Alberta. Yet, even then, he benefitted from the influence of his social connections made through

letters of introduction written by his father to “Clarence C. Chipman, Chief Commissioner of the Hudson’s Bay Company in Winnipeg” (Dempsey, Introduction vi). The Commissioner secured Gardiner a position on the ranch of “James W. Bell, an ex-Mounted Policeman and one of the most successful oldtime ranchers in the district” of Fort Macleod (vii). Gardiner’s affiliation with the establishment later guaranteed his place in the elite society of Anglo-Canadian land owners, among whom he again enjoyed the privileges of rank. I examine Gardiner’s letters for evidence of the ideologies that shaped his sense of entitlement to land and social status and his resentment of his treatment as a hired hand.

Joan Key (née Petter) also self-identified as a genteel British immigrant. Key was born in Yeovil, England, in 1902. Her memoir is based mostly on what she remembers of her childhood experiences, but she draws, as well, she explains, from a diary her father kept for a short time around 1910 (182-83), and from her memories of oral stories he told her when she was young and he was ill and wished to pass the time in bed by recollecting their arrival in Strathmore (15-18). Key published her memoir in 1988, late in her retirement in Victoria on Vancouver Island. Her writing style, unlike that of the other authors in my study, leans toward excessive literary embellishment. Philippe Lejeune maintains that the aim of autobiographical texts “is not simple verisimilitude but resemblance to the truth. Not ‘the effect of the real,’ but the ‘image of the real’” (22). Yet, it is clear that Key crafts her fanciful descriptions of the prairie grass, flowers, birds, and sky for verisimilitude. Each morning is beautiful and offers the promise of joy. She

describes, for example, a trip she took with her father to the neighbouring farm to buy oats, as “a crisp spring morning [...with] the Rockies standing up blue and sharp against a translucent western sky. Soon they would be touched with rose and gold, as the sun tipped the horizon behind us” (35). Her elaborate images, proffered in the voice of innocence, contribute to the myth of pioneering as taking place in an agrarian utopia. Literary critic and writer Edward A. McCourt suggests that a “characteristic *regional* theme” in prairie literature is a nostalgic yearning for the lost Eden of the magical, golden time of youth (159; orig. emphasis). Key’s memoir exemplifies such sentiments.

Initially, Key uses her memoir to recall the lost Eden of the Petters’ former estate in England and to reassert claims of their social standing as members of the landed gentry. She endeavours to do so by emphasizing the formality of their British manners and by augmenting her prose with photographs of her parents on well-groomed horses posed on the lawns of their English estates. Thus, Key’s memoir is an apology, which Francis R. Hart defines as a personal history that seeks to communicate or express the essential nature, the truth of “the self relative to social and/or moral law” (491). Key emphasizes her British background for many of the same reasons that Hopkins does, which is to identify her social superiority in spite of the loss of her status incurred by her immigration. Defending her parents’ tenacious grasp on their culture, Key contends that “the stubborn and sometimes ridiculous refusal of the English newcomers to adapt was not so much to impress their neighbours, as an attempt to keep up their own courage, and to assure themselves that there was hope that someday all the traditional customs and

comforts they had left behind, would be theirs once more” (37). *The Third Radfords* is available in university libraries, but has yet to gain the interest of literary critics and historians. I explore it as a pioneer narrative that promotes myths of the prairies as an agrarian utopia, but one that existed exclusively for privileged settlers, for Key’s memoir betrays not only her sense of cultural superiority, but also her racial distinctions. She compares her Indigenous neighbours to the gypsies in England, who were “beggars and thieves” (79).

Georgina Thomson’s *Crocus and Meadowlark Country* is the third woman’s memoir in my study. Thomson and her family migrated from Galt, Ontario, to Nanton, Alberta, in 1904. Their goal was to grow grain and keep a few cows, chickens, and pigs to satisfy the family’s nutritional requirements, an image that was, no doubt, modelled on their agrarian practices in eastern Canada. Thomson indicates that she learned to write when she was a child and states that her memoir is based partly on material she composed when she was “only fourteen years old” (84, 208). As a young woman, she obtained a degree in education at the University of Alberta, became a school teacher, and, after retiring, wrote about her life experiences. Thomson’s memoir is partly an apology in which she contests her family’s and friends’ misunderstanding of her as a youth, and attempts to replace their less than flattering impressions of her with a more pleasing self-portrait. She refrains from the kinds of aesthetic embellishment found in Key’s memoir, however, and offers a plainly worded narrative that provides random but detailed information about the culture and agriculture of her agrarian community. What her writing lacks in cohesion, it makes up for in its reflection of the innate diversity of

human life, for Thomson includes anecdotes about her family's domestic economy, leisurely pastimes, participation in church and community events, and common experiences like schooling, sports, courtship, marriage, and the births of the next generation.

Thomson's memoir, like the others in my study, places significant importance on the animals her family raised for food and provides vivid descriptions that betray a fondness for them bordering on sentimentality. Her memoir might best be described as an example of the georgic literary traditions, which, literary critic Donna Landry asserts, foster the recognition of animals as having "knowable characters" (*Invention* 8). Thomson demonstrates awareness of the disposition of Dixie, her favourite horse, in her recollection that he loved to eat "the sweet purple tops of the thistle blossoms," which he nipped off "gingerly with his lips pulled back from the lower prickly part" (261). Thomson's family kept several horses for pleasure riding and utility, and, like Hopkins, Thomson boasts that her equestrian skill afforded her great independence. By riding Dixie, she enabled herself to take up a position at the age of sixteen as a school teacher in Porcupine Hills, some distance from home (256). Her family's ownership of horses did not secure it a place among an elite group of equestrians, however, for the portrait she provides suggests that the Thomsons' income was modest. Another obstacle to her family's inclusion was its affiliations with the Scottish Presbyterians, not the Anglicans. L. G. Thomas observes that "the ranching community included representations of many religious positions, [but] it was predominantly Anglican," and while not all of the ranchers were devoted

churchmen, “there were enough of them to exercise a strong influence on the Anglican Church in Alberta” (55). Thomson suggests that the division between denominations was not strict. The church services that were held in people’s houses before churches could be built attracted not only Presbyterians, but Methodists, Anglicans, Baptists, “the occasional Roman Catholic and one or two avowed agnostics,” who merely wished to “get out and have a chat with their neighbours” (134).

Like Key’s, Thomson’s memoir is available in Canadian university libraries, but has drawn little scholarly interest. Linda Rasmussen, Lorna Rasmussen, Candace Savage, and Anne Wheeler include an excerpt from it in *A Harvest Yet to Reap: A History of Prairie Women* as an example of unremitting and intensive labour in female settlers’ lives. S. Leigh Matthews employs Thomson’s text to argue that pioneer life and life writing offered women opportunities for empowerment. I examine the manuscript as an example of a settler memoir that perpetuates a myth of farming as a noble occupation, which, sociologist Robert Barnetson claims, “centres on the belief that farming is a virtuous activity that often entails personal sacrifice” (65). The foundation of that myth is the georgic traditions, yet it has not been fully examined in the history of settlement or farming in the last century. Utopian or georgic myths were imagined by educated and genteel immigrants, who emphasized their personal sacrifices to justify their sense of deserving. Thomson does not describe the prairie as an agrarian utopia; thus, her memoir serves as a contrast to those that do. Nevertheless, the Thomsons migrated to the prairies with the goals of increasing

their wealth and the quality of their lives through farming, and achieved them often at the expense of itinerant workers.

Henry Sheppard Sr. strove for economic prosperity on the prairies not only through his agricultural endeavours, but also through his employment as a magistrate. He was born in Sheffield, England, in 1861, and was educated at Oxford before immigrating to Canada in 1887 to breed horses and cattle (*Leaves* 98). He was “the son of a rector of Thurnscoe Parish near Sheffield” (*Leaves* 98), but chose to give up that gentle life and adopt a labour-intensive mode of subsistence on the prairies. Before coming to Canada, Henry Sr. had already experienced life in the British colony of Australia, where, in 1884, at the age of twenty-three and having completed his studies at Oxford, he had gone to work on “a Cattle and Sheep Station owned by the Church of England” (98). He worked there for three years before turning his attention to southern Alberta (99). Henry Sr.’s apprenticeship in Australia must have provided him with some of the practical knowledge of animal husbandry and the experience necessary to adapt British agricultural methods to the prairies. It may also have instilled in him colonial attitudes, which he then carried with him when he immigrated to Canada. Like Gardiner, Henry Sr. had social connections and arrived with a guarantee of employment as a ranch hand on the Grieg family’s Paleface Ranche near Pekisko (*Leaves* 90). The Griegs had come from England the previous year, importing some of the first registered Herefords in Alberta (90). Henry Sr. acquired his own ranch near Hay Creek, north of High River, then, later, bought the Cottonwood Ranch, which is south of the town (90). In 1908, he contracted the building of a

house for his family on what was then the outskirts of High River. The location facilitated his participation in social events and his occupation as a civil servant. In 1917, after his wife's death, he sold the house and moved to the Riverbend Ranch near Longview, where he lived out the remainder of his life.

Henry Sr. documented information about his ranching operation, his civic duties, and his social events from 1907 to 1934 in account books diaries or ledgers in an eclectic assembly of numbers and sentence fragments. As examples of sub-literary pioneer accounts, that is, diaries composed of empirical data and sentence fragments, his journals are remarkable for their diversity, for they reveal his varied roles as a family man, an influential member of the Anglican Church, a politician, an insurance salesperson, a land speculator, and an investment broker. The multitude of topics he discusses and tasks he performed contradict the notion of a cohesive selfhood, for he reveals that he played numerous roles over the course of his life and even over the course of a day. These roles were wrought by his environmental, temporal, economic, and cultural circumstances, and the dynamic materialities that formed and reformed his personality. Henry Sr.'s and Henry Jr.'s journals and Gardiner's letters challenge assumptions that male writers convey cohesive self-portraits. Moreover, their writing reveals the many unrelated roles the authors played in their lives.

J. Hillis Miller's theory of performativity informs my analysis, for it promotes the view that the roles people perform in their lives are shaped by familial, social, ideological, and political forces. As Miller claims, performativity "means, among other things, the assumption that human beings have no innate

selfhood or subjectivity but become what they are through more or less forced repetitions of a certain role” and that each role is a social construct (*For* 146). The authors in my study endeavour to represent those roles in their writing and, by writing about life, seem to come to terms with its incongruities, while validating and, at times, revising their self-images. The variety of domestic and outdoor activities represented in these texts reflect the culture that British immigrants and eastern Canadian migrants brought to the prairies, traditions that, through settlers’ adaptation of them to the environment, evolved into a hybrid, yet dominant, Anglo-Canadian culture.

Henry Sr.’s journals reveal his self-identification as a privileged land owner and member of an elite agrarian society. They also offer evidence of his many years of civic duties. His British public school education, aptitude, and skills prepared him to take on roles of leadership and help to plan and execute the creation of an infrastructure in High River. Thus, Henry Sr. was an agent of expansionism, which Doug Owram defines as the ideal of developing a society in the North West with “Britain as its model” (126-27). Moreover, he was the model of an ideal Canadian citizen for a new society in the Dominion of Canada, which sociologist Richard J. F. Day asserts, was particularly Anglo-Canadian in nature (146). Henry Sr. was also instrumental in nurturing the British culture of his community. He promoted, attended, and participated in cultural, artistic, educational, and sporting events. Thus, he aided in the development of “a stratified and cultivated society in imitation of the social structure [Anglo-Canadian citizens] had formerly known in Canada’s eastern cities and in Great Britain” (Breen 98).

He was an expert equestrian and competed at horse shows. He did not play polo, but he supported the game and was connected to those in the community who did play. He wrote in the entry for July 26, 1907: “Took Bee and George to Crossing [High River] for Polo and Dance. *Calgary Versus* [F?] awful dust storm [...] Good dance.” I investigate his journals for evidence of colonial attitudes and the influence and perpetuation of georgic farming traditions.

Henry Jr. was born on April 6, 1889, at the Sheppards’ first ranch “on Hay Creek” (*Leaves* 99). His journals, which cover the year 1919, and the years from 1929 to 1951, represent the cyclical pattern of an agrarian life. The first volume documents his experiences after his release from four years of confinement in a German prisoner-of-war camp (99). In 1913, Henry Jr. and his brother, Jay, the second eldest son, enlisted in the army and went to Europe. Jay died at Vimy Ridge (99). Henry Sr. wrote on May 6, 1917, that he had received a “wire from Military Department” telling him that “Jay was killed on April 9th.” Henry Jr.’s 1919 volume marked its author’s return home. The subsequent volumes account for twenty-five years of his life as a farmer in High River, on land that is now the Sheppard Family Park, a designated historic site. His journals and his father’s, to some extent, served as farmers’ almanacs. The authors used them to record daily weather conditions, the amounts of grain, hay, and produce handled, the names of hired hands, and the nature of the work performed each day. What is significant about the journals is the absence of the kinds of romantic imagery about farming often found in settler memoirs.

A typical entry in Henry Jr.'s journal is one for March 31, 1930, in which he wrote: "Hauled hay for cows & went to town p.m. nice day Bondy Cow Calved. calf [?] had to have it in house." His father recorded a similar entry on February 27, 1907: "3 yr old heiffer calved calf weak had to bring it into the house." The matching accounts reflect the ethic of stewardship, a humanist ideology rooted in the georgic traditions. That the calf in Henry Sr.'s kitchen had been a Hereford, a breed raised for beef, while the calf in Henry Jr.'s had been born to a dairy cow reveals the subtle difference between the economic interests of father and son. Henry Sr.'s livelihood depended partly on the sale of cattle; Henry Jr.'s depended partly on the sale of cream, which he collected, kept cold in metal containers in a "spring box," a wooden crate in the creek, and sold to the creamery in High River.

Bert Sheppard's journals cover the years from 1938 to 1942 and the year 1947 and indicate that he had very little to do with dairy cows. Bert was born on the Cottonwood Ranch on February 26, 1901, and, as a young man, worked as a cowboy on the historic Bar U Ranch. He claims that it was a realization of his "boyhood dream to become a Bar U cowboy" (*Just* 83). In his later years, he became a successful breeder of pedigreed Hereford cattle on his own ranches, the TL and the Riverbend. In his journals, in a summary of September 1938, Bert wrote that the calves he shipped to a cattle show in "Saskatoon [won the] Grand Championship." Bert kept track of his accomplishments in the history of the TL Ranch, as well, which he hand-typed around 1951. He notes in that text that in 1947, "[t]hree TL steers in the capable hands of Ed Noad, were awarded

championship ribbons in Major Shows. J.W. Maus [the handler] had the champion load of fat cattle at the Toronto Royal with some more of them” (TL 32). Such achievement appears to have had even greater significance to him than his career as a cowboy.

Limited use of Bert’s memoirs has been made by historians. In *The Bar U and Canadian Ranching History*, Simon Evans refers to Bert’s account of Jonas Rider in *Just About Nothing*, as testimony to the Nakoda (Stoney) cowboy’s expertise as a roper (98-99). Rider, in Evans’s text, represents the contingent of Indigenous cowboys employed by the Bar U Ranch. Ed Gould quotes from *Spitzee Days in Ranching in Western Canada*, and acknowledges Bert as “a boyhood hero” (7). Voisey mentions *Spitzee Days* in an endnote in his history of the *High River Times*, but light-heartedly remarks that *Just About Nothing* was appropriately titled, meaning perhaps that it contained nothing to serve his scholarly purposes (Conversation). No one has critically analyzed Bert’s journals, or those of his father or his brother.

My study of Bert’s writing includes his oral history, which was recorded by volunteers at the Stockmen’s Foundation Library and Archives, and the journals of his brother, Henry Jr., and his father. In some instances, the oral stories add information that Bert could not have foreseen when he wrote his memoirs, such as the fact that Rider and his wife lived out their lives on the Riverbend Ranch. The journals facilitate a reader’s comprehension of the literary representations of Bert’s life by making one critically aware of the narrativization process through which Bert transforms everyday routines into stories of adventure and courage. The

journals often contradict details in Bert's memoirs, especially when they show the mundane aspects of his activities and behaviour as he grew up on the family's ranches. Writing in the trope of the frontier, Bert presents his, his family's, and his friends' personal histories in a manner that suggests objectivity; however, close readings of his literary texts reveal narrative constructs designed to present tailored images of Bert and his friends as ruggedly masculine individuals. Thus, they support his sense of entitlement and the privileges associated with land ownership.

In the frontier myth, privilege is conferred as a kind of reward for a pioneer's success in overcoming the challenges he or she had faced in settling in a hostile environment. In the utopian myth, entitlement is based on rank to educated and refined Anglo-Canadian settlers, who acquired and cultivated genteel farms and ranches. At times, the authors add suspense to these mythical narratives by slowly unfolding the action, pretending they cannot foresee the outcome of potentially tragic situations regardless of the fact that they have lived through the events they depict. Hopkins often glosses over the hardships she and her husband suffered and the discomforts they endured by employing humour when describing their failures. Other times, she builds tension in her narratives by exaggerating the risks they took and portrays their success as a triumph over adversity. Thomson and Key tend to narrate their settlement experiences as a gradual progress toward a utopian horizon and, imagining that they have achieved a state of plenitude and harmony with the land at some point in their past, conclude their life stories with a sense of nostalgia for those golden years.

Myths of the prairies as a utopia have been explored by numerous historians, such as Owsen, who, in *The Promise of Eden*, emphasizes British expansionism as a motive for settlement, and Rasporich, who holds the view that naïve beliefs in utopian ideals were responsible for the failure of several parties of European homesteaders to permanently settle. R. Douglas Francis explores the foundations of utopian myths in a biography of religious leader James S. Woodsworth, who promoted a vision of the Canadian prairies as a “land of milk and honey” where Christianity and agriculture could flourish (225-27). Antithetically, Elofson explores the frontier environment as an obstacle in the development of agriculture, particularly, of cattle ranching. Evans’s history of Alberta’s beef industry, framed in a monograph with Western-styled typography, portrays the Bar U Ranch as an icon of frontier ranching.

Henry Nash Smith defines the frontier with a degree of irony as an “axiom,” a self-evident truth that American society had “been shaped by the pull of a vacant continent drawing the population westward” (3). This notion was articulated by Frederick Jackson Turner in “The Significance of the Frontier in American History”, a paper delivered to the American Historical Association in 1893 (3). As Smith notes, Turner’s influence prompted his contemporaries to rewrite history (3). William Katerberg asserts that the notion of the frontier has had the strongest influence in academic history in the United States; nonetheless, he claims that Turner influenced the history of settlement in Canada as historians “adapted” the frontier thesis “to Canadian life and emphasized common North American experiences” (69). While “academic histories are not the same thing as

popular or political culture,” Katerberg admits, “they too can play a ‘myth-historical’ role” (68). My study explores the notion of the frontier to disclose its power to shape settlers’ recollections of their experiences and support their sense of deserving.

Turner promotes an attractive element of the frontier, when he proclaims that it “lies at the hither edge of free land” (28). “‘Free Land,’” historian Wilfrid Eggleston maintains, was “the magnet which drew hundreds of thousands of immigrants to western Canada in the early years” of the twentieth century (340).⁵ Such was the promise of the Dominion Lands Act, which, after the land was surveyed and divided, allowed men “to homestead a quarter section (160 acres) of their choice. Then, after paying a \$10 filing fee and ‘proving up’ their homestead claim (occupying the land for at least three years and performing certain improvements, including building a house and barn, fencing, breaking and cropping a portion of the land), the homesteader could apply for patent (title) to the land” (“Alberta”). Labour was necessary to the homesteader’s “proving up” of the land. Thus, settlement narratives tend to emphasize the labour the authors performed to cultivate and demonstrate their entitlement to the land.

Like Landry, Indyk, in a study of literary representations of colonial settlement in Australia, also differentiates between pastorals and georgic verse. “In contrast to the pastoral mode,” he claims, “the white settlers’ commitment to working the land for profit takes the form of georgic” (845). Indyk’s focus is the *Eclogues*, in which Virgil analogizes the dispossession of shepherds in Italy as a

⁵ See also, Frances Kaye (24-26).

result of “the land seizures by which Octavian and those before him had rewarded the loyalty of their soldiers” (837). In the *Georgics*, Wilkinson asserts, Virgil deliberately excludes references to “veterans who were settled on the land of the dispossessed, or whoever they employed to farm it for them” (23). He addresses the “smallholder or tenant (colonus)” (22). Echoing Virgil’s dissent in the *Eclogues*, Indyk censures the colonial attitudes and practices that resulted in “the displacement of an indigenous population by the settlers” in Australia, where, as in America, immigrants “shared in the pastoral expectations aroused by the prospects of a New World” (838). Landry refers to a similar kind of enclosure in England, which coincided with the establishment of the institution of the country estate (*Invention 2*). Both occurred at the time the rage for horse breeding took hold, she claims, for estates provided space to keep horses (2).

Enclosure in Canada, in the form of imperialism, preceded and was a catalyst for the creation of a class of small land owners and an elite society of equestrians. The Sheppards, Gardiner, Hopkins, and Key were members of this group. Indeed, “polo games, race meetings, gymkhanas, [and] horse shows, marked the peaks of [their] social activity” (Thomas 88). Their participation in equestrian sports constituted a kind of aggregate training that honed their riding skills and made their horses more versatile and valuable than the roughly trained *broncs* ridden by many cowboys. Because horses were the only means of travel at the time, equestrianism was a discipline practiced by both the men and the women in this social group. Yet, women have long been encouraged to ride for pleasure and for health in England, where, Landry asserts, riding offered women

opportunity not only for exercising their bodies, but also for “exercising agency beyond the boundaries of domesticity” (*Invention* 147). Literary readings of female prairie settlers’ memoirs have, however, overlooked equestrianism as a means of women’s empowerment, while Canadian pioneer history has failed to consider equestrian sports as a means by which settler society maintained British hegemony in the early twentieth century.

Horses, for many of the families with whom the Sheppards socialized, bred and trained draft horses. Horses were essential to the completion of farming operations. Henry Sr.’s and Henry Jr.’s journals indicate that the Sheppards took their mares annually to the Bedingfeld ranch to be bred to Clydesdale studs. The Bedingfelds were lifelong friends of the Sheppard family and are often mentioned in Henry Sr.’s journals. He noted on April 1, 1907, that: “Frank rode in to High River on his way to Calgary show where he shows his new Clydesdale horses,” and a week later, Bedingfeld “came with his new stud horse and stayed the night.” He is noted for having “bought the foundation stock for his ‘Westward Ho’ Clydes from John Turner [...] for whom Turner Valley was named” (*Leaves* 362). The Sheppards also bred their mares to the Shires belonging to the Shakerley family. Bert Sheppard recalls that “Arthur Shakerley had a small ranch in the foothills” and bred polo ponies as well (*Spitzee* 217). The Sheppards’ purpose in breeding their mares to draft stallions was to produce horses that could be for use in hauling wagons, for plowing the fields in preparation for planting, and for cutting, raking, and stacking hay. Economic purposes are explored in the journals through a

phenomenological lens, for the references to horses, most often by name, represent literal not symbolic horses.

My investigation also explores the relationships between settlers and their horses in an ideological mode to address the class distinctions imposed and supported symbolically by ideal equine images. In a study of equestrian representations in literature, Landry investigates the affiliation the British have had with horses since the sixteenth century and the attitudes of superiority that resulted as a consequence of their creation of the Thoroughbred horse (*Noble* 66). She argues that along with the production of this highly athletic horse came the technique of riding with a forward seat, which enabled equestrians to engage in the sport of fox hunting (66). Among the ranches that bred horses for the purpose of fox hunting was the Quorn Ranch, which was “established on Sheep Creek in 1884 by members of the Quorn Hunt Club of Leicestershire, England” with the aim of “rais[ing] Hunters for the English market” (*Leaves* 359). The Quorn was well established in England in 1830s (Landry, *Noble* 172). In the 1880s, the proprietors endeavoured to continue their success on their colonial farm in Alberta and imported “210 Irish Hunter-type mares, and 20 of England’s finest Thoroughbred and Cleveland Bay stallions” (*Leaves* 359). “What was at stake in English self-representation on horseback,” Landry maintains, “was an image of liberty, of free forward movement of horse and rider with the minimum of restraint [...] an image with undoubted political significance” (66). “This ideology-in-action, however, also had a sinister side,” she continues; “English riding, conceived as a superior technology of horsemanship, and imperialism, conceived as a civilizing mission,

have much in common as ideological projects” (66). Landry identifies the Renaissance author Philip Sidney as a writer and a rider who influenced the development of equestrian discipline in England. When composing his *Apologie for Poetrie*, Sidney “could think of no more persuasive analogy for recommending his chosen art of poetry than equitation,” for his adage, Landry states, was: “As a man governs his horse, so will he govern his text – or a ruler his people” (18-19). To the British, horses were not only property; “horses were also powerfully symbolic” (16). The authors in my study demonstrate their adherence to these conceptions.



Figure 2: Claude Gardiner on coyote hunt
Gardiner and friends at the 44 Ranch, West of Nanton, AB, 1906
(Photograph used by permission of the Glenbow Museum. NA-4035-17)

Horses were deployed, in Nicole Shukin’s words, “as a tool of affective governance” (3). Shukin’s focus is on the Canadian beaver as a “natural, self-

evident sign of the nation” (3). Yet, “animal signs are anything but self-evident,” Shukin argues; an image of an animal “functions as a hinge allowing powerful discourses to flip or vacillate between literal and figurative economies of sense” (5). Shukin’s study examines animals from a phenomenological perspective, which acknowledges them as sentient beings, that is, beings that have “the capacity to suffer and/or experience enjoyment” (Singer, “All” 42), and from an ideological perspective as political icons. Referring to the post-colonial theories of Homi Bhabha, she claims that “the tools of colonial discourse analysis can be brought to bear on animal capital inasmuch as the animal sign, not unlike the racial stereotype [...] is a site of ‘productive ambivalence’ enabling vacillations between economic and symbolic signs of power” (6-7). “Against a mythopoetic invocation of animal signs as universal lingua franca,” Shukin examines the “specific cultural logics and material logistics that have produced animals as ‘forms of capital’ (in the words of Pierre Bourdieu) across the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries” (7). Horses were an important part of what privileged British settlers imagined as “the good life” promised by and embodied in the “rural pursuits” they aspired to achieve (Thomas 201).

Horses and equine symbols affiliated with the North West Mounted Police served to promote myths of military power to bolster British imperialist claims in Canada (D. Francis 81). “More than any other agency, the Mounted Police influenced the complexion of early settlement in Alberta,” for, Thomas observes, many “members of the force, after their term had expired, settled in the country which they had helped to open” (5-6). Henry Sr., who bred horses to sell to the

police, and Gardiner, who was ex-cavalry, both emphasize the quality of their horses, for their possession of well-bred pleasure horses was a means by which they demonstrated their wealth and high social status in the early agrarian communities. In July, 1895, in a letter to his parents, Gardiner boasted that he had been told that his mares, “Birdie” and “Midget,” are “the best team anywhere around here. I think I will show them in [Fort] Macleod [in] the fall at the show” (44).

Gardiner “took great pride in his matched teams that he used for his democrat,” Dempsey asserts, and, in spite of the availability of cars in the early twentieth century, “still relied on his horses” (Introduction x). So, too, did Monica Hopkins, whose “team and democrat remained a familiar sight on Priddis roads” long after “the automobile age was well established” (Jameson xv). Henry Sr.’s affection for horses also shaped his relationships with them; thus, despite his access to motor vehicles, he opted to travel with a democrat pulled by a team. While his friends, the “Keith Nelsons’ came to tea in their Motor” on December 28, 1913, he chose, two days later, to drive “to W C McDougalls with Hardy and Squaw in Harrows buggy which [he] had borrowed to deliver summons.” There are countless entries attesting to Henry Sr.’s use of horses for travelling, and to his travelling in all kinds of weather.

Typically, pioneer life writers reveal attitudes of superiority over those who could not afford to keep horses, but had to use oxen to cultivate land and haul

wagons.⁶ The authors in my study betray a sense of superiority over the Siksika and Nakoda, as well. According to Bert Sheppard, they either walked or rode “Indian ponies.” These could be purchased “for about fifteen dollars,” he maintains, and “some of them made dandy kids ponies” (*Spitzee* 171). Whether Bert’s term “ponies” is intended to imply that the horses the Siksika and Nakoda people rode were smaller than the horses ridden by Anglo-Canadian and American ranchers is indeterminable, for he also refers to cowponies and polo ponies in his memoirs, when, clearly, these working and sports horses are not pony-size.⁷ Bert’s reference to the Siksika and Nakoda women as squaws is clearly demeaning. He writes that the “squaws wore calico dresses” and some “had coloured blankets thrown over their shoulders, that often covered a baby that was strapped to the squaw’s back, and they all wore moccasins made of buckskin” (13). Regardless of Bert’s familiarity with Rider, the Nakoda cowboy, when he mythologizes pioneer life in tales of the frontier, he populates his world with what Daniel Francis calls *imaginary Indians*, historically static “figure[s] of the past” (167).

Bhabha asserts that the use of stereotypes in colonial discourses is a major “discursive strategy,” employed to maintain the hegemony of the colonizers through the proliferation of knowledge that, he asserts,

⁶ Pioneer authors who explicitly indicate preferences for working with horses instead of oxen are Sarah Ellen Roberts, Mary Hiemstra, Leslie Neatby, and Dutch settler Willem De Gelder, who writes in a letter home on June 12, 1913, “What a pleasure to have horses now instead of oxen. No yelling all day long: get on, come on, get up now, move on boys: the horses go by themselves [...] Farming is a lot easier now” (78).

⁷ Ponies are less than 14.2 Hands High (four inches per hand), yet, Henry Sr.’s show horse, Lony, was 15.1HH and competed in the the “heavy weight Polo Pony class” at the Calgary Horse Fair (9.4.1912).

needs no proof, [and] can never really, in discourse, be proved. It is this process of *ambivalence* [...] that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization; produces the effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed. (66, original emphasis)

The use of stereotypes in settler life writing is no less politically motivated than it is in other colonial narratives, for it serves to differentiate between people who were entitled to the land and those who were not. Breeding, raising, and training horses required vast acreages for summer grazing and for growing hay and grain for winter feed. Satisfying that need demanded the removal of the Siksika and Nakoda people from their traditional territories and their placement on reserves where they could, it was imagined, either adopt the ideologies of the colonizers or live out their lives in “primitive” ways.

There was little room for Indigenous peoples in the newly formed agrarian society, for an indigenous worldview, it was believed, was founded on naturalistic rather than civilized and cultured relationships with the land. Thus, according to Sarah Carter, Indigenous peoples were often placed on reserves where the land was unfit for agriculture (*Lost* 161-62). As John Hawkes proclaimed in 1924, in his history of Saskatchewan, the “Indian was not a natural farmer. He was a born hunter and warrior,” whose “nomadic instinct” made the daily labour of agriculture “as foreign to his nature as a dog kennel to a fox” (qtd. in S. Carter, *Lost* 3). Nor was there room for Indigenous peoples in pioneer memoirs, except as stereotypical figures. Importantly, Hopkins, Bert Sheppard, and Key appear oblivious to the racism inherent in these stereotypes. Their memoirs serve to keep

racialized signs of difference in circulation today. In this “era of contemporary colonialism,” they constitute what Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel describe as “a form of post-modern imperialism in which domination is still the Settler imperative” (597). As Alfred and Corntassel contend: “Contemporary Settlers follow the mandate provided for them by their imperial forefathers’ colonial legacy, not by attempting to eradicate the physical signs of Indigenous peoples as human *bodies*, but by trying to eradicate their existence as *peoples* through the erasure of the histories and geographies that provide the foundation for Indigenous cultural identities and sense of self” (598; original emphasis). The memoirs in my study continue the process of erasing Indigenous culture by retelling and reinforcing colonial history.

In the analysis of my primary materials, I employ Miller’s term *performative* as he uses it to refer to both discourse and behaviour (*For Derrida* 146). One might describe the discourse of the memoirs in my study as performatively *re-enacting* settlement and, indeed, celebrating its success. The behaviour of the Sheppards (represented in their journals) and their journals acted performatively to ‘civilize’ the prairies by imposing and bringing to predominance Eurocentric patterns of behaviour and agricultural practices in the region. “Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative,” Bhabha states, “are produced performatively” (Introduction 2). Bhabha’s theories on performativity in colonial discourses and the stereotypes produced by such discourses are useful to my discussion; his stated objective, however, is not. He writes: “The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or

cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, *on-going negotiation* that seeks to authorize *cultural hybridities* that emerge at moments of historical transformation” (Introduction 2; my emphasis). A discussion of how the “social articulation of difference” contributes toward an “on-going negotiation” is beyond the scope of my investigation for I do not include the writing of those whose ethnicity places them in a minority group.

My focus is on discourse written by the colonists, not the colonized. I discuss “the concept of colonialism as an ideological or discursive formation,” and what Stephen Slemon identifies as “an apparatus for constituting subject positions through the field of representation” (17). Slemon observes that the “basic project of colonial discourse theory is to [...] try and define colonialism both as a set of political relations and as a signifying system, one with ambivalent structural relations” (22). Likewise, Bhabha claims that colonial discourse is dynamic and subject to shifts in political relations. The authors in my study do not question, nor do they seek to negotiate their claims of authority. Rather, their memoirs and diaries appear to constitute a kind of sub-genre of life writing that, through the power of repetition, maintains Anglo-Canadian cultural hegemony.

Sub-literary works such as farm logs and account book diaries have long been ignored in the history of settlement, and in scholarship in general, because, Steven Earl Kagle claims, they are often “so fragmentary that they are inadequate for any reader other than the diarist himself” (416). This may be a fair estimation when considering the terse and obscure entries found in farm logs, which Marilyn

Ferris Motz observes were used by “rural men and women in the nineteenth century ‘to record expenditures and calculate profits, as well as to note farm work, weather, and crop yields to aid in planning future seasons’” (qtd. in K. Carter 134). Admittedly, the Sheppard journals constitute a humanist form of writing, for keeping a daily account of one’s life is both a Christian and a humanist practice. Carol Edkins observes that some “of the earliest life stories” were written in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries “by Puritan and Quaker women” as public confirmation of their spiritual conversions and that the “framing of the life stories around the group’s tenets create[d] a symbolic bond with the group and/or community” (39, 41). Henry Sr. and Henry Jr. were devout Anglicans, and while it is doubtful that they intended to publish their journals as proof of their piety, the records may have reminded them of the continuing bonds they had with the Anglican community. There is a distinct connection between religious and humanist traditions in the Sheppards’ keeping of diaries, for as religious accounts, the entries record their authors’ weekly church attendance, and as farmers’ almanacs, they record the men’s daily labour. Both uses have moral implications if conceived as the authors’ reckoning of their lives to God.

The Sheppards’ practice of keeping journals emerge from a convergence of science and religion, as well, for it reflects the tenets of Methodism, a Protestant denomination “closely connected with the exaltation of Francis Bacon,” Michael Gauvreau states (70). Methodism declares that “truths about consciousness, the world, or religion must be built by a strict induction from irreducible facts of experience” (70). These humanist assertions, Gauvreau maintains, were

foundational to the mandates of “the fledgling church colleges” in Canada (70).⁸ Humanist and religious influences are also reflected broadly in the journals in the authors’ demonstrations of stewardship, which is a georgic ideal and, Lawrence Buell observes, referring to the *ecotheology* embodied in Thomas Berry’s *The Dream of the Earth*, a neo- or post-Christian ethic (106). Yet, while the Sheppards’ fulfillment of ranch labour and church commitments served human interests, the journals might be categorized as proto-posthumanist discourses, for they invite readers to imagine living human beings existing in the world beyond the pages of the text.

The fact that the authors refrain from assigning meaning to their experiences imparts an existential quality to them. Thus, in my examination, I employ a posthumanist lens, which offers ways to “untether” humanist forms of “meaning, reason, and communication [...] from [their] moorings in the individual, subjectivity, and consciousness” (Wolfe xv-xx). A posthumanist perspective does not surpass or reject the human; rather, Cary Wolfe claims, it “opposes the fantasies of disembodiment and autonomy, inherited from humanism itself” (xv). Posthumanism, Wolfe asserts, “enables us to describe the human and its characteristic modes of communication, interaction, meaning, social significations, and affective investments with *greater* specificity” than is afforded by humanism (xxv). Henry Sr.’s and Henry Jr.’s gathering of empirical data and subjective

⁸ Gauvreau argues that the views of “the Anglican leader John Strachan [rivalled] those promoted by the Presbyterian Thomas McCulloch and the Methodist Egerton Ryerson” in that Ryerson emphasized the development of a polite society through the study of the classics, while McCulloch “rejected the supremacy of the classics in the curriculum” in favour of a more practical knowledge (73). Finally, however, a vision of a “new ideal of ‘liberal education,’” born from the blending of these ideas, “sought a balance of Christian piety and reason” (70-73).

responses to phenomena and sensorial experiences lead readers to imagine the authors' experiences as embodied.

To make a case that a posthumanist lens allows readers of the Sheppard journals to conceive of the authors as living beings that physically existed in and experienced the material world is not to claim that the journals are capable of providing representations of human experience any more realistic than those offered in other forms of life writing. Paul de Man argues that to “the extent that language is figure (or metaphor, or prosopopeia), it is not the thing itself but [...] the picture of the thing and, as such, it is silent, mute as pictures are mute” (930). Likewise, Buell asserts, “[w]ritten and even oral expression is subject to severe sensuous limits, being sight and/or sound-biased” (33). He describes languages as “culturally coded symbol systems,” and writing as “a system of abstract graphic notations” (33). “All attempts to get the world between [book] covers,” Buell reasons, “are subject to asymptotic limit beyond which the environment cannot be brought to consciousness in any event” (33). Posthumanism, however, “forces us to rethink our taken-for-granted modes of human experience” (Wolfe xxv). It evokes a positive response to Jacques Derrida’s question: “can we not conceive of a presence and self-presence of the subject before speech or its signs, a subject’s self-presence in a silent and intuitive consciousness?” (131). In an elucidation of Derrida’s work, Wolfe marks a shift from an emphasis on writers as subjects who reflect on their experiences to an awareness of them as persons existing in a world of phenomena to which they respond in verbal expression.

Paul John Eakin offers a precise articulation of the debate concerning the nature of the autobiographical subject and the 'self'. The "controversy about the ontological status of the self," he observes, "has tended to polarize into a self-before-language or a language-before-self set of positions" (191). Eakin summarizes the theoretical positions of Lejeune, De Man, James Olney, and others to foreground a challenge to outmoded theories. "Instead of debating the old either/or proposition," Eakin reasons, "it is preferable to conceptualize the relation between the self and language as a mutually constituting interdependency" (8). In direct confrontation with scholars who refer to a human being as a 'self', neuroscientist M. R. Bennett and philosopher P. M. S. Hacker maintain that the "notion of a 'self' is an aberration" and that there "is no such thing as a 'self' construed thus" ("Illusion" 331). Moreover, they argue, the common usage of the term causes confusion among scholars by leading them to believe there is a *self* that is an essential and mysterious entity existing as a part of or within the whole human being (331). In Cartesian and Lockean philosophical traditions, the self "is supposed to be the permanent subject of successive states of consciousness and conscious experience" (331). "But this is an illusion," they contend, produced "by grammatical confusion" (333). "To speak of myself is not to speak of a self which I have," Bennett and Hacker state, "but simply to speak of the human being that I am" (334).

Posthumanist conceptions of human experience pose similar challenges. For example, they refute the assumption James Olney makes in *Metaphors of the Self* when he tries to explain why and how poets employ metaphors to convey new

knowledge about human experience. Olney claims that poets “explore the inner reaches of self, especially self as it becomes or feels transcendent and more than individual, and seek images that might make the experience available to the reader” (30). Drawing from research in “biology, psychology, and the human sciences” to study the relationships between human and non-human animals, Donna Haraway demystifies such notions, reasoning that “what we have learned is that we are not the ‘self’ or ‘transparently present to the self’ either, and so we should expect no transcendent knowledge from that source” (*When* 226). Wolfe concurs, asserting that posthumanism removes “meaning from the ontologically closed domain of consciousness” (xv). Posthumanist theory moves beyond Cartesian conceptions. Likewise, phenomenological analysis allows for differentiation between representations in the journals of literal daily activities in which the Sheppards engaged, and the metaphoric representations of life experiences in the memoirs, which camouflage daily experiences through narrative. By exploring Key’s, Thomson’s, Hopkins’s, and Bert Sheppard’s memoirs alongside the Sheppard journals, one can discriminate between the social circumstances that shaped the construction of pioneer diaries and those that shaped the meaning of settlement events decades later.

I include life writing by both men and women among my primary texts to explore gendered differences in their pioneer accounts. The tendency to view pioneer experiences through gendered perspectives reflects both popular notions of settlement life and labour and government policies. Sarah Carter discusses such issues in “Transnational Perspectives on the History of Great Plains Women:

Gender, Race, Nations and the Forty-ninth Parallel.” The beliefs of Canadian and American officials during the time of settlement that certain kinds of homesteaders were likely to succeed led them to design policies that favoured men over women, for they were imagined as having an aptitude for agricultural labour. Carter also investigates racial discrimination by women who gained privileged positions on the merit of their British ethnicity for, as she argues, “Britishness, combined with whiteness, became equated with Canadianness” (“Britishness” 43, 48). Sheila McManus observes that both American and Canadian governments “took maleness for granted as much as whiteness as a key characteristic of desirable immigration, because ranching and large-scale agriculture, hardiness and rugged self-reliance were all associated with masculinity” (126). Their views inform my analysis of Bert Sheppard’s life writing, which perpetuates myths of masculinity as a means of supporting notions of entitlement to ranchland.

My examination of men’s and women’s life writing reveals settlers not as essential or stable ‘selves’, but as fluid personalities. I explore gendered depictions to emphasize the diversity of pioneers’ accounts, which reflect the diversity of their life experiences as well. Thus, while I acknowledge Buss’s contributions to the realm of autobiographical theory, especially her research on Canadian pioneer women’s life writing, I question her employment of the terms ‘self’ and ‘mapping’ in *Mapping Our Selves*. Buss uses the terms in combination to promote memoirs, in particular, as an effective form for women to voice their dissent against gender discrimination, for, she contends, memoirs allow women to transcend the limits set by the conventions of autobiography (5). Buss’s views are similar to those of

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, Linda Anderson, and Estelle C. Jelinek, who believe that women's life writing has, from earliest times, been marked by discontinuity because the narratives they create "are analogous to the fragmented, interrupted, and formless nature" of their lives, while men's autobiographies tend to reflect "orderliness, wholeness, or a harmonious shaping" (Jelinek 19). Jelinek admits, however, that fragmented narratives are not unheard of in men's autobiographies; "nor are progressive narratives absent in women's" (19). As I discuss in my next chapter, the diversity of topics in the memoirs of Thomson, Key, and Hopkins offers evidence to support the view that women's life writing lacks cohesion; yet, diversity is evident in Bert's, Henry Sr.'s, and Henry Jr.'s journals and Gardiner's journal letters as well.

In addition, I reveal that these male writers show concern about topics associated with women's memoirs and diaries, the "domestic details, family difficulties, [and] close friends," which, Jelinek writes, men tend to omit from their writing and women choose to emphasize (8). At the time Jelinek published *Women's Autobiography* in 1980, she expected life writing to change, because the "mode [had] been undergoing considerable experimentation" (19). Smith and Watson, likewise, anticipate changes in studies of life writing, and observe that, while early scholars like Georges Gusdorf and Karl Weintraub celebrated autobiography "as a master narrative of civilization in the West," postmodern and postcolonial theorists have begun to contest this status, arguing that the term given to the genre is no longer adequate "to describe the extensive historical range and the diverse genres and practices of life narratives and life narrators in the West and

elsewhere around the globe” (4). All of the authors in my study, regardless of gender, offer accounts of their lives that, if not as orderly, whole, and harmonious in shape as autobiographies, are as purposefully designed and have as much power to maintain cultural hegemony. Moreover, Key’s, Hopkins’s, Thomson’s, and Bert Sheppard’s memoirs demonstrate that the form of the memoir offers equal opportunity to women and to men to reinforce or undermine dominant ideologies.

Kathryn McPherson advises that, in spite of the debates about gender inequities in families regarding the division of labour and about political injustice in legislation that governed land ownership in the early twentieth century, “focusing on the ‘passive’ roles of women [...] need not exclude investigation of the more active roles as colonizers [that] women assumed” (“Was the ‘Frontier’” 83). In this essay, she examines several texts, letters, and memoir excerpts written by “western Canadian women” to analyze the social structures that shaped women’s roles (78). She furthers her discussion of how ideologies emerge in women’s life writing to shape the stories about their encounters with Indigenous women who visited them on their homesteads (“Home Tales” 224). Memoirs, she argues, placed women “at the heart of the narrative[s] of colonization, and [...] at the core of nation building” and afforded them opportunities to make assertions about the roles they played in settlement (236). McPherson’s work informs my analysis of the ideologies that emerge in the women’s memoirs in my study. In my fifth chapter, I examine through a phenomenological lens the women’s shaping of their self-identities as robust, but not unfeminine, to discuss their labour and their leisure, especially, their equestrian activities. Presenting themselves as capable and

skilled in their memoirs was one way they asserted their power over the hired hands who worked on their family farms and ranches.

Buss maintains that memoirs constituted a form for women to *map* their life experiences as a means of undermining social forces that contribute to their subjugation. The metaphorical use of cartographical images has taken on new critical meaning as the authority of maps is called into question. John Pickles contends that maps do not “reflect an external nature,” but, rather, they “produce natures through their propositional logics. [...] These are the most commonplace propositions and they tend to command the most universal assent” (xi). Drawing from cognitive linguistics for new ways to envision maps, cartographers Denis Wood and John Fels have begun to look at them not as pictures that convey the reality of the world, but as “a form of political discourse” which has long been a tool that served in “the acquisition and maintenance of power” (xvi-xvi). Pioneer memoirists and diarists refer to their land in terms of the numbered designations authorized by and published in surveyors’ maps. The Sheppards, for example, note the numbers of sections to indicate where they drove in wagons or rode on horseback to tend cattle, build fences, or cultivate the land. Billie Hopkins “homesteaded SW1/4-18-22-3 in 1902, patenting in 1907,” and “owned NW1/4 7-22-3” as well (Park 304). Thomson writes that her father “filed on a homestead that was to be our home for years, the north-west quarter of Section 22, Township 15, Range 27, West of the 4th Meridian” (14). Cartographic metaphors readily apply to personal accounts of settlement, because memoirs, letters, and diaries, serve similar purposes as maps. By way of selecting “what they record and [by]

their normal reference to that most vital of individual and national empowerments, land,” postcolonial theorist Simon Ryan asserts, maps were “a crucial and fascinating element in the project of Empire” (115). These qualities strongly resemble the aim of autobiographical texts, which Lejeune maintains, “claim to provide information about a ‘reality’ exterior to the text” (22). Pioneer accounts create a highly politicized reality. Settlement narratives strengthen the notion of ownership and reassert colonial attitudes by claiming authenticity “in a way which not only legitimizes the representation but also enables the self-privileging of Western modes of knowledge” (Ryan 116).

In *Auto/biography in Canada*, Julie Rak observes that life narratives are now being analyzed “to ‘trouble’ the idea of Canada as a nation with an unproblematic history” (3). The history I propose to “trouble” is the kind that valorizes settlers and presents them either as ideal British colonists endeavouring to shape a utopian society on the prairies, or as heroic individuals facing the challenges of a hostile Western frontier. Underlying utopian and frontier myths in history, or co-existing with them, are those that perpetuate notions of the deserved wealth and privilege for some, but not all people living in Canada. Charles Taylor contends in *Modern Social Imaginaries* that myths can shape our worldviews and motivate our actions, yet, like “social imaginaries,” they can also conceal “certain crucial realities” (183). We may have a sense of ourselves as living in a democratic state in principle, but in imagining it as “integrally realized,” he continues, we are “engaging in a cover-up, averting our gaze from various excluded and disempowered groups or imagining that their exclusion is their own doing” (183).

As I will show, the authors of my primary texts exclude and ignore Indigenous peoples and farm workers.

In the following chapters I compare the commonalities and differences of the various forms of settler writing in my study. In the first chapter, “Diaries, Letters, Memoirs and Myths: Theories of Alberta Settler Narratives,” I elaborate on the autobiographical and literary theories that I employ to explore my primary texts and provide an overview of the diverse types of diaries, including literary diaries, within the English canon. In addition, I demonstrate where the Sheppard journals fit within the broader context of life writing and establish the criteria that distinguish them from literary diaries, which more resemble the memoirs in my study because of their rhetorical dimensions and aesthetic embellishment. In the second chapter, I explore the utopian myths of settlement, their georgic foundations, and the manifestation of georgic traditions in agricultural practices, including the keeping of farm logs.

The third chapter focuses on the trope of the frontier in Bert Sheppard’s memoirs and explores the power the history of settlement told as frontier myths has in the shaping of portraits of working cowboys. The fourth chapter compares Bert’s journals to the selective and polished self-representations in his memoirs to discuss the differences in the texts. In the fifth chapter, I discuss Key’s, Hopkins’s, and Thomson’s memoirs, which are written in the style of georgic literature, to explore the authors’ depiction of animals and the marginalization of hired farm workers. Finally, I discuss the exclusion of Indigenous peoples from settlement projects and omission from settlement narratives except when portrayed as

imaginary Indians. The whole of my study examines representations of the prairies seen through the eyes of the colonizers, which have tended to dominate the historical and cultural landscape and have erased the history and the presence of Indigenous peoples. There is value in such a project not only to Canadian studies, women's studies, Indigenous studies, and life writing, but to postcolonial studies of settlement history for, as J. E. Chamberlin states in *The Harrowing of Eden*: "What was done becomes clear enough. What people thought they were doing is much less clear, but often much more important" (11).

Chapter One – Diaries, Memoirs, Letters, and Myths: Theories of Settlement Narratives

Life writing is an increasingly popular mode of expression. Indeed, according to Robert L. Root Jr. and Michael Steinberg, it is the *fourth* genre. This is not to say that life writing is a catch-all category for works that fall outside the traditional creative, expressive, and objective genres; rather, as Root and Steinberg contend, autobiographies, memoirs, diaries, and so on, are literary forms that exist “as locations on a series of intersecting lines connecting the poles of the personal and the public, the diary and the report, the informal and the formal [...] the imaginative and the expository” (xxiii). Their interest is in the personal essay, which they recognize by its elements of “*personal presence, self-discovery and self-exploration, veracity, flexibility of form, and literary approaches to nonfiction*” (xxiv; their emphasis). One might argue, however, that these elements are common to all forms of life writing including memoirs, testimonials, letters, diaries, journals, autobiography, and biography. My study examines several of these forms: the Sheppard journals, the journal letters of Claude Gardiner, and the memoirs of Monica Hopkins, Bert Sheppard, Georgina Thomson, and Joan Key. In this chapter, I outline the theories I employ in my analysis of these texts and manuscripts. I also compare the journals and memoirs to diaries that are exemplary models of high literary quality to discuss the use of literary devices in life writing intended for publication and the lack of such devices in writing that is meant to be private. I will begin with a brief history of life writing to situate my primary

materials within the genre or, more accurately, to demonstrate how they exist on the periphery.

In a comprehensive study of life writing in Canada, Julie Rak indicates a rising interest in the genre “in a number of areas, including communication studies, cultural studies, women’s studies, [...] post-colonial theory, historiography, Quebec studies, [and] Aboriginal studies” (3). As evidence, she cites an increase in scholarly publications about the genre, stating there are now “more than fifteen journals devoted to aspects of autobiography, biography, life writing, and diary writing in at least seven languages” (2). Similarly, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson recognize autobiography or life writing as an increasingly important subject for critical analysis in “literature, American studies, women’s studies, African American and ethnic studies, [and] history” (xi). They employ the term *life narrative* while exploring the “diverse modes around the autobiographical,” but emphasize “the exclusion of biography from [their] investigations” (223). James Olney prefers the term *life-writing* for the reason that he became uncomfortable writing ““about autobiography as a literary genre,”” after observing a ““gradual alteration [...] in the nature of life writing or autobiography over the past sixteen centuries, moving from a focus on “bios,” or the course of a lifetime, to focus on “autos,” the self writing and being written”” (qtd. in Smith and Watson 223). Adopting a gesture instigated by Susanna Egan and Gabriele Helms—the insertion of a forward slash between *auto* and *biography*—Rak “highlight[s] the instability of autobiography as a genre” and emphasizes “a continuum rather than an area of absolute difference between biography and autobiography” (16). The slash makes

the point that auto/biography is as much about other people as it is the author, and that biography reveals something about the author even as it tells the life story of a biographical subject.

Regardless of the fluidity of terms and boundaries, for better or worse, or for the sake of convenience, reference librarians employ discrete categories to classify the numerous subgenres of life writing. A search by subject heading in the catalogue of the University of Toronto Library, the largest Canadian collection, reveals over 95,000 entries for biographies; 19,000 for memoirs; 9,172 for diaries; 7,609 for personal narratives; 6,900 for autobiographies; and over 5,000 entries for life writing (identified as letters, correspondence, addresses, and papers).

Biographies have enjoyed the most popularity (if a comparison of the number of entries in library collections is any indication) followed by memoirs, diaries, and autobiographies, but this trend is changing. Rak maintains that in literary studies, biographical criticism—that is, the “kind of criticism which connected the events of an author’s life to an author’s work”—has lost its fashionable status, while auto/biography as a discourse about identity, has become an important institution in the study of “the nature of individuality and personal agency in the western world” (17).

In terms of preference among the forms chosen for scholarly examination, diaries seem to be the least popular despite their existence in greater number than published autobiographies. Elizabeth Podnieks wrote in 2002 that the diary “has for so long been undervalued in academe and categorized as a ‘sub’ or lesser form of autobiography ‘proper’ even within the growing field of life-writing studies”

(1). In 1973, Kagle made a similar observation, blaming this disregard on the belief that “diarists lack the artistic intent necessary for effective communication” (416). Yet, the popularity of diaries attests to their value for their authors if not for their readers for, as Thomas Mallon claims, “five million blank diaries [are] sold each year” in the United States alone (xvi). As I will show, the Sheppard journals were of value to their authors and to readers in spite of the fact that they possess little literary quality. While they are nearly devoid of self-reflection, they can be understood by extrapolating from the authors’ records of empirical data about weather conditions and livestock management, and references to social interactions. When read through a lens shaped by phenomenology, such information gives readers a sense of the environmental conditions in which the authors lived and the ideologies that shaped their lives.

Before I elaborate on my primary materials, I will explain my use of the term journal in reference to the Sheppard texts. There is an ongoing discussion about the differences between diaries and journals. In *The Assassin’s Cloak*, Alan Taylor seeks to determine their distinctions, and while he complains of the futility of dictionary definitions, he nonetheless cites *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, which states that a diary is ““a daily record of events, transactions, thoughts, etc., esp. ones involving the writer,”” and a journal is a ““personal record of events or matters of interest, written up every day or as events occur, usu. in more detail than in a diary”” (qtd. in A. Taylor ix). Mallon argues that the terms are “hopelessly muddled” and that even Dr. Johnson’s *Dictionary* defines them as “more or less equal”: a diary is ““an account of the transactions, accidents and

observations of every day; a journal” (qtd. in Mallon 1). Referring to a blurring of the terms in French, Mallon asserts that both diary and journal are “rooted in the idea of dailiness,” but that he prefers the word diary over the larger “mouthful,” *journal intime* (1). Similarly, Kathryn Carter states: “Diary is related to the word diurnal, from the Latin ‘dies’ for day, and journal stems from the French ‘jour’; both emphasize the dailiness which is one of the diary’s most salient features” (“Contingency” 18). Her decision to employ the term diary instead of journal has political reasons. In her study of diaries by Canadian pioneer women, she states that her use of diary signifies her desire to “investigate debate around” and to “privilege” the term because it has “fallen into disrepute through its association with women” (“Contingency” 17).

My choice to use *journal* to refer to the daily records of the Sheppards has no political agenda attached to it. In 1999, when I began my project to transcribe, annotate, and interpret the Sheppard journals, my place of research was the Museum of the Highwood in High River, Alberta, where the journals are housed, and I engaged in many conversations with the staff and the volunteers there, and with Dianne Vallée, then curator of the museum. I merely fell into the habit of referring to the journals as they did. Since Henry Sr., Henry Jr., and Bert have long been deceased, there is, perhaps, no way of discovering how they referred to their daily records or whether they spoke of them at all. Indeed, there was limited awareness of the existence of the Sheppard journals until I began my research. Moreover, there was little interest in them. Had Canadian scholarship not witnessed a shift in its estimation of the value of personal narratives in historicism

and literature, no doubt, my research on the Sheppard journals would not have begun. As Rak and others have stated, however, there is an increased interest in personal accounts, in documents that have “been left out of the historical record because they are by people without power and influence” (3).

Compared to the cattle barons, Pat Burns, A. E. Cross, George Lane, and Senator Matthew H. Cochrane who, in the days of the open range system, “controlled over 300,000 acres” of prairie land (Elofson, *Cowboys* 15-16, 9), Hopkins, Gardiner, Key, Thomson, and the Sheppards were people without power or great influence. With the exception of Thomson, who migrated with her family from Ontario, they were merely a few of the many English immigrants who were lured by rumours of the prairies as an agrarian utopia and settled in southern Alberta in the late nineteenth century to pursue this agricultural vision. They are the kind of people Elofson claims “historians have tended to overlook” in studies of the early history of western ranching “in part because records of them are scarce” (*Cowboys* xviii). Perhaps this has been the case in the past, but, as Rak and Koroscil indicate, the trend to overlook settlers’ life writing is changing as more of these documents find their way into the public realm. Among the reasons that farmers’ logs and settlers’ diaries have been ignored is because their authors’ archaic writing is difficult to decipher. Another is because their daily references to the weather render them less than interesting to read. Thus, they have been stored away and are read by no one.

The Sheppard diarists wrote about weather. Rain, wind, sun, fog, hail, snow, heat, and cold were experienced by all of them, and were tersely noted for

numerous reasons that are left up to the reader to discern. Extreme cold signaled the need for the Sheppards to increase their animals' feed and to chop through the ice in watering holes. On February 10, 1922, Henry Sr. recorded the temperature as "34° below," and noted that "Henry [Jr.] rode up to [section] 7 and found pipe frozen," referring to a *ram*, which is a pipe that siphons water from a creek into a trough to provide water for the livestock. Terry Crowley finds evidence of such data "most commonly in the mid-[eighteenth] century farm diaries which 'were not diaries in the conventional sense but narratives of daily business dealings, weather, sales, and contract'" (qtd. in K. Carter, "Contingency" 134). The use of account book diaries and farm logs, Kathryn Carter states, was popular and "was even endorsed by the *Canadian Farmer*" in 1869 (134). "Account-book diaries tap into a form of diary writing with rural roots and a very old, secular, tradition that had a time-honoured attractiveness," she argues, much like ships' log books and commonplace books (137).

The Sheppard journals resemble those anthologized in *The Small Details of Life: Twenty Diaries by Women in Canada, 1830-1996*, which are authored mostly by people who compiled miscellaneous details of their daily activities in each entry, prioritizing none. Sub-literary farm logs do not facilitate easy or pleasurable reading. Admittedly, diaries are made more accessible when introduced and contextualized by scholars like Mallon, who provides excerpts from over one hundred diaries including those kept by celebrated writers such as Samuel Pepys, Edmund Gosse, the Brothers Goncourt, Byron, Mary Shelley, Virginia Woolf, and many others. Some are interesting because they were written by interesting people

and some are pleasurable to read because of the quality of their prose. Regardless of their value, Mallon makes the excerpts entertaining, partly, because he skilfully embeds fragments of them within amusing and insightful comments about the authors or about life in general. As a compiler and editor of diaries, he displays certain tendencies that are not entirely agreeable, however; Mallon has a habit of using the diaries as a means to offer his own observations on life. Thus, Mary McCarthy describes *A Book of One's Own* as “an anthology of diaries told mainly in the anthologist's own words” (dustcover). As a reader, one would prefer that an editor surrender the stage, instead, to the diarists.

An anthology in which the diarists speak for themselves is *The Assassin's Cloak*, a collection of daily entries from one hundred and seventy-two diaries that the editors, Irene Taylor and Alan Taylor, believe are of the highest historical value and highest literary quality existent within the English canon. “All human life is here,” they claim, but “not every diarist, [for some have been] excluded because they are dull” and others, “because their diaries work as complete entities whose potency is diminished when quoted selectively” (xviii). With an arsenal of exceptionally literate and highly quotable materials, the editors could have launched into their own philosophical musings, but instead, other than a short introduction by Alan Taylor, they make no attempt to interpret the contents. They present the diary excerpts (faithfully, one presumes, for there are few bracketed words indicating additions) in chronological order in month-long blocks, each day represented by entries written by several of the featured diarists, and each block spanning years, decades, and even centuries.

The diary selections are compelling, because they have been written by novelists and poets; artists, dancers, and musicians; statesmen and actors; victims of war and perpetrators of war crimes; philosophers, comedians, and clergymen, all of whom have had extraordinary life experiences, and are capable of writing about those experiences with intelligence and grace. Among the diarists, we find again, the “first real diarist,” Samuel Pepys, who, Alan Taylor asserts, “may not have patented the form but was certainly instrumental in its development” (x). In addition, there are entries by Sylvia Plath, Che Guevara, Noël Coward, Andy Warhol, and many more famous people. The entries also show evidence of diverse degrees of significance the diarists had on the world stage. To grasp their impact, one would have to possess knowledge of history from the seventeenth to the late twentieth century; thus, the editors provide brief biographies to facilitate the reader’s awareness of the social milieu in which the diaries were written. An important feature of the collection is the beauty of the prose.

Two exemplary entries in terms of their literary brilliance are vignettes composed by Anaïs Nin and Elizabeth Smart. Like settlers who kept accounts of their pioneer experiences on the Canadian prairies, Nin and Smart have written about the weather, but unlike settler diarists, they give purpose to the climatic descriptions; that is, the weather provides verisimilitude or takes on the power of pathetic fallacy as the writers transform it from empirical reality into connotations of their emotions. Nin writes in an entry dated March 1, 1925, about an outing on a rainy afternoon along the Bois River in Paris, recalling that she and her husband Hugh “rented a boat, and Hugh rowed us to a little island, where we walked up a

gravel hill to a chalet and sat on the porch before a white-top table and ordered chocolate and cakes. Behind us were a pair of lovers discreetly kissing. [...]. We dreamed together on that quiet and soft afternoon, sipping chocolate and nibbling cakes” (qtd. in Taylor and Taylor 124). For Nin, the afternoon’s excursion with her husband is a romantic time during which the presence of other lovers serves to heighten her passion. Nin uses weather imagery to convey a sense of being nested or sheltered both literally, by umbrellas and the chalet, and metaphorically, within the security and comfort of her relationship with her husband.

Similar eloquence is found in Smart’s diary, in an entry dated March 7, 1933, in which she recalls the ambience of a spring walk “along the Serpentine [...]. There was a breezy wind enough to blow your hair and make you feel a little like the mascots on motor cars – so I took my loose, loose hat off before the wind did. [...]. And just when I thought I was alone I saw two more lovers on my left who thought they were alone. [...] I had to walk all across that long bare path trying to think of other directions to look in besides theirs” (qtd. in Taylor and Taylor 132). For Smart, the outing is a solo venture; she is alone and lonely, and her encounter with lovers accentuates her emotional isolation. She uses the weather to convey transience in her description of the spring breeze and her walking, her alienation from the lovers as she encounters them, and her discontent in a sense of nebulous longing.

The sentences in literary diaries like Nin’s and Smart’s are often whole and are composed of well-chosen words to recreate scenes and convey certain impressions about their authors. The memoirists in my study also wrote in

complete sentences as they aspired to increase the literariness of their prose. For example, Key recalls a trip she made with her father one winter's day, writing: "The fresh white snow gleamed coldly under the ink black sky" (101). Thomson gives purpose to her description of the weather. "As winter set in in earnest, we had plenty of time on our hands," she recalls with fond remembrance, so she and her siblings headed off to a frozen slough "surrounded by sloping banks which made it good for sleigh-riding as well as skating" (77). She mentions the winter sports and activities in which she and her family participated to present her years on the prairies as golden and to counter narratives of settlement that portray the prairies as a hostile environment. One of these is *Gully Farm* by Mary Hiemstra (née Pinder), whose family members were among the immigrants that comprised the ill-prepared Barr colony. Recalling her settlement experiences as a traumatic ordeal, Hiemstra depicts the cold as a malicious power that inflicts emotional and physical harm on her and her family. Thus, with ominous foreboding, she writes: "It was during this first savage onslaught of winter that the coyotes began to howl" (211). To her the prairie was inhospitable. Her mother tells her that it is "'fit for nobody but the Indians, and it's hardly fit for them, either, but they seem to like it'" (231). Her memoir, time and again, emphasizes her fear of freezing in order to set up and celebrate her family's eventual triumph over adversity.

The differences between settler narratives are marked by the portrayal of prairie life that each author, for various reasons, has experienced. While Key, Thomson, and Hopkins convey optimism in the achievement of their agrarian utopia, Hiemstra reveals pessimism and depicts the prairies as a hostile

environment. Her life unfolds in a dystopia, not on a frontier, which is the realm of strong and courageous individuals proving themselves by facing adversity.

Hiemstra's is a mournful tale full of events that bring out her martyrdom as she blames her parents for subjecting her to discomfort brought about by deprivation.⁹

Hiemstra claims that her parents were so ill-prepared that they ended up subsisting on scarce rations of flour, oatmeal, and tea, and the only fresh meat they had their first winter was provided by a pair of bachelors who, lonely for company, hosted a Christmas feast for their neighbours in their crowded tar paper shack. To heighten the emotion in various scenes, Hiemstra adopts the voice of a young child, who experiences the trauma of abandonment as her mother, paralyzed with fear, fails to provide security, warmth, food, and affection. Key's memoir is also frequently related through the use of a child narrator; however, the memoirs are strikingly different in their authors' descriptions of their economic situations, for Hiemstra stresses that she was a deprived child, while Key makes it clear that she was the privileged child of a wealthy English family.

With her family kept warm by huge coal and wood stoves and the horses and cows "safely housed in the stable and cowshed," Key had no fear of winter and describes her first snowfall on the prairie in fanciful terms, writing: "Sky and land disappeared, and we seemed to be suspended in a fantasy world of whirling

⁹ That is not to say that Hiemstra exaggerates her claims, for the project initiated by George Exton Lloyd and Rev. Isaac M. Barr to bring "twenty-five hundred emigrants" from England to Saskatchewan was, in Rasporich's words, "either a naïve rendering or a calculating exploitation of English middle-class perceptions of prairie life" as a Promised Land (135). "Barr's enterprise," Rasporich notes, was an "understandable failure" for he promoted a "pastoral vision of happy farm life," but failed to prepare emigrants by making them aware of the challenges they would face (136).

white” (58). Likewise, all the primary subjects in my study were well accommodated with sufficient food, fuel, warm clothing, and structurally superior houses; thus, they discuss weather as an aspect of the environment to which they respond often with relish for the variety of activities it brings to their daily lives. Hopkins refers to the snow in terms of the ease of travel. In a chapter titled “January 4, 1910,” she writes, “The snow is very deep now and the sleighing good” (38). The cold weather is time for amusement, Hopkins remarks, especially at Christmas, and after “a jolly time” skating on the frozen creek, she and her party of friends and family “returned home ravenous to eat huge quantities of turkey, pudding, mince pies and trifle” left over from dinner (36). She offers a positive view of winter.

Bert Sheppard writes in *Spitzee Days* that when the winter was snowy, “everyone got out their sleighs and cutters, and the merry ringing of sleigh bells could be heard from afar on the frosty air” (146). “It was a pretty sight, to see a swift moving team and cutter go racing by,” he recalls, “with the bells jingling, and the occupants warmly clad in their fur coats and hats, with a buffalo robe tucked around them.” The pictures Bert, Key, and Hopkins present of winter weather are nostalgic remembrances of their experiences that contribute to the building of utopian visions. At times, however, Bert personifies the environment to emphasize the hardships encountered in the early days of ranching, as he does when he writes that the “terrible winter of 1906 and 1907 [...] joined hands with the homesteaders and sod busters, to break the back of the open range beef cattle industry” (*Spitzee*

45). Bert's depictions of the ease or difficulty settlers had in dealing with weather change according to the impression he creates in his various scenes.

Admittedly, the writers in my study were amateurs and, in their attempts to craft dramatic and aesthetically pleasing images, they fall short of Nin and Smart, who were professionals and made names for themselves within the social milieu in which they lived and in literary history. The diary entries by Nin and Smart are well crafted to reflect their highly developed writing skills. In the previously quoted excerpts, both describe outings by rivers on spring days in March, moments that are fleeting and leave only the residue of emotion in their place. Nin's reference to "that quiet and soft afternoon" and Smart's use of past tense imply reminiscence. For diarists (and memoirists) who reflect on their thoughts and feelings about events as Nin and Smart do, it is plausible to consider that what they are doing is creating mnemonic prompts to assist their remembrance of the fine details and the emotions that were felt. It is equally plausible and, perhaps, more accurate to suggest that as they reflect upon their memories of their outings, the act of remembrance stimulates new emotional reactions and that it is these new emotions that colour their writing. Annie Dillard is of the opinion that in composing exquisitely crafted images, writers create something somewhat different from the moments that are their models, that is, in the act of composing verbal descriptions of memories, writers create works that reconfigure the memories themselves. Drawing from her own experiences, she claims that when she writes about the "fragmentary patches of color and feeling" of her experiences, she erases her memory of them: they "are gone; they've been replaced by the

work” (243). Dillard’s insight provokes further inquiry into the process pioneer memoirists enact in their imaginary reconstructions of settlement history when they reminisce about their experiences and, depending on the kind of story they endeavour to write, depict these events as good times or hardships. They do so by assigning meaning to events that initially had none. Generally, that meaning supports their sense of entitlement, although, at times, it implies progress in the quality of their rustic lifestyles.

Emphasizing the point that life is constituted by a dynamic unfolding of events in passing instants, Barrett Mandel proclaims that “in life there is no time for ever knowing the meaning of what is happening for oneself” and while memories “are indispensable for autobiographies,” he continues, “they are not the thing itself” (59, 61). Settlers can offer insight into their life experiences, yet, like all authors, they can evoke only an imagined sensation; they cannot re-enact the original sensations to which their writing refers regardless of the brilliance of their prose. Sensations and perceptions are fleeting phenomena, brief in duration and singular. Language can never recreate them except as mnemonics, because, according to philosopher and cognitive scientist Humberto Maturana, “a description in language and the generative phenomena to be described take place in ‘independent and nonintersecting phenomenal domains’” (qtd. in Wolfe xxv). Wolfe argues that the “language (or meaning, more strictly speaking) that describes [experience or phenomena] is of a different phenomenal order from that which is described. Paradoxically, that language is fundamental to our embodied

enactions, our bringing forth a world, as humans. Yet it is dead. Rather, as Derrida puts it quite precisely, it exceeds and encompasses the life/death relation” (xxv).

These enigmatic statements lend themselves to broadening possible interpretations of autobiographical writing, which, in its own nature, exceeds the limits of death as the lives of writers are captured in language or in “traces,” which Derrida describes as “the intimate relation of the living present to its outside, the opening to exteriority in general” (qtd. in Wolfe 12). Ajay Heble explains the term by referring to its French origin, *la trace*, a word that, “rendered into English, [becomes] track, mark, footprint, trail, or clue,” and as such, “serves as a physical reminder of something which is no longer there: as a trace it mediates between presence and absence, between that which remains and that which is no longer present” (647). Importantly, Heble indicates that “Derrida shows no nostalgia for a lost presence and would deny that anything is ever fully present in language” (647).

The brief entries in the Sheppard journals might be understood as a *trace*, a concept closely related to the notion of *presence*, or, more precisely, it is

the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself. The trace has, properly speaking, no place, for effacement belongs to the very structure of the trace. Effacement must always be able to overtake the trace; otherwise it would not be a trace but an indestructible and monumental substance. In addition, and from the start, effacement constitutes it as a trace—effacement establishes the trace in a change of place and makes it disappear in its appearing, makes it issue forth from itself in its very position. (Derrida 137-38)

Wolfe, quoting Derrida, refers to the notion of the trace in conjunction with an event “as the double movement of protention and retention” (in Wolfe 7). “An event worthy of the name ought not to give in or be reduced to repetition,’ but

rather,” Derrida states, an event “‘ought above all to *happen* to someone, some living being who is thus *affected* by it’” (qtd. in Wolfe 9; original emphasis). Wolfe draws from Derrida’s notions of *differance*, *écriture*, and iterability to interrogate the “concept of communication in a variety of contexts” and to emphasize that “writing can ‘no longer be comprehensible in terms of communication, at least in the limited sense of a transmission of meaning’” (qtd. in Wolfe 11). Derrida, in Wolfe’s estimation, is an “exemplary posthumanist” theorist, as is sociologist Niklas Luhmann, because “both refuse to locate meaning in the realms of either the human or, for that matter, the biological” (xxvi). I locate, amid the dense and reader resistant barrage of theories in Wolfe’s introduction and in his first chapter, a means of comprehending the Sheppard journals by forestalling any assumption that they are designed to communicate meaning in the common sense of the word. Rather, I imagine their simple and terse words, devoid of their authors’ self-reflections (which might suggest meaning), as representations of events recorded chronologically.

Wolfe emphasizes the notion of events occurring in a brief moment and without meaning by looking to the work of Luhmann, not only to help clarify a “central point from systems theory—the separation of psychic and social systems” but also to “clarify how the thinking of [an] event may be, in Derrida’s words, withdrawn from ‘an ontology or metaphysics of presence’” (qtd. in Wolfe 10). Wolfe weighs the paradox of events, which, on the one hand, “constitute the fundamental elements of psychic and social systems in Luhmann’s scheme” as offered in his systems theory, but on the other hand, “occur only once and only in

the briefest period necessary for their appearance (the ‘specious present’) [...] and cannot be repeated” (10). This unfolding of presence as singular events is represented in the Sheppard entries as occurring only once and only in the briefest moment, that is, they are represented as passing moments in which the authors physically interacted with the existing environment.

Drawing from the ordinary language philosophy or linguistic analysis of Ludwig Wittgenstein to make similar assertions, Bennett and Hacker critique the terms neuroscientists employ to “ascribe psychological attributes to the mind,” contending that psychological predicates “apply essentially to the whole living animal, not to its parts” (“Mereological” 68, 72). They argue that attributing human capacities to a part of, but not the whole human being is *a mereological fallacy* (73).¹⁰ Taking aim at the same fallacy, David Abram argues that the “common notion of the experiencing self, or mind, as an immaterial phantom ultimately independent of the body can only be a mirage” (45). Abram, paying homage to the source of his conceptualizations, asserts that “Merleau-Ponty invites us to recognize, at the heart of even our most abstract cogitations, the sensuous and sentient life of the body itself” (45). Buell identifies Maurice Merleau-Ponty as a

¹⁰ In *How Our Lives Become Stories*, Eakin defends his use of the term “self when dealing with the representation of subjectivity in autobiography” (10). At the same time, he moves toward notions of embodiment by employing neurological theories. In his discussion, he praises Gerald M. Edelman for enacting “what is surely the most ambitious attempt to date to construct a biological theory of mind” (12). Edelman reflects on “‘perceptual phenomena as the perhaps most simple organizing, early function of the higher brain,’ [and] observes, ‘Your brain constructs.... It doesn’t mirror.... Even before language, your brain constructs and makes perceptual slices of the world’” (qtd. in Eakin, *How Our* 15-16). Bennett and Hacker complain that Edelman’s terms create nonsense. They reason that we “understand what it is for people to reason inductively, to estimate probabilities, to present arguments, to classify and categorize things they encounter in their experience. [...] But do we know what it is like for a brain to see or hear, for a brain to have experiences, to know or believe something?” (“Mereological” 70).

French phenomenologist “whose work is focused more on the body emplaced than on the mind giving itself over to dwelling,” and who has been especially influential within the realm of ecocentric criticism (101). Concepts of lived experience as corporeal facilitate comprehension of the Sheppard journals, in which the authors represent their physical presence in the world.

Abram, Bennett and Hacker, and Gumbrecht share the view that experiences are what happen to *people*. Wolfe contends that subjects are constituted by “writing and communication” (13). While one might argue that the Sheppards are the subjects of their diaries, they offer little in the way of self-reflection. In contrast, Hopkins, Key, Thomson, and Bert Sheppard, seeking to communicate information about their experiences, create subjects that represent themselves and place them in the centre of their life narratives. To imagine life experiences not as narratives, but as phenomena that exceed linguistic description requires new modes of thought. Heidegger introduces ways of thinking about common notions of reality by differentiating between what he calls *earth*, “that on which and in which man bases his dwelling,” and the *world*, which is “more fully in being than the tangible and perceptible realm in which we believe ourselves to be at home. World is never an object that stands before us and can be seen. World is the ever-nonobjective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into Being” (41, 43). Gumbrecht builds on Heidegger’s theories by adding “the concepts, *Erleben* or ‘lived experience,’” in the phenomenological tradition, “which presupposes that purely physical perception [...] will be followed by experience (*Erfahrung*) as the result

of acts of world interpretation” (100). Explicitly aligning his beliefs with Heidegger, he uses the word *presence* to refer “to a spatial relationship to the world and its objects” (xiii), espousing “a relation with the things in the world that oscillates between presence effects and meaning effects” (xv). The Sheppards appear to have recorded events as mnemonics to allow for later self-reflections.

J. Hillis Miller contends that as an investigative tool for the understanding of fiction, however, a phenomenological approach has its limitations. He writes that he prefers Husserl to Merleau-Ponty for being a “little harder-headed” (which means, perhaps, more rigorous in his investigation) and indicates that he has “no strong objections to phenomenology, and still greatly admire[s] Poulet as a great critic”; however, he continues, “I became suspicious of the way phenomenology was used by Poulet and others, including myself, to buttress the assumption that all the works of a given author are going to form an ‘organic whole’ because the creating consciousness remained the same” (Correspondence). “That now seems to me a dubious hypothesis,” he admits, and explains that he is now

more interested in looking at language in literary works without untestable presuppositions about ‘consciousness.’ How do I know what was going on in Robert Browning’s head when he wrote, “Mr. Sludge, ‘The Medium’”? But I do have the words on the page. They are hard evidence for the meaning that is generated when I read them. [...] In a way, I returned to my New Critical roots, minus the organic unity presupposition. (Correspondence)

It is perhaps for this very reason that biographical criticism in literary theory—that is, the “kind of criticism which connected the events of an author’s life to an author’s work”—has lost its fashionable status (Rak 17).

Regardless of these contradictions, a phenomenological approach to understand and interpret diaries that are constituted mostly by empirical data rather

than personal reflection has merit. To grasp the physicality of the Sheppards' lives and the material basis of their existence, I examine them employing Luhman's theories of social systems and Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela's notion of *autopoietic life-forms*,¹¹ a term Wolfe borrows to distinguish between subjects and living beings (including nonhumans), which "'bring forth a world' in what Maturana and Varela call their 'embodied enactions'" (13, xxiii). By conceiving of the Sheppard diarists as autopoietic life-forms in constant interaction with other autopoietic life-forms, one can begin to think of a host of these living beings on the prairies shaping each other within a shared environment. In other words, Wolfe states, the "environment, and with it, 'the body,' becomes unavoidably a virtual, multidimensional space produced and stabilized by the recursive enactions and structural couplings of autopoietic beings who share what Maturana and Varela call a 'consensual domain'" and in doing so, make the environment different, "indeed sometimes *radically* different, for different life-forms" (13, xxiii; original emphasis).

Settlers like the Sheppards, imagining the prairies as as a kind of Eden where they could establish lives of plenitude, prosperity, and gentility, radically transformed the prairies and changed the nature of that life form. Don Gayton, one of Canada's foremost authorities on grasses, asserts that "[b]etween plowing and

¹¹ In *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind*, Evan Thompson simplifies Varela's "definition of autopoiesis. For a system to be autopoietic, (i) the system must have a semipermeable boundary; (ii) the boundary must be produced by a network of reactions that takes place within the boundary; and (iii) the network of reactions must include reaction that regenerate the components of the system" (101). "In summary," Thompson states, "the form or pattern of the autopoietic organization is that of a peculiar circular interdependency between an interconnected web of self-regenerating processes and the self-production of a boundary, such that the whole system persists in continuous self-production as a spatially distinct individual" (101).

overgrazing, [the prairie] is perhaps the most extensively altered biome on the planet, and we know very little of its original ecology and function” (25). Settlers replaced the indigenous plants by introducing exotic or, as Gayton describes them, “alien” plants (108). Moreover, he argues, in much the same way that European agriculture has erased the original “North American prairie,” so, too, has “colonial society, with its overwhelming sense of cultural superiority, effectively denied the histories” of Indigenous people, “rendering them all but invisible” (24, 42).

Among those nations affected by Treaty 7, which, according to the Canadian government, took legal possession of the land, Dorothy First Rider and her co-writers identify as the Siksika, Tsuu T’ina, Nakoda-Stoney, the Piikani or Peigan, and the Kainai or Bloods (148-59). Importing their culture as ideologies, practices, and materials, settlers transformed the land from its indigenous state as open and unfenced into privately owned parcels clustered around hubs of agricultural communities.

Convinced of the nobility of the occupation of farming and encouraged by a government that sought the development of Anglo-Canadian culture across Canada, English immigrants endeavoured to “civilize” the prairies. Thomas reasons that they aspired to attain a way of life that was beyond their financial means in England; thus, they imagined the prairies as a landscape “characterizing the English countryside” (158), an image based on georgic traditions. To provide themselves with varied diet, in keeping with what they imaged to be a gracious style of living, the settlers in my study planted fruit and vegetable gardens; landscaped their prairie estates with flowers, shrubs, and trees; cultivated fields of

grain and hay; and fenced acreages into pens, paddocks, and pastures, where they could breed and raise horses, cattle, hogs, and poultry. In the following chapters, I elaborate on the various material components of Key's, Hopkins's, and Thomson's pioneer reminiscence, specifically, the authors' descriptions of their houses and the construction of barns, chicken coops, and various other outbuildings. The Sheppards also refer to such constructions in their journals.

A posthumanist stance invites a reader to rethink the relationships the authors had with the materials of their culture and the way these writers compose anecdotes about them. While the primary texts in my study afford the means for readers to glimpse the writers' lives, they do not recreate or *re-present* the experiences. What they offer is textual evidence to allow analysis of the language the authors use in the transmission of the meanings they construct.¹² Offering theories about perception and self-reflection, Luhmann proposes that ““meaning simultaneously enables consciousness to understand itself and continue to affect itself in communication, and enables communication to be referred back to the consciousness of the participants”” (qtd. in Wolfe 21). Language does not

“determine consciousness, [for] psychic processes are not linguistic processes, [...] nor is thought in any way ‘internal dialogue’ (as has been falsely maintained). It lacks an ‘internal addressee.’ There is no ‘second I,’ no ‘self’ in the conscious system, no ‘me’ vis-à-vis

¹² Cognizance of the fact that autobiographers create or assign meaning to their lives in the act of writing contradicts the beliefs of one of the most celebrated autobiographers, St. Augustine, whose religious faith prompted him to conceive of writing as a means to uncover hidden truths by plumbing the depths of his soul. Weintraub maintains that Augustine's “quest for understanding and meaning was securely grounded in a basic trust that life had been endowed with fundamental meaning and that man had been so created that his search for meaning could be crowned with success” (27). Implying his own kind of faith in metaphysics, Weintraub proclaims that in autobiographical writing, “when the soul *speaks*, it cannot simply be the *soul* that speaks” (xiii, original emphasis).

an ‘I,’ no additional authority that examines all linguistically formed thoughts to see whether it will accept or reject them and whose decision consciousness seeks to anticipate.” (Luhmann qtd. in Wolfe 21)

Composing her memoir in the form of an epistolary, Hopkins engages in a “dialogue” with a fictional interlocutor in a way that mimics what is often imagined as an “internal monologue” or “dialogue” with the “self” during moments of self-reflection. In reality, Luhmann asserts, the consciousness does not do this, for there is no interlocutor, fictitious or otherwise.¹³ While consciousness is involved in generating and managing the fluctuating compilation of ideas and fleeting sensations that comprise a person’s awareness of his or her experiences, it is through a literary rather than a neurological process, a process of editing to select, reject, and accept information about those experiences, that writers determine what to include in their narratives.

The Sheppards’ selectivity of aspects and details of their environment appears to have been randomly determined by their immediate concerns, while Bert, especially in his memoirs, selected and included information to present himself as a rugged individual rising to the challenges of building successful cattle ranches from the remnants left by their former owners. In the process of choosing which events to narrate from the infinite selection of possible moments, authors create selective portraits of themselves engaged in experiences. Whether the act of narration fictionalizes these experiences or not is a point of debate among autobiographical theorists. Lejeune suggests that intention is what matters. He

writes: “As opposed to all forms of fiction, biography and autobiography are *referential* texts: exactly like scientific or historical discourse, they claim to provide information about a ‘reality’ exterior to the text, and so to submit to a test of *verification*” (22; original emphasis). Moreover, autobiography is a genre, Lejeune asserts, that is distinguished by an implicit promise given by the author to the reader that the information written is intended to be truthful, an autobiographical “pact,” which affirms the “(‘identicalness’) of the *name* (author-narrator-protagonist)” (13-14; original emphasis).

Contesting the validity of such a pact, Paul de Man reveals its logical flaws. He states that “Lejeune uses ‘proper name’ and ‘signature’ interchangeably” to establish this contract, assuming that “the name on the title page [...is] the signature that gives the contract legal, though by no means epistemological, authority” (922). De Man contends that in such an agreement, when the author’s name is presumed to be the same as the subject of the text, a subject who is “capable of self-knowledge and understanding,” the reader must be the judge, “the policing power in charge of verifying the *authenticity* of the signature and the consistency of the signer’s behavior, the extent to which he respects or fails to honor the contractual agreement he has signed” (923; original emphasis). I suggest that pioneers fail to honour the autobiographical pact not only when they give literary dimensions to their texts, but when they assign meaning to events that initially had none. This is something we all do regularly even in our daily lives.

¹³ An alternative technique is found in Katherine Mansfield’s short story “Bliss,” in which the protagonist Bertha Young engages in an internal monologue as she puzzles over her emotional reactions to post-Victorian social conventions.

Eakin discusses the intrinsic human desire to explain our experiences through narration in *Fictions in Autobiography*. Avrom Fleishman, he observes, “entertains the possibility ‘that life—indeed, the idea of a life—is already structured as a narrative’” (qtd. in Eakin, *Fictions* 131). Likewise, Barbara Hardy asserts that “[i]n order to really live, we make up stories about ourselves” (qtd. in Eakin, *Fictions* 131).

When people tell stories about their lives from a retrospective distance of many decades, however, as many settlers have done, they tend to engage in the act of *misremembering*. “Memory is imperfect,” psychologist Elizabeth Loftus states, since “memory traces can actually undergo distortion. With the passage of time, with proper motivation, with the introduction of special kinds of interfering facts, the memory traces seem sometimes to change” and transform into “new” memories (37, 40). These new memories, she continues, are shaped by our “biases, expectations, and past knowledge,” and are subject to “‘constructive’ errors”; thus, as we tell stories about ourselves, we create “‘false facts’ that might—or might not—have been true” (41, 40). We are all subject to the same lapses of memory and, whether or not we are conscious of doing so, we “fill in the gaps” with “chains of events that are logically acceptable” (41).

Pioneer memoirists, being conscious of the fallibility of their memories, qualify the accuracy of their life narratives with disclaimers. Thomson writes, “I have written down all that I can recall of [settlement] times, so that children and grown-ups too of future generations may know what it was like to live on a homestead in Southern Alberta at the beginning of the twentieth century” (5). Key,

too, indicates in her preface that the process of writing her memoir is an act of remembering as her “mind slips back seventy years or so to the still, autumn days at Radfords, our prairie home” (n.p.). “My memories of the [...] eight years that our family spent on the Strathmore farm are like a jumbled drawerful of old photos,” she explains; “I pick them out at random, now from the difficult but exciting early years, now from a later period, winter or summer, spring or fall; now a gay one, then one touched with sadness” (33). Key admits that, sometimes, she is even relating her memories of earlier memories that had been elicited during “the long evenings in the warm, lamplit kitchen,” when her mother had read to her and her sisters, and “memories of my happy childhood in England would drift through my mind” (n.p.). These “memories of memories” are included, too, in her memoir, having been made golden by time’s passing. They are reshaped yet again when Key turns them into stories by filtering them through the lens of her adult imagination, adopting the persona of a child (Lejeune 53). It is possible, however, that while readers may doubt the authenticity of her details, Key believed her memories to be true and accurate accounts of her experiences.

Lejeune and Eakin take memory’s fallibility into account in their debates on authenticity. Eakin maintains that “autobiographical truth is not a fixed but an evolving content in an intricate process of self discovery and self-creation” (3), while Lejeune claims that “memory is selective [...] memory has gaps, indifferences, amnesias; and in the opposite direction, obsessions” (213). Nonetheless, he states, if autobiographers “make mistakes, distort, and so on, in relation to what we can assume to be reality, this distortion is their very truth!”

(134). Eakin discusses the changes to a writer's memory caused by the verbal description of experiences. He writes that one of the stories Mary McCarthy wrote about her childhood "is a case in point" (*Fictions* 15). In her memoir, she admits that she can no longer remember whether a certain event actually happened, or whether her memory has been irrevocably modified by her creation of a fictionalized version of it (15). Thus, she has created two versions of an event that do not match (16).

Loftus contends that the occurrence is common to all of us, whether we write down our experiences or create oral narratives about them. "Few people would deny the existence of the very prevalent experience that we call 'forgetting', [...which is] the common occurrence of having facts, events, and details in our memory become less available as time passes," she states (41). "The process of using inferences and probable facts to fill in the gaps of our memories has been called 'refabrication,'" she continues, "and it probably occurs in nearly all of our everyday perceptions" as we supply information in "bits and pieces, largely unconsciously, to round out fairly incomplete knowledge" (40). While McCarthy worries about "a lapse from fidelity to autobiographical truth into the irresponsible manipulations of fiction," Eakin argues that what we really "have here is a short-story writer confessing her autobiographical sources" (15). Eakin reasons that "what we call fact and fiction [are] rather slippery variables in an intricate process of self-discovery" (17). Thus, he asserts, "we must discard any notion of the juxtaposition of story and commentary as representing a simple opposition between fiction and fact, since fiction can have for the author [...] the status of

remembered fact” (17). These claims might well apply to the memoirists in my study.

When writing about their experiences, Thomson, Key, Hopkins, and Bert Sheppard reshape them to create coherent, compelling, and, often, pleasing narratives. Bert writes these narratives in the trope of frontier history, which emphasizes the manly robustness of early settlers. In contrast, Key, Thomson, and Hopkins, writing in the georgic literary style, shape their narratives into utopian visions of plenitude and grace. In a “letter” dated May 29, 1910, Hopkins tells Gill that now that the snow had gone and “spring had come,” the grass had turned green, the trees had grown new foliage, and flowers had begun to bloom on the prairie (48). Whether pioneer memoirists write selectively about what they want to remember or whether they have actually forgotten certain details and events is a matter of speculation. This is not to say that the Sheppards, when writing their journal entries at the end of each day, were exempt from experiencing the same kinds of memory lapses as memoirists. There is the suggestion of momentary forgetfulness when one word has been replaced with another. For example, on December 16, 1920, Henry Sr. wrote: “Henry hauled [~~‘hay’~~ crossed out] Greenfeed for stable.” Yet, the time intervening between their experiences and when they wrote about them was hours instead of decades, which increased the chance of accuracy. Moreover, they seemed to aspire toward attaining accuracy rather than creating impressions for readers of how they wished their lives had been. Since the Sheppards used their journals as farm logs, they would have been motivated by the same reasons as accountants to create accurate records of their

commercial transactions. In addition, they would have been bound by the moral code of their Anglican faith to represent their daily lives to the best of their knowledge. One might argue that they have, at times, portrayed themselves to their best advantage as Henry Sr. does on March 19, 1909, when he recorded the events of a meeting to nominate a Liberal candidate, and wrote: “Roberts meeting, house quite full. I took the chair!!” Finally, since the journals served as almanacs, there would have been no logical reason for the authors to misrepresent the weather and undermine their ability to draw from their accounts to make wise decisions that pertained to the future success of their agricultural enterprises.

The memoirists in my study were well aware that they were writing for publication and voice, at times, their self-consciousness of the writing process. In her preface, Key indicates where she sits while she writes, explaining that “from my window I can see far out over the Straits of Juan de Fuca” (n.p.). Hopkins mentions in closing a letter dated September 21, 1909, that she has “been writing this letter the whole of the afternoon and my hand is almost paralyzed with holding the pen all that time” (9). Gardiner makes similar remarks about writing and posting letters explaining in the last entry to a letter, dated September 2, 1984, that his cohort, “Larkin is going down to [Fort] Macleod today and will post this letter for me” (18). Rarely do Henry Sr. and Henry Jr. reflect on the act of keeping journals. In one exceptional entry dated January 11, 1937, Henry Jr. wrote, “Warm. West Wind. Snow drifting [...] went to town P.M to pay bills & buy this diary.”

Alternatively, Bert Sheppard was quite conscious, at times, that he was a writer. In a journal entry dated January 5, 1939, he wrote that in the “Evening [he] started typewriter lessons.” Eight years later, on January 28, 1947, he noted that he spent the “morning typing out history” of the TL Ranch, and on February 23, he “worked at book cover,” meaning that he constructed the wooden shingle-like covers for the manuscript.



Figure 3: TL Ranch, 1887 Cover
(Photograph by Author.)

While Bert demonstrated an earlier interest in writing by having kept a journal for several years, the completion of the TL Ranch manuscript seems to have incited a serious desire in him to publish his historical vignettes. One of the reasons I include both published and unpublished writing in my study is to explore Bert’s tendency to take sentences from his journals and revise them to include in his memoirs, such as the TL Ranch history. In turn, he revised passages from the

TL Ranch history to provide realistic details to introduce biographical information on Tom Lynch in *Just About Nothing*. I discuss Bert's revisions in chapter four to reveal the manner in which he transformed his journal entries into myths of settlement that portray heroic cowboys, lumberjacks, and firefighters facing the challenges of a rugged frontier.

In addition, as Kathryn Carter did in her dissertation, I include both published and unpublished writing to discuss theories pertaining to issues of privacy and publicity. Carter's insights are useful to my analysis of the Sheppard journals as I examine the subtleties of their language to speculate on their intended readership. Arguing that "the questioning of privacy and an intersubjective model of reading are related," Carter emphasizes that this model requires scholars to consider their reception as well as their interpretation of diaries as part of the reading process ("Contingency" 14). She maintains that "diaries generally, are written in a dialogic mode," which means that they "are always written to someone else whether that be God, a future self, a close friend, or an imagined friend" (20). Quoting Barbara Powell, she argues that "published writing is transactional and 'intended to communicate a message to a reader,' [whereas] diary writing has more in common with 'interactional conversations ... [which depend] on pre-existing shared information, on non-verbal cues, on nuances of meaning'" (21). Such is the case with the Sheppard diaries; they were, it seems, meant to be read by somebody, probably other family members, for the empirical data contained in them depended on "pre-existing shared information" for transmission. Their messages would be most relevant to a reader with a vested interest in the family's ranching enterprise.

The information conveyed in the journals is not easily detected by readers without knowledge of animal husbandry, however, for the Sheppards wrote, often, in a vernacular familiar to ranchers but perhaps puzzling for the uninformed. They used uncommon terms like a “jag” of hay, which is a half full wagon, and “greenfeed,” which is oats or barley that is cut before the grain has ripened and is cured and stoked or bound for storage (Zimmerman, Conversation). There is also much information about the family’s social interactions, which reveals their privileged positions in High River and Longview. Revealing the mundanity of their daily lives, the journals frequently refer to the people who came to buy potatoes or dairy products, or to borrow the team of heavy horses. Henry Jr. wrote on May 22, 1938, that “The Runcimans came about 4 with Derek [...] Mrs Cousins borrowed team to plow her garden.” Often, visitors are identified by first name only. On January 21, 1937, Henry Jr. wrote: “Sam Come for team to haul Coal here to dinner & tea Eve went to Mrs Tylers for Bible Class. [?] Cooper brought Berts Beef.” For readers who know nothing about the families who lived in these ranching communities in the early twentieth century, the names probably mean very little. Indeed, it took me many years of studying the journals before I realized that the man identified in the above entry as “Sam” was Jonas Sam Rider, the Nakoda cowboy that Bert praises for his expertise as a roper.

The Sheppard journals resemble the family record books described by Lejeune as “a collective work (passed on from father to son) in the form of a journal, centered on heritage and the business of the family” (168), for they seem to have functioned as a record of the Sheppards’ cultural history and as account

books recording the business transactions of farming. Like the account book diary, Lejeune continues, “the family record book is always a manuscript. [...] At the time of the family record book, the single copy of the manuscript allows the family history to be submitted to later generations; it was a process of conservation (in time) rather than distribution (in space)” (169). Henry Sr.’s account book diaries were passed on to his son, Bert. In contrast to the family book which, Lejeune asserts, typically centres on the heritage and business of the family, biographies are “career” stories that present the life of a subject as “a conquest” (168). Settler memoirs that emphasize the conquest of a frontier environment fall within the latter category. Bert’s memoirs, his history of the TL Ranch, and even his journals at times, portray his life as a conquest, especially when he writes in the trope of the frontier.

For example, in the foreword to his TL Ranch history, Bert writes: those “of you that are interested enough to read on, will find a fairly reliable and accurate account of the rough and winding trail this old ranch seems to have followed down the years. In fact a trail as rough and varied as the country in which it lies” (n.p.). While he may have written the TL Ranch history for future generations, he did not anticipate these readers to be members of his family. Nor did he anticipate his journals to be passed on to his progeny for, unlike his father and brother, he had no children to whom he could leave them; rather, he seems to have written his life narrative as evidence of the challenges he faced as a cattle rancher and his eventual success. His summaries of each month in his journals imply a sense of progress. At the end of April, 1938, Bert wrote: “Stopped feeding cattle in [section] 7 on the 23.

Grass coming well. On the whole April was a fine month, 63 living calves by the end of the month. Rumpus traded old car on new Chevrolet. 150 chickens arrived on the 27. Shed roofed with lumber.” Likewise, in his history of the TL Ranch, he observed: “By fall [of 1939] all the new boundry fences had been built and several miles of old linefence been rebuilt. Fifteen miles in all.” Perhaps Bert did imagine future readers of his journal who are not family members, for he sometimes wrote in full sentences and, at times, he offered logical assumptions to convey meaning. For example, Bert indicated that his partner, Rumpus, was endeavouring to build up a dairy business. In a summary for March, 1938, he wrote, “Rumpus Peterson still increasing in his milk sales.” For Bert to refer to Rumpus using both first and last names suggests that he may have anticipated having his journal read by someone who might not have known Peterson, someone outside his social circle. This practice is inconsistent, however. Basing his opinion on the growth of sales, Bert concluded in a summary for June that “Rumpus [was] holding his own with the dairy in spite of strong competition.”

Gardiner’s journal letters were obviously meant to be read by family members for they contain messages that are dependent for their meaning on previously shared information. In a letter dated December 6, 1894, Gardiner responded to what seems to have been a request from his parents to return home to England, when he wrote, “I have considered the matter of a farm in England and I think it would be very foolish of me to go home now as things are at present. You see, with £1,000 I should only be able to take a very small farm and I should not be able to better myself” (25). Likewise, Gardiner began a letter to his father, dated

December 12, 1895, by telling him that he had “received the gun all right and like it very much. I have not fired it yet, not having been to town to get cartridges” (54). Such acknowledgement must refer back to Gardiner having asked for a gun in a previous letter, but there is no explicit evidence of the request, at least not among the letters in the Glenbow collection.

Aware that future readers would not have all the background knowledge to make sense of her “letters,” Hopkins provides that information at the start of her memoir. That is, before writing about her life in Alberta, she summarizes the history of her first acquaintance with Billie, how they had met years before, adding, “but you know all about that,” a rhetorical strategy to suggest she is addressing Gill, her fictitious interlocutor, and not her readers (1). In her role as editor, Jameson gathered information from “friends of Mrs. Hopkins” about Hopkins’s teenage years in England and in Montreal, where she and her family lived between 1900 and 1903, when her father, “the Rev. Mr. Maggs accepted the position of principal of the Wesleyan Theological College at McGill University” (Introduction xvii, viii). Such material provides readers with necessary background to further their grasp of Hopkins’s meaning as she portrays herself as a woman with elevated social connections. In contrast, the meaning of the Sheppard journals is left to the reader to discern. Such is the case on July 1, 1938, when Bert wrote: “Cool day. worked at mower, Dave finished chicken-house. Rained in the evening.” Entries like this are puzzling, because they provide no information that might suggest their significance. Devoid of literary meaning, they impart an

existential quality and invite readers to imagine the authors as human beings engaged in mundane physical activities with a literal not symbolic purpose.

Sub-literary forms like farm logs and account book diaries can, however, be read in the same way one reads a reader resistant poem—by skimming over incomprehensible phrases and words while remaining sensitive to the suggestion of themes that reveal themselves as patterns in the text. One must read several volumes, however, before a diarist’s self-identity emerges—before one can grasp a sense of his or her goals, beliefs, occupations and interests, food preferences, and other aspects of his or her personality. Kathryn Carter asserts that the meaning found in an account book diary “can only be adduced by standing back from individual entries” (“Contingency” 152). At times, one can intuit a kind of narrative or story in diaries, for, as fiction writer Bill Roorbach claims, while diaries may be fragmented and “may seem incoherent or haphazard in their preoccupations,” they “gather force by accretion of experience, always chronological” (qtd. in Smith and Watson 193). Drawing from the work of life writing theorist Margo Culley, Smith and Watson assert that it is “through the force of that accretion, [that] the diarist’s voice takes on a recognizable narrative persona” (193).

Henry Sheppard Sr.’s account book diaries reveal a recognizable narrator. They illuminate the small details of his life and incite emotional responses in the reader regardless of his lack of literary ambition. Especially moving are his 1912 and 1913 volumes in which he writes about the premature death of his wife Bee. It is a narrative thread that Mallon describes as a “deathwatch” (97). From the time

of Henry Sr.'s first reference to Bee's illness on August 14, 1912, and a note that the surgery took place on August 19, and throughout his documentation of Bee's slow recovery until a year later, when he realized that Bee was unwell again, a narrative emerges in his journals that possesses the quality of a well written drama. Even more poignant is Henry Sr.'s account of Bee's quick deterioration in the last few days and his cathartic, albeit understated, description of her final hour. In an entry for November 13, 1913, Henry Sr. wrote: "Fairly cold night. Wrote to Henry. Bee had a bad night, Nurse Peter sat up with her and she talked incessantly in quite a strong voice [...] Towards evening Bee looked much worse and Dr. Learmonth feared the end was near. Chior practice."¹⁴ The next day he concluded his deathwatch with these words: "Mary got her book of prayers and read sentence from a service for those dying, while she was reading and we were kneeling round the bed my poor Bee breathed heavily two or three times and passed away quite peacefully."

Account book diaries like Henry Sr.'s are not meant to portray their authors' lives in a cohesive manner, for the very nature of their composition and form precludes such presentation; thus, they cannot be made subject to the criteria Wayne Shumaker sets forth to define and evaluate autobiographies, contending that minutiae must be left out if the autobiography is to provide a unified portrait of its author (47-50). Indeed, it is *because* the narrative of Bee's death is embedded in the minutiae of daily life that makes it engaging, for readers are drawn into a process of detecting clues that gradually shape the thread of the narrative and, in

¹⁴ Henry Sheppard Sr. consistently misspells choir as "chior" in his journals.

the midst this process, are surprised at the intensity of the outcome. In spite of their fragmentation, Henry Sr.'s journals offer what Smith and Watson describe as an "immediacy [that] derives from the diarist's lack of foreknowledge about outcomes of the plot of his life" (193).

In this critical period of his life, Henry Sr.'s journals served as a vessel into which he poured his emotions, for they document the compassion he felt as his wife suffered from a long illness. They also reveal Henry's suffering after her death. In an entry for November 15, 1913, one of his most philosophical, he wrote that he and his sister Mary "went to see Bee in the coffin, she looks so peaceful, but of course different from her real self. [...] I don't think the boys have begun to realize their loss yet." His most poetic entry, written on November 17, 1913, the Monday following Bee's death, observed how the Anglican Church service

went off very well, all except Brown of the pall bearers being present. Frank Bedingfeld – H. Westropp. W. Ings, D Broderick. W Hanson. Joe Limoges. Two banks of beautiful flowers on each side of the coffin which scented the whole Church, and were piled on the coffin before it was lowered into the grave. The Church full. Singing and playing very nice Hymns 500 –592[.]

His words convey understated emotion. Likewise, in an entry for November 18, Henry Sr. subtly revealed his emotional attachment in his note that he "Went to cemetery and shook snow from the wreaths left on the grave."

A kind of dramatic irony emerges as well in a series of entries in Henry Sr.'s journal about his church activities, for regardless of his willful planning, there are outcomes which confound his expectations. In 1912, the minister of St. Benedict's Anglican Church, whose age had brought on ill health, retired, and the parishioners looked forward to the vitality of a new minister. On May 13, 1912,

Henry Sr. wrote that the new minister, “Mr. Stamer arrived from England. looking very well and fit.” On May 26, 1912, however, he recorded that “Mr. Stamer was taken ill before eveningsong and could not turn up” to conduct the service. Mr. Stamer, it turned out, was suffering from an old wound that had become infected. Thus, he was sent home and St. Benedict’s was once again in search of a new minister. Read consecutively, the sequence of entries over many months appears as a mock tragedy, which, in spite of one’s awareness of the discomfort the poor man must have suffered, is not without humour. Fiction, through the use of literary devices such as irony, can only mimic the life experiences that are set forth without pretension in Henry Sr.’s journal.

A significant difference, one that demands elucidation, is the time sequence represented by the diaries and the kind that forms the temporal foundation for the narratives in memoirs. Fiction and history are written in what Paul Ricoeur defines as “narrative time,” a kind of non-linear, public, or mythic time (175). Diaries, in contrast, are written in, and thus, represent ordinary or linear time, the first measurements of which “are borrowed from the natural environment – first of all from the play of light and of the seasons” (173). The Sheppard journals and Gardiner’s journal letters recorded the days as they passed with discrete moments (represented by and in the entries) in ordinary time. The ordinary time represented in the Sheppard journals, and in diaries like them, is not existential time, however. Existential time, according to Ricoeur, is conceived as “a neutral series of abstract instances” where “now” is “an abstract instant” (173). Yet, the Sheppard journals, which measure out the lives of their authors in the same manner that a clock

measures the minutes and hours, are a model of, or at least, bear the indications of existential time. They provide their readers, if not their authors, a sense of time passing and the existential nature of the time in which they were written. Ricoeur claims that “the simplest story [...] escapes the ordinary notion of time conceived of as a series of instants succeeding one another along an abstract line oriented in a single direction” (174).

While the chronological sequence in diaries is obvious, I draw attention to it not just to differentiate between the temporality of diaries and the temporal constructs in memoirs, but to emphasize a profound quality of the Sheppard journals, especially of Henry Sr.’s and Henry Jr.’s journals, which is that they conclude with the authors’ deaths. Thus, they present their authors’ *telos* and those of the Sheppard family’s neighbours (whose names are too obscure to mention here), when they serve as obituaries. Cumulatively, the Sheppard journals document the *telos* of their animals, as well. Animal studies scholar Bernard Rollin maintains that ethical relationships with animals means acknowledging that they “have natures of their own (what I have, following Aristotle, called their *telos*) and interests that flow from these natures” (17; his emphasis). In this respect, accounts of pioneer diaries can serve to further animal studies.

Diaries are composed of fragments of events, which have not been organized into a cohesive whole. Narratives, such as those in pioneer memoirs, unfold as a series of events that, Ricoeur suggests, are gathered to form a plot which “construes significant wholes out of scattered events” (178). There is a kind of “repetition” involved in such narratives (180). Ricoeur states that the “highest

form of narrative repetition is the equivalent of what Heidegger calls fate (individual fate) or destiny (communal destiny)” (186). He argues that “this level of repetition” as some might believe, is found not only in fictional narratives, but in “interpretive history” (187). Such is the power of colonial discourse, which, Edward Said claims, employs the verb tense of “the timeless eternal [to] convey an impression of repetition and strength” (qtd. in Bhabha, “Other” 71). Settlers repeatedly celebrate the success of colonization in narratives about the establishment of their culture and their landholdings. These narratives assume mythic proportions with victorious endings that communities of readers embrace as histories of actual human experience. Through the power of repetition over the past century, settler memoirs and history proper have established a dominant version of history that overshadows and erases history as told by Indigenous peoples.

While the presence of narrative threads in them opens them to the kinds of critical analysis performed on literary diaries and memoirs, as I have indicated in this chapter, reading them through a lens shaped by posthumanism allows readers to comprehend fragmented notes that are devoid of self-reflection. Kathryn Carter draws attention to the difficulties in reading sub-literary farm journals. She recognizes the purpose in entries that record the harvesting of crops and purchase of dry goods, and comprehends those that record weather and the completion of chores, but she is stymied by entries like “took the baby to the beach” (“Contingency” 137, 163). She rationalizes that the “messiness of human life complicates interpretive acts because the records of that life resist narrative closure

and rebuke our attempts to self-identify” (*Small Details* 24). Reading the Sheppard journals through a posthuman lens, a phenomenological approach, allow readers to self-identify with the authors for the very reason that Carter cites as the difficulty: they reveal the meaningless experiences that are common to all human lives.

The details that Carter interprets as “messy” and incomprehensible might be understood as the representation of a *corporeal or embodied experience* of a human being who physically existed and engaged in the material realm of the real world beyond the pages of the text, the world the texts seek to display. The existential aspects of human life that are depicted in the Sheppard journals reveal the authors to be ordinary people, that is, not in the sense of their status as immigrants, for they were privileged Anglo-Canadian citizens, but in the sense that they ate, slept, and bathed as do all human autopoietic systems. In the next chapter, I examine the pioneer accounts in my study to reveal them as a form of colonial discourse that records the repetitive commonplace behaviour of their authors, which are manifestations of their ideologies and which, performed with variations over several decades, served to transform the prairies from one system of interacting autopoietic life forms into another system, a farming system of divided and cultivated sections, each presented as the result of the author’s labour and each emblematic of its owner’s entitlement to the land. Specifically, I explore evidence of these transformations in the life writing of Key, Hopkins, Thomson, Gardiner, and the Sheppards to reveal their ideological foundations in the georgic traditions.

Chapter Two – In an English Country Garden: Utopian Ideals in Pioneer Life Writing

This chapter explores the themes common to the life writing of the Sheppards, Gardiner, Hopkins, Key, and Thomson. They appear in other settler accounts, as well. I draw attention to them, not to claim that they chart the conventions of an autobiographical subgenre called settler memoirs, for my investigation is not broad enough to make such generalizations. Nor are the numbers of examples of farmers' logs and account book diaries sufficient to predict the kind of topics that will be common to them. Such a project will require the use of digital tools to explore these forms of life writing once a large sampling of them is brought into the realm of scholarship. Rather, I identify the themes as examples of the authors' fostering of georgic culture in the rural communities that multiplied during settlement.

Whether the authors have framed their experiences in artfully crafted memoirs or in the fragmented sentences of sub-literary journals, their accounts exhibit georgic ideologies. Henry Jr.'s journals are especially rich in georgic references and constitute a model of sustainable agricultural practices. I examine these texts for evidence of the authors' ideologies embedded in their descriptions of their material goods, their domestic practices, their community activities and recreation, the development of their properties, and their labour. As I will demonstrate, the importation of European traditions and practices as these settlers transformed the prairies into cultivated farms and ranches enacted the erasure of indigenous culture and its replacement with settler culture. My aim is to show that

the authors' reminiscence of their adherence to British and Anglo-Canadian cultural practices reveal their sense of superiority over Indigenous peoples, and, at times, over other immigrants. My main focus is on their references to their families' construction of houses and landscaping of their yards, for these improvements signified an increase in a settler's prosperity, status, and sense of entitlement to the land.

Among the topics my subjects document are: weather conditions such as snowfalls, hail storms, extreme summer heat, freezing winter temperatures, and lightning strikes, especially when these have started prairie fires; and agricultural practices such as plowing, planting, haying, stooking, and threshing. Like other settlers, they write about household chores like laundry, house cleaning, and white washing; cooking, baking bread, and making butter; raising chickens, collecting eggs, and milking cows; growing gardens, grains, and fodder; and preserving meat, fruit, and vegetables for winter. They record their social activities such as Christmas festivities, church attendance, weddings and funerals, teas and picnics, the celebration of agricultural traditions at regional fairs, and other aspects of their community involvement; and they all discuss school, higher education, and sports. Key is alone in describing natural prairie phenomena like the northern lights, mirages, and sun dogs (which indicate the oncoming of chinooks), although Bert Sheppard also comments on the indigenous flora and fauna.

While the existence of common themes in settler life writing invites their categorization in the manner that Mallon applies to the diaries in his anthology when he describes them as travel narratives, apologies, chronicles, confessions, or

the accounts of pilgrims and prisoners, Heather Robertson's pictorial study of pioneers in *Salt of the Earth* offers categories that are more applicable and, thus, more useful to my study than Mallon's. Robertson's first section, "The Trek West," is dedicated to travel across the Atlantic Ocean on steamships and the conveying of baggage, belongings, and families by train across Canada. The next, titled "Homesteading," covers the first experiences of settlers upon their arrival on the prairies and refers to their staking of claims on homesteads and initial "breaking" of the land. The rest of Robertson's text is divided into sections to reflect the stages of settlement that followed: the first Christmas on the prairies, cultivating the land, subsistence practices and household chores, church and community involvement, and experiences of weather. These same aspects of prairie life comprise a good deal of the content in Henry Sr.'s, Henry Jr.'s, and Bert's journals. They are also topics that are presented anecdotally in Hopkins's, Key's, Thomson's, and Bert memoirs, and, to some extent, in Gardiner's journal letters.

The first two of Gardiner's letters constitute a travelogue for they describe a journey of a young Englishman setting out on an adventure to seek his fortune as a rancher in a British colony. They reveal his economic status and validate his self-identity as a first class British passenger, especially, when he compares his accommodations on the ship and train to those of less affluent travellers. His first letter, dated April, 1894, was written to his father on stationery with the letterhead of the "Allan Line Royal Mail Steamers" and the address "Steamship *Carthaginian*" while en route to Newfoundland. Like many settler memoirs, his

letter relates his experiences aboard a steamship during the trans-Atlantic crossing. He informed his parents that everyone, including him, had been seasick because of the rough seas and had tried to console each other with kindness. Gardiner added a postscript to assure his father that he had arrived safely, and posted the letter in Halifax (3).

In his next letter, dated May 20, 1894, he wrote: there “were 2 young fellows, brothers, in the train who came over by the same steamer 2nd class” and one of them shared “the sleeper with me last night” (3-4). “The sleeping car is a very grand affair but there were only us 2 passengers in it. I expect that we shall have a lot more at Montreal. The railroad agent has telegraphed to reserve me a good berth at Montreal where I change trains” (4). His insinuation seems to be that he was one of the few passengers who could afford to travel first class, a sign of his privileged social position. The next letter, dated May 25, 1894, underlines his status by revealing the personal connections the Gardiners had to influential figures in high level administrative positions in Canada. It was written at Hudson’s Bay House in Winnipeg, where he stayed with Mr. Chipman, who “has got me a berth,” he told his parents, “on a ranch at a place called MacCloud; it is to the south of Calgary near the border of the States” (5). Gardiner’s play on the word, berth, to refer to his position as a hired hand, reveals that he was well educated and suggests a kind of literariness in his discourse, which was, perhaps, necessary for conversing in polite company. Gardiner recalled to his father in the following letter, written at the Belleview Ranch, that he had met the Chipmans socially in London and that he had stayed with them in Winnipeg for five days. As stated

earlier, when Gardiner immigrated, Chipman was the Chief Commissioner of the Hudson's Bay Company (Dempsey, Introduction vi). In his next letters, he describes his first impressions of the prairies.

Key's memoir begins with a description of her family's journey to Alberta; however, in the manner in which Barbara Korte asserts that writing about a travel experience is, often, "merely a backdrop for the traveller's very personal concern: how he or she can confront and make sense of the world" (*English* 144), Key's first chapter serves, for the most part, as a kind of proof of her privileged social position by establishing her family's wealth and connections to landed gentry in England. After a nostalgic reminiscence of her childhood on the illustrious estates of her Victorian grandparents, she writes: "We left our home, the second Radfords, in Yeovil, Somerset, on March 30th, 1910 on a cold and windy morning" (5). She then describes her family's journey to Canada, which was, for her father Harry Petter, "an exciting adventure, the sort of thing he had dreamed of doing all his life" (4). Providing details of their voyage across the Atlantic Ocean by steamer, she recalls the amusements she found in roaming the decks and lounges while her mother, her siblings, and their governess were sea sick and kept to the family's staterooms.

Key relates that she gallivanted freely around the ship making a "thorough nuisance" of herself, and while "standing in the stern of the ship, leaning precariously over the rail," she dropped an expensive porcelain-headed doll overboard, a doll "dressed beautifully as a bride [...in] a long, full cream coloured satin dress with a train, a floating lace veil with a wreath of orange blossoms, and

tiny white kid slippers” (7). In her childlike persona, she recalls wondering whether the doll was in the “world of mermaids [...] like little Tom, the chimney sweep in Charles Kingsley’s ‘The Water Babies’” (8). Key’s elaborate description of belongings, such as the expensive doll, is indicative of the class values she had been taught by her parents and contribute toward establishing her self-identity as a wealthy British child; her reference to the books she had read or that had been read to her suggests that she was a member of a well educated and highly literate family.

Charles Kingsley’s *The Water-Babies* is part of the corpus that, Jo-Ann Wallace states, emerged in “a ‘golden age’ of English children’s literature,” along with and after the “rise of nineteenth-century colonial imperialism” (172). The text is not among those Wallace describes as offering “resistance to imperialism”; rather, it is one of the proponents (171). She notes that “offensive or impolitic stereotyping” such as “passages lampooning the Irish” and “unfriendly references to potatoes” have been edited out or revised to make the novel acceptable to today’s juvenile readership (181-82). Key, no doubt, read it in the original form. Her reference to such literature suggests that indoctrination into ideologies that supported notions of British superiority was a regular part of an English schoolboy’s or schoolgirl’s upbringing. Thomson’s envy of the literary knowledge and artistic skills of a childhood friend, May Eversfield, who “was the product of an English school for girls, the sort we read about in boarding-school stories such as those in ‘Girls’ Own Paper’” (104), indicates that she, too, had internalized such notions.

Key concludes the ocean journey by stating that they landed at “St. John, New Brunswick” and spent “a long depressing day in a huge immigration shed, surrounded by hundreds of other bewildered and somewhat worried colonists, and mountains of baggage” (8). She then describes the journey by train to Winnipeg, where her “Father took a couple of rooms in a small hotel near the station,” so the Petters could rest before boarding the train to Grandview, Manitoba, where she, her mother, and her sisters were to stay with relatives while her father “went on to Alberta to take up the half section the C.P.R. was holding for him, and to build a house” (9). Key’s father had the means to hire professional carpenters to construct a two storey house in readiness for the family’s arrival, a house well heated, Key points out, by the “Nautilus heater” designed by her grandfather and made in his foundry (5). Key depicts the family’s later arrival at Radfords, the Petters’ new home near Strathmore. She recalls how, having travelled by wagon with their belongings, they crested a hill and surveyed the “wide panorama of gently undulating prairie” before fixing their eyes on a knoll upon which sat their new “unpainted wood” house surrounded by prairie on all sides (26-27). The plots of many settlers’ memoirs include descriptions of the visual impact on the occasion of their authors’ arrival at their homesteads.

For privileged settlers, the centre-piece of this vision was a house, which, whether it took the form of a modest dwelling, a country house, a farmhouse, or a ranch house, served as a symbol of a settler’s status as a land owner. Drawing attention to the architecture and size of the various homes in which her family had lived, Key demonstrates that the symbolism of social status attached to country

houses had no less personal value in Alberta than in England, where it was manifested in structures with more magnificence than those erected on the prairies. The first Radfords, the estate on which her mother had grown up, had “an L-shaped Elizabethan house,” Key writes, which “had been the home of her family for generations” (27). The second Radfords, she continues, had a “large red brick house” that had been built for her parents on the Petters’ estate in Yeovil “before [they] were married.” It, too, was spacious and luxurious. Thus, the house on the prairie was a significant disappointment to Key’s family (27). It had “no running water, no plumbing, and no gas for cooking,” her father admitted, reasoning that the house would afford little more than a style of “primitive living for a while,” but he promised there would soon be improvements made, such as the addition of “a verandah, and stables and chicken houses [...] then a garden” all neatly fenced (27). Theirs was a utopian vision in the midst of a harsher reality. It was during her “eight years on the Alberta Prairie,” she tells her readers, that she made “many happy, but some sad, memories” (30).

The same pattern of travel and arrival is repeated with variations in other settler memoirs. There is no Atlantic crossing in Thomson’s memoir, however, for her family migrated from Galt, Ontario. She begins her narrative with a description of their journey to the prairies by train, adopting the voice of a child narrator at times, which tends to present naïve impressions of pioneering experiences. Her strongest memories of her journey are the crowded train and a bout of food poisoning she experienced en route from food her mother had packed. “There were no dining-cars nor coffee-counters on these colonist trains, even if the average

settler could have afforded such a luxury,” she complains, “so all the families carried large lunches to last the journey” (9). She recalls that her family had stayed one night in Calgary at the “Dominion Hotel” and, from the verandah upstairs, she and her sister Chaddy had “watched the traffic on the street, which seemed very exciting to us, especially the cowboys on their horses and the occasional Indian. Of course there were no automobiles in those days” (10). Her reference to purchased meals as luxuries establishes the Thomsons as settlers with limited financial resources. Her allusion to cowboys and Indians offers an impression of Calgary as a frontier town in the early 1900s. The title of her chapter describing their arrival at their homestead, “Our Home on the Range,” has similar connotations.

Like Key’s father, Mr. Thomson had gone ahead of the rest of the family and, with the help of his son Jim and a few hired hands, had built a house on the prairie in the summer before the arrival of Georgina, her mother, and two of her sisters. The house that was to be their new home, she admits,

wasn’t much to look at. It was a bare, unpainted wooden house [...which] [u]nlike most homesteaders’ shacks [...] had an upstairs with two as yet uncurtained windows above and one window and a door below. The house had no foundation, but was set flat on the ground so that on windy nights because of its height, it rocked in an alarming way, as [they] were to find out. (19)

The walls were not yet plastered and the floors were bare, and they had to sleep on ticks filled with prairie grass rather than the feathers they had been used to, but as Thomson insists, she and her sister were more interested in their new horse, Dixie, so how the house looked mattered little to them (21). Yet, Thomson betrays an underlying tone of dismay at having given up a more gracious style of living in Ontario for a barely finished and sparsely furnished house on the prairie. The

passage, which implies a degree of martyrdom as Thomson and her family made sacrifices and endured discomforts as homesteaders, also serves as a preamble to her claim of entitlement to the land. Like the Petters, the Thomsons imagined the improvements they would make to their new home, ““Parkhouse,”” for, Thomson asserts, her mother “was determined to change [the farm’s] bleak appearance and make it live up to its name” (121). The realization of farm improvements—utopian goals—required the family’s labour, which is another factor that justifies deserving.

While Thomson relates that the windows of her family’s new house “faced the foothills and Rockies and gave us a wonderful view, especially of the gorgeous sunsets” (21), Hopkins describes her house as being *in* the foothills, behind which the Rockies tower “all white and glistening in the sun” (53). “Hurrah for the Golden West!” she exclaims, ““Home for Europe’s starving millions’ as the posters at home so poetically put it. Well, one of the millions has at last arrived, bag and baggage” (1). The playfulness in her employment of phrases borrowed from promotional materials is obvious. Less obvious is the irony in her suggestion that she is one of the hungry masses; however, four months later, in a ‘letter’ dated January 4, 1910, she makes it very clear that there is an abundance of food in the Hopkinses’ “storehouse”. She lists among their provisions: “a side of beef and one of pork, a number of partridge and prairie chicken, and about a dozen roosters” (37). Her feigned impoverishment is designed, perhaps, to lower the reader’s expectations, for the story she relates is one of modest achievement.

Hopkins dedicates only the first few pages of her memoir to her travel on board a steamer to Canada. Like many other passengers, she was seasick, and wished she “could have been left alone to die in peace” (3). She describes her and Billie’s arrival and, after a quick stop-over in Quebec City and an impromptu tour of the city in a horse-drawn cab driven by a cabby who speaks only French, she relates that she and Billie took the train across Canada and arrived in Calgary in the rain. At that point in her memoir, to fill her readers in with information about her family’s Victorian sensibilities and initial refusal to let her immigrate to Canada, Hopkins mentions her father’s visit in 1903 to Calgary, a “wild and woolly looking [...] ‘cow town’” (4). Her parents, she explains, were sure that she was “not cut out for this kind of life,” and states emphatically: “It is up to me to show them that *I am*” (2; original emphasis).

Hopkins’s estimation of her new residence is more positive than shown by Key and Thomson, who insinuate that they sacrificed the luxuries of their homes in England and Ontario to appease their fathers’ desire for adventure in Alberta. Yet, she, too, implies a loss of the kinds of domestic comfort to which she has been accustomed in England. Emphasizing the rustic, yet aesthetically pleasing style of her new abode, Hopkins creates a subtext that betrays her regret. The house that Billie Hopkins constructed when he established his homestead was made of logs. Hopkins recalls her first view of it, writing: “It is very pretty, a low log house standing on a knoll with the creek on three sides and a lovely bush of timber behind” (7). The “sitting room,” she continues, is cosy “with the curtains drawn and the lamps lit,” and the “two Turkish rugs that Billie’s cousins in Ireland gave

us” (19). Yet, she creates an incongruous image when she boasts that their “wedding presents look very nice, the silver all aglitter” within a space decorated by “four heads—a deer, bear and two lynx—all shot by Billie,” which, she observes, are “quite in keeping with the log house” (19). The juxtaposition of these material possessions, some symbolic of her English customs and others the relics of Billie’s bachelor past, infuses her narrative with uneasy contradictions and tensions that connote—regardless of her praise—her dissatisfaction with her circumstances. While she claims that her ranch life is glorious and assures her readers that, despite the fact that she and her husband were not making their “fortunes” from raising horses, they were “getting a great deal of joy and fun out of living” (57), she aspires for a more gracious style of life in keeping with her sense of class entitlement. Her utopian dreams are, thus, made conspicuous by her inability to realize them.

Thomson, Key, Gardiner, and Hopkins begin their accounts in a manner typical of other settlers: with journeys. Their narratives are similar in that respect to one written by Susanna Moodie, who writes a detailed description of “A Visit to Grosse Isle” and her family’s travel down the St. Lawrence River, and another by her sister, Catharine Parr Traill, who offers an account of her experiences as a gentlewoman settling in the backwoods of Canada. Like Hopkins, Traill employs the form of an epistolary to relate her experiences, addressing her letters to a particular reader: her mother. Her dating of the paragraphs as she wrote them—August 11, August 12, and so on—suggests she is writing journal letters. Traill includes sketches of the flora and fauna to augment her lengthy verbal descriptions

of Canada; Moodie includes poetic verses. The forms used by the Sheppard men are much different from those of the memoirists, for their journal entries are written, not in flowery descriptive sentences or in verse, but in fragmented phrases. Their lives as genteel immigrant farmers appear to unfold in similar ways, however.

Henry Sheppard Sr. and Bee (née Beatrice Godden) met on the boat on their way to Canada. Each was the child “of an Anglican clergyman” (*Leaves* 98). Bee had been on her way “to the Greig ranch to act as governess to the Greig children” and Henry to work as a hired hand (98). They courted, became engaged, and, after a short separation when the Greigs returned to England “accompanied by their governess [while] Henry stayed on the ranch,” they were married (98). They set up a homestead “on Hay Creek,” which is now called Sheppard Creek (99). Whether or not Henry Sr. kept a diary while living there, or during 1910 and 1911, a two year gap in the set, cannot be determined. Henry Sr.’s diaries begin in 1907 at the Cottonwood Ranch when Henry and Bee were busy nursing their sons through childhood diseases like mumps and measles. They found the time, nevertheless, to engage in typical British activities. On June 23, 1907, Henry wrote: “Mowed lawn and played croquet afternoon.” The next day, they “All went to High River to see Light Horse sports.” Bee also kept a journal, although its whereabouts are currently unknown. In the few entries that remain, she demonstrates wit and resourcefulness, having written on April 3, 1893: “Had to kill dark yellow hen for eating eggs on Thursday, thirtieth. Ate her yesterday”

(qtd. in *Leaves* 101). She seems to have shared her husband's utopian dreams and enthusiasm for the georgic way of life that promised their fulfillment.

In 1887, when Henry Sr. and Bee immigrated to Alberta, they must have imagined the kind of life they were to create for themselves when they decided to marry and rear a family. The celebration of their marriage speaks of their optimism and yet it speaks, as well, of the challenges they faced. Upon the occasion of their arrival in the area as newlyweds, they stopped at the High River Horse Ranch where their host, Phil Weinard, held a wedding reception, and to honour "the young couple, set the table with a white table cloth and the most beautiful cut glass and silverware brought out [from England] by the McPhersons. The guests were seated, and the first and only course was brought in—a big, black iron pot of corn meal mush, which was all they had to eat on the ranch" (*Leaves* 99). The host's creation of an elaborate table setting suggests the kind of English formality these British settlers tried to recreate. The food, or lack of it, reflects their material conditions. The juxtaposition of the two images—one symbolic of a utopian vision, the other symbolic of a frontier environment—implies a tension between desires and a reality that thwarted or delayed their fulfillment.

The Sheppards engaged in cultural practices that, David Breen maintains, "strengthened the British social milieu characteristic of the Canadian ranching community" (29). In his journals, Henry Sr. noted his attendance at cultural events such as concerts and lectures. He wrote on January 14, 1914, that he "Went with [his sister] Mary to University [?] lecture on Comets Meteors and Northern lights by Professor Killam, very good." On January 28, 1914, he and Mary went

“to University extension lecture on formation of Rocky Mountains at Town Hall. Dr. Allen Lecture. quite interesting and instructive.” Two months later, on March 23, 1914, they travelled “into Calgary at 1.30 by the Spokane train” and at “8.30.” attended the “Symphony orchestra Concert, excellent.” The frequent notes of sojourns indicate that Henry Sr. had the financial resources to partake of entertainment and to pay hired help to complete ranch chores while he was away. They also demonstrate the establishment of British culture in Alberta.

Henry Sr. documented the process of colonization not only as an agriculturalist, but as a magistrate, as well. He “was appointed Justice of the Peace in March, 1898” (*Leaves* 99) and used his journals to record the details, dates, and decisions of court cases, the delivery of summonses, the names of those charged and fined for violations, and the sum of the fines. In the eclectic gathering of topics in his daily entries, he does not differentiate between these activities. For example, he wrote on April 25, 1912, that he “Put in 3 rows of potatoes Tried Jasper Thompson for Prairie Fire on [Huths?] land.” Thus, he fostered the progress of acculturation through the performance of what appear, initially, to be distinct aspects of his life. Yet, they are not entirely distinct, for his primary agricultural interests focused on breeding and training horses for the military, the North West Mounted Police detachment stationed in Alberta (*Leaves* 98). Henry Sr. also exported horses to England. He wrote on August 15, 1908, that he went “to Eckford to look for horses to ship to England.” Only later did he incorporate the raising of beef cattle into his ranching operation.

Henry Sr.'s accounts of his civic duties reveal his role as an agent of cultural imperialism. On May 17, 1913, he "Issued warrant for Willie Dickson Stony [Nakoda] Indian for horse stealing." A month later, on June 13, he "Had preliminary hearing of Stoney Indian Willie Dixon for horse stealing and remanded him for trial." Such entries reveal racial distinctions, and while there is nothing in his journals to suggest that he held particularly negative attitudes towards members of the Siksika and Nakoda nations, the conspicuous absence of references to them, generally, implies disregard for their well-being. Moreover, Henry Sr. displays early twentieth-century capitalist attitudes in his references to his desire to acquire tracts of land to add to their holdings. An example is an entry dated June 28, 1907, in which he noted that he "drove onto *Sections 29, 19, 23* West of 4 which I have applied for. Saw some good land south of Blackfoot reserve." The entry makes explicit the kinds of assumptions about land acquisition held by settlers, which are based on notions of entitlement. His sons betray similar sentiments in their journals.

A sense of entitlement to land appropriated from Indigenous peoples is reiterated and reasserted, yet again, in the memoirs, which were written in the 1960s and 1970s, around the time of Canada's Centennial. Like the many regional histories that were produced by various communities to celebrate the success of colonization in Canada, settler memoirs, in which their authors narrate their pioneer experiences in the form of utopian myths, have the effect of maintaining racist and class ideologies in the public imagination. Personal accounts of settlement produce what Bhabha describes as a "social reality [...that] employs a

system of representation, a regime of truth, that is structurally similar to realism” (“Other” 71). The writers in my study employ their texts to describe and discuss the “reality” of their communities, both culturally and agriculturally, a “reality” that is imagined from the perspective of privileged immigrants who held to British traditions.

Henry Jr. adopted the habit of keeping a diary from his parents, it seems, and wrote in the same terse style that distinguishes their journals. He wrote the first entry of his journals on January 2, 1919, upon his return to England after four years’ confinement in a German prison camp: “Arrived home from Denmark on evening of 23 Dec. but did not disembark till morning of following day. had pipe band to welcome us.” While awaiting his discharge from the Royal Canadian Armed Forces, he used his journal to account for time spent with relatives in England. Several entries refer to the activities in which he participated and the outings he had with his cousins—skating and tobogganing, attending concerts, lectures, and the theatre, and strolling country lanes. On January 25, 1919, Henry Jr. visited his cousin Louise and went “to theatre in the evening.” He also visited family acquaintances in various small towns, and on February 20, “left for Victoria train for [?] 3 to 5 enjoyed my stay at Hamstead university.” Like his father, he demonstrates the connection British immigrants maintained with their homeland and family members, and offers evidence of the kinds of cultural interests his parents imported to Canada.

The fourth month of Henry Jr.’s 1919 journal resembles a travelogue, for it documents his return to Alberta, specifically, his crossing of the Atlantic by

steamer, his journey across Canada by train, and, finally, the conclusion of his trip upon his arrival at the Riverbend Ranch in Longview. His father wrote in the entry for that day, April 12, 1919: “Nice day. Hauled a jag of hay cleaning up corral [...] George brought Henry home about 2.30. Henry looking very much older and tired with his journey. It is over 5 years since we saw him Nov 1913. Bees funeral.”

Henry Jr. spent the next decade working on the Riverbend. Indeed, within days of his arrival, he resumed his daily routine and wrote on April 19, 1919, that he “Went ploughing in afternoon.” Yet, with his army pay to invest in his own agricultural operation, he indicated on June 1, that he went to High River with his father, his aunt Mary, and Bert, and “Drove home by Bar U Saw Lane about [section] 24.” Henry Sr. wrote in an entry for that same day that they went “to see Geo Lane about a quarter *section*.” The mention of George Lane in both entries suggests the importance of the Sheppards’ connections to influential land owners in the area, for Lane owned the Bar U, having purchased it in 1902 (Evans 109). Henry Jr. did not manage to obtain land that year, however. References to his labour and life experiences are found in his father’s journals, which fill in a gap of ten years in Henry Jr.’s. By the time he resumed the practice of keeping a journal in 1929, he had established his own farm on the outskirts of High River, and had married Evelyn Maccoy, a widow with an eight year old daughter, Ruth. Henry Sr. noted in an entry for April 21, 1925: “Henry and Evelyn’s wedding day. [...] We all went to High River to see them married [...] Had tea at the Rectory afterward.”

Despite the fact that Henry Jr. had grown up on his father’s horse and cattle ranches, he chose to become a farmer. His journals indicate that he invested his

time and energy into the keeping of dairy cows and horses, as well as the raising of grains and grasses to feed them. They are almanac-like in that they reflect his observations of the passing of the seasons and recorded the tasks performed according to the type of weather the seasons brought. Henry Jr.'s practices resemble the methods described in the first book of the *Georgics*, in which Virgil provides advice on observing astrological patterns to determine the best "time to reap or sow, / [...] For not in vain we watch [...] The fourfold seasons of the balanced year" (l. 253, 257). Henry Jr.'s knowledge of the weather is wrought, it appears, from the experiences he gained by working the land. For example, in an entry for May 23, 1929, he wrote: "finished plowing greenfeed also plowed west end of breaking which was too wet before." He documented his completion of annual tasks such as ploughing and disking the soil; cutting, raking, and stacking hay; cutting and stooking wheat, oat, barley, and rye sheaves; and milling and storing grain. He wrote on September 2, 1932, "Nice day, cutting oats, had trouble in the morning with knotter, but binder ran well in afternoon." The same pattern is repeated in each yearly cycle of his journals.

Henry's journals identify the kinds of vegetables he grew for his family's table and those he grew for the market. On May 30, 1932, another "Nice day," Henry Jr. "planted cabbage and lettuce and cauliflower, p.m., harrowed east 9 acres disced and harrowed hill also garden." He also cultivated many varieties of potatoes and "mangels"¹⁵ or sugar beets, which he cut up and fed to his dairy cows.

¹⁵ According to Mary Pillat, Ruth Maccoy's cousin, mangels were a kind of root vegetable like sugar beets that were cut up and fed in portions to the milk cows (Conversation).

His major sources of income seem to have been the sale of pork, beef, poultry, and fodder. Of the three Sheppard diarists in my study, Henry Jr. was most occupied with general farming practices. He operated what Elofson calls a “mixed-farming” operation, which combined the raising of cattle with the cultivation of hay, greenfeed, and grains, as well as the cultivation of gardens and the raising of livestock to keep the ranch kitchen supplied (“Not” 207-09). The agricultural methods Henry Jr. practiced reflect a model based on venerated humanist ideologies, such as stewardship. His methods are what Rollin describes as “good husbandry,” which meant “keeping the animals under conditions to which their natures were biologically adapted” (6). Indeed, his journals evoke “one of the most pervasive features” of the *Georgics*: “Virgil’s sympathy with all nature, animate and inanimate” (Wilkinson 29).

Henry Jr. engaged in sustainable methods of soil enrichment, the methods promoted in the *Georgics*. Wilkinson states that Virgil recommended alternating crops “a thousand years before anyone seems to have tried what is now commonplace practice” (48). Henry Jr. used his journals to keep track of crop rotation. His inclusion in his 1938 volume of a clipping, an article published on Thursday, March 3, 1938, in *The High River Times* on methods of crop rotation, suggests that he and his agricultural community were aware of issues of sustainability. The article, called “Crop Rotation on 4 Year Principle,” identifies summerfallowing and livestock pasturing as two components of a weed control and soil revitalization plan. How Henry Jr. acquired knowledge of the georgic traditions is a matter of speculation. He may have studied Virgil in his Latin

classes in high school, but a more likely explanation is that he adopted these agricultural methods through his father's modelling of them. No doubt, so did his brother, Bert, regardless of Bert's preference to celebrate the rugged brutality of frontier life in his writing. Yet, the fact that Bert became a writer at all suggests that his family's British cultural practices as well as their agricultural practices influenced the shaping of his self-identity.

Bert's journals also include descriptions of travel, but these are not mentioned until the last two months of 1938, the first volume of his set. His trips were to Chicago and Toronto to attend livestock shows. Such entries were evidence of his success as a breeder of fine blooded cattle and imply that he sought prestige from his ranching career. In a summary for November, 1938, he noted that he had travelled to "Toronto on the 12. Maros' carlot won first at the Royal, sold for 13.25 @ cut. Left for Chicago [International] on the 25th [...] via Niagara Falls." Bert repeated the journey the following year with a load of calves who arrived "tired but in good shape." He recorded that the "Champion load [brought] 20 1/2¢ a lb. My loads selling at \$15.25 and \$13.00 weighing 447 + 446 lbs." His records of trips to national and international livestock shows and of the sales held there refer, as well, to the many prizes he won with his cattle. There is no evidence to suggest that Bert kept a journal before or after he wrote the few volumes that are extant, but it is possible that they are missing. The existing volumes account for his life on the TL and Riverbend Ranches between the years 1938 and 1942, and the year of 1947. Bert's history of the TL Ranch is partially a narrativization of those years augmented with information seemingly drawn from his father's journals,

which he, no doubt, acquired upon the death of his father when, he relates, he took possession of the Riverbend Ranch (Interview). Of the three members of the Sheppard family, Bert acquired the most land. In the 1940s and 1950s, at the peak of his career, he owned the Riverbend and TL Ranches and had shares in the Rio Alto.

The cyclical pattern of the Sheppard journals makes them exceedingly suitable to an examination through a lens shaped by the georgic traditions. The same agrarian cycle that is repeated annually in the journals is modelled in the *Georgics*. By preserving the georgic traditions through constant repetition, the Sheppard journals, regardless of the sub-literary quality of their writing, have political purposes for they are accounts of settlement experiences that are performative. Cumulatively, the documentation by settlers of their progress in farmers' logs and account book diaries constitutes acculturation as the performances of labour and accounting for its completion served to enact the erasure of the culture and traditional subsistence practices of the Siksika and Nakoda who inhabited the territory prior to colonization. Seen in that light, account book diaries and farm logs were useful tools of colonization. Kathryn Carter observes that these forms of pioneer life writing were "endorsed by the *Canadian Farmer*" as early as 1869 and were commonly used by immigrant English farmers to provide "a modicum of control" and a sense of economic security amidst the uncertainty of the settlement experience ("Contingency" 134-37).

As has been mentioned, Henry Sr. arrived in Alberta in 1887 after a three years residence in the British colony of Australia (*Leaves* 98). While he does not explicitly use the term colony in his writing, his attitude bears a similarity to those of settlers like Key and Thomson who do. Canada was officially a dominion, yet Thomson refers to her family travelling on the “colonist train” from Ontario to Alberta (9). Key referred to her family as colonists among the many that stood in the immigration shed in St. John (8). The authors’ reference to Canada as a colony, while inaccurate, perhaps, after Confederation, implies attitudes of entitlement and privilege as British subjects nonetheless. The term ‘colonialism’ Sarah Carter states, “refers to a great variety of asymmetrical relationships” (*Aboriginal* 102). She defines colonial attitudes as “the domination, or attempted domination, of an expatriate group over indigenous people” (103). “Fundamental features of colonialism were present in Western Canada in the late nineteenth century,” Carter continues, “including the extension of the power of the Canadian state, and the maintenance of sharp social, economic, and spatial distinctions between the dominant and subordinant population” (103). Henry Sr.’s performance of his role as magistrate, especially when passing judgment on the conduct of Indigenous people, reinforced colonial ideologies.

The transmission of culture occurs not just through literary and historical sources, but through the materialities of daily life as well. Life writers tend to focus a great deal on the things that comprise their surroundings and which, in turn, shape their self-identities. Thus, because the lives of settlers were rooted in their possessions, I examine the authors’ references to the material goods and

various animate and inanimate objects that constituted their living conditions. Settlers imported their culture to Alberta in the form of their cooking utensils, casual and formal attire, toys, sporting equipment, farm machinery and implements, and domesticated animals. Indeed, the wholesale transportation of their English lifestyles to their Alberta farms and ranches expedited the erasure of Indigenous culture on the prairies and its replacement by European subsistence practices, customs, and material goods. Exploring the materialities of human lives concerns the relationship of people to *things*.

Anthropologist Janet Hoskins's study of "how identities and biographies are formed around objects in a society" facilitates my exploration of the objects named in my primary texts, specifically the "personal symbolism and the idiosyncratic significance of objects" (2, 3). Hoskins emphasizes the importance of clothing and other objects that serve "in demarcating and preserving a sense of the past and collective memory" (2). She also discusses "the more intimate level of individual actors and domestic objects—common household possessions that might be given extraordinary significance by becoming entangled in the events of a person's life and used as a vehicle for a sense of selfhood" (2). Her theories are useful to discern the purpose 'things' serve in Monica Hopkins's anecdotes about household appliances. Kathryn Carter emphasizes the importance of a diary as "an ideal vehicle for uncovering the material conditions of women's daily lives" (*Small Details* 21), yet, she touches too lightly upon the concept of materiality and fails to define her terms. Such 'things' are what Hoskins describes as *biographical objects* in relation to those who possessed and used them.

I also draw from the phenomenological theories of Paul Ricoeur, who maintains that “our temporality [...] is] dependent on the description of the things of our concern,” a trait Martin Heidegger calls “preoccupation” or “circumspection” (172). Heidegger distinguishes between “*das Vorhandene* (‘subsisting things which our concern counts on’) and *das Zuhandene* (‘utensils offered to our manipulation’).” Ricoeur explains that “however inauthentic our relationship to things, to ourselves, and to time may be, preoccupation, the everyday mode of concern, nevertheless already includes characteristics that take it out of the external domain of the objects of our concern, referring it instead to our concern in its existential constitution” (172). These abstract suppositions inform the analysis of my subjects’ references to things, such as the “iron Maiden stove” that Henry Sr. installed in the kitchen of the Cottonwood Ranch house on January 7, 1907, which retains its existential constitution.

In contrast, in Key’s, Thomson’s, Hopkins’s, and Bert Sheppard’s memoirs, things lose their existential constitution and become “*das Zuhandene*” or “utensils offered to our manipulation” (Ricoeur 172). That is, the authors manipulate “things” linguistically, transforming them into metonyms, which serve symbolic purposes in the drama of their life narratives. In an anecdote about her domestic experiences, for example, Hopkins focuses on her new bathtub, which she transforms into an ad hoc wash tub on a laundry day. In this self-deprecating anecdote about her ineptitude in the performance of household chores, she relates that as she soaked her clothes in the tub while experiencing the sub-zero temperatures of an Alberta winter, the clothes and water froze into a block of ice,

causing an awkward problem to which she and her friend, Helene, had to find a solution (41-44).

Material possessions such as clothing and household appliances take on political power in pioneer life writing when they symbolize a family's cultural heritage. For example, Hopkins's references to a "glossing iron" have more than one meaning within the context of her letters. She tells her interlocutor that she keeps the glossing iron packed in a trunk with her "trousseau," relieved to have found upon her arrival on the ranch that she does not need it for her "spouse never wears a collar unless he absolutely has to and then he wears the softer ones and as for as his dress shirts, they are deep in a trunk with the rest of his evening attire and there they will stay" (21). She explains that her mother had tried to impose upon her the kind of behaviour thought appropriate for women by sending her to a school of domestic science so she could learn skills in housewifery. Hopkins attests that having had only "*one* lesson in ironing" before she was married, she lacks skill in the performance of such duties and implies that she is reluctant to develop them (21; orig. emphasis). Thus, stowing away the glossing iron emphasizes her rejection of the Victorian customs and domestic duties that shaped her identity while she was growing up and living in her parents' household.

Yet, irons and collars take on an alternative meaning in a subsequent anecdote about attending the Millarville races. In this case, Hopkins demonstrates her adherence to the customs and protocol associated with British fashion in her insistence that her husband wear a starched collar. Billie preferred to wear a bandana, "a large silk coloured bandana," she writes to her imaginary interlocutor,

“and very nice it looks too” (21). Thus, on the day of the formal picnic, the “men had an idea that if they wore clean overalls and shirts and handkerchiefs around their necks that would be all that was necessary,” Hopkins begins; they would not have worn collars but for her and Helene’s persuasion (65). “Billie capitulated at last,” Hopkins remarks, “not gracefully, but he did consent to wear his best clothes *and* a collar and tie [...and] seeing that he had to give in, himself” loaned a collar and tie to Joe. “Helene wore a pretty frock that she had worn to the Melbourne Cup races,” Hopkins writes, and “I wore one of my trousseau frocks that I hadn’t had a chance to sport before. Fortunately for Helene and myself both our dresses were very simple and we didn’t feel overdressed, which would have been horrid” (65). Monica and Helene were not overdressed as a passage in *Our Foothills* about the attendees at the Millarville Races in 1912 reveals.

The anonymous contributor to the community history admits that “not every foothills gathering was a decorous picnic, the ladies flirting beneath their parasols, the gentlemen in spotless white flannel [...]. Nor was every dance a ball with engraved invitations and cards and imported bands, the men in full evening dress, the ladies in gowns described in loving detail by the local press” (*Our* 20). The suggestion is that there were plenty of events that were. Stories about the participation of the British in equestrian sports and the social activities that followed are evidence of the wealth as well as the culture that the elite group of immigrants brought with them to Alberta. “Not all shared, or would have wished to share, in the more extravagant manifestations of this attempt to recreate in the Alberta foothills the life of the English shores,” the author states; however, “a

significant number of the settlers [who did], appear to have had capital resources, an assured income or at least reassuring expectations” (*Our* 20). Key reveals that her family had income and expectation.

In several chapters of her memoir, Key endeavours to elevate her family’s social status by reminding her readers that her parents were wealthy British immigrants. Internalizing the ideologies of her mother, Key promotes the symbolism and value of possessions, such as clothing, for “in those days,” she asserts, “dress and appearance were important clues” to a person’s wealth, education, class, and place in the budding social hierarchy (20). Her mother insisted on dressing “correctly” when the Petters arrived in Strathmore, “and though no neighbours would be watching our arrival,” Key admits, “no doubt the manager of the King Edward Hotel, the stationmaster, the owner of the general store, and the few residents of the little town of Strathmore had duly estimated our station in life, and future value to the community, all from Mother’s appearance” (20). Key provides a lengthy, detailed description of her family’s clothing. She and her sister, Betty, wore matching “navy blue reefer jackets with the traditional two rows of brass buttons down the fronts, and blue sailor caps with the names of Royal Navy ships printed in gold on the black corded silk bands” (21). Her father, she asserts, “had already adapted to the garb of the western settler, [and] wore a grey wool flannel shirt, khaki twill trousers, and a large brimmed hat” (21). Like the Sheppard sons, he adapted to the environment of the Alberta prairies and to the demands of ranch work by adopting western styles of attire: trousers and shirts.

Gardiner was conscious of the symbolism attached to clothing, yet for practical and other reasons, he, too, exchanged his British togs for western apparel. Secure in his place, for he had acquired his own ranch by October 13, 1895, when he wrote a letter to his parents, he rejected the clothes his parents had sent. "I have not worn a tie since I have been out here," he complained (49). "We always wear a handkerchief tied around our necks, silk if one can afford it, but I always wear a coloured cotton one, an imitation bandana. [...] I should look like a dude in those shirts and ties." He expressed the hope that when his parents visited, they would bring him grey shirts, and he instructed them to "bring clothes for all kinds of weather. It may be hot or it may be cold when you are here. One cannot tell for 2 hours what the weather will be like" (49). Hopkins states that her husband Billie's daily attire consists of "navy blue trousers and white (?) shirts, [...] and when it's cold he wears a buckskin coat that he got from a Stoney Indian" (21, editor's punctuation). Her words in this passage convey a sense of pragmatism; however, at other times, she displays her adherence to the value of British clothing, customs, and protocol as visible signs of membership in the elite social milieu of British settlers in Alberta.

Hopkins reveals the importance of clothing as symbols of social status in an anecdote about her new riding habit, "which she had planned to wear," she explains, for a "special event," such as paying a call "on an English bride who has just arrived in this district" (145). During the inaugural ride in that new habit, Snake, her horse, "took an awful tumble and sent [her] flying over his head" (145). They had been traversing a swampy area, and, she complains, she ended up being

covered in “green slime from head to foot” and had to turn around and go home again (145). While the passage appears to be a self-deprecating anecdote about her foibles, it implies, as well, Hopkins’s intention to establish her social standing with her new neighbours by employing the symbols of her status: the new riding habit. As Hoskins puts it, “the object becomes a prop, a storytelling device, and also a mnemonic for certain experiences. However, such devices are never innocent” (4).

Donning boots and britches or a riding skirt—the appropriate attire for English equestrians—was a practice among many wealthy British immigrants. In a study of elite immigrants in the Okanagan Valley, Koroscil presents a formal portrait of James Cameron Dun Waters dressed in hunting pinks while standing on the steps of Plaish Hall Shropshire, where he was Master of Wheatland Hounds (120). He was a wealthy man, recalls Roger John Sugars, a neighbour at his Okanagan estate in Fintry, and he was eccentric for he ““refused to recognize local customs. He rode English saddle in English britches and jodhpurs. He carried a hunting horn which he used to use—you’d hear this hunting horn through the hills and it was Dun Waters out for a ride”” (qtd. in Koroscil 126). Jodhpurs, ankle length riding pants, have obvious connections to the British imperial occupation of India and, through a critical post-orientalist lens, can be seen as an example of cultural hybridity. A settler’s wearing of them might not necessarily have been due to eccentricity; alternatively, such attire might be seen as practical for it afforded comfort for equestrians while in the saddle. Yet, they are, as well, culturally constructed symbols signifying one’s high social rank.

While the attachment British settlers had to clothing is evidence of their regard for cultural traditions, their performance of roles at events that reinvented those traditions on the prairies demonstrates their desire to impose signs of culture on the community in order to inculcate deference among its lesser affluent members, whose acquiescence they sought. Performativity is reflected in both the discourse of my subjects and their behaviour (as it is represented in the discourse) and both reveal the ideologies that shaped and are reflected in them. Hopkins describes the performance of the Millarville races that were held in July, 1910, a festive occasion at which she and her party were invited to join the picnic of the Mitford family, and sat “around a huge table cloth” on the ground to partake in a huge “spread” of salads, “plates of sandwiches, meat patties and devilled eggs [...] cakes and cookies galore, pickles, etc.” (66). “Such a spread!” Hopkins exclaims. Mrs. Mitford, the hostess of the grand picnic, would not brook refusal, but insisted that everyone partake of her “marvelous hospitality; she seemed to thoroughly enjoy watching people gobble up her food” (66). The anecdote reveals not only the plenitude of gracious living on the prairies, but it is also a display of conspicuous consumption, which is an aspect of the georgic traditions that Fowler asserts, “were considered a political necessity for the governing ranks,” whose lives were immersed in agriculture and labour (3). Hopkins describes the social gathering in detail to demonstrate her acceptance into the elite equestrian circle of friends and acquaintances, yet, aspiring to portray herself as slightly higher in morality, she adds that she found it shocking to be a “minister’s daughter going to the races”

(67). Her mock confession serves to remind readers of her previous social status in England and, thus, her rightful place in Alberta's rural bourgeoisie.

Aware of his place in the social hierarchy of High River, Henry Sr. used his journals at times as a guest register and recorded the names of his social connections. At the Sheppards' Cottonwood Ranch, there always seemed to be at least one or two couples of the elite circle visiting and ready to take tea, have lunch, or play a game of croquet. Henry Sr. wrote on August 31, 1907, that in the "Afternoon M^{rs} Robertson, Trott, Madam and M^{iss} De Rossa, M^r and M^{rs} Clanval came I drove Madam Rossa round the place. M^{rs} and M^{iss} Learmonth also came." Referring, perhaps, to his father's journals, Bert recalls that the Cottonwood was where his mother and father entertained their privileged guests, well-to-do settlers like them, who, drawn by the utopian visions of the prairies, came to southern Alberta to pursue the gracious lifestyles these visions offered. Other visitors at the ranch, Bert observes, were the La Chaise, Bidus, La Maout, and de la Claire families, and the "large family of the Marquis de Roussy de Sales" (*Spitzee* 56). Utopian visions attracted many families of noble European extraction. The members of the de Foras family, which arrived around 1906, were among the titled French immigrants who came to the Cottonwood Ranch (*Spitzee* 56). The Count and Countess de Foras and their daughter Oddette were Henry Jr.'s neighbours, as well, and are frequently mentioned in his journals. He wrote on July 23, 1937, that his wife "Eve had another tea party" and "The Countess & Oddette" were among those who attended. While he seemed to be conscious of their titled status in this entry, in others they appear merely as customers for his dairy products.

In *Salt of the Earth*, Heather Robertson recognizes the differences in the social status and financial situations of the immigrants: “Some came with money and possessions—Limoges china and silver tea services, carpets, pianos and canaries in cages—others had only a change of clothes rolled in their bedding” (10). Her pictorial history represents the diverse occupations of those who chose to settle on the prairies: “working people, artisans, failing businessmen, tenant farmers, the seventh sons of country gentlemen without property or occupation, [...] shepherds, peddlars, schoolmasters” and others seeking adventure or future security (10). In *Spitzee Days*, Bert features a photograph of his mother awarding a trophy to the winning team at a polo match, ensuring that readers are aware of the Sheppards’ membership in the privileged British group of immigrants (158).

Displaying the Sheppard family photographs in his memoirs appears to be one way Bert alludes to his family’s social status and wealth. Like his memoirs, photographs offer Bert a means of crafting selective portraits. Moreover, the female memoirists also include photographs as empirical evidence of their families’ successful settlement projects. They seem to substitute photographs for verbal details at times, for these authors’ writing skills are less developed than Traill’s and Moodie’s, whose early memoirs established the practice in Canada. In addition, when photographs do not appear to be available, the authors provide amateurish sketches. Bert’s choice is to include reprints of works of art in his memoirs. In contrast to settlers’ diaries, which are devoid of photographs, memoirs typically include family photographs. In fact, they comprise an important part of

the memoir form and, like memoirs, are designed to provide certain details and omit those that do not contribute to the author's sense of identity.

Drawing attention to the staging of photographs, Robertson suggests that many of the scenes depicted on them are contrived; that is, pioneers were posed "outdoors, in front of their shops or homes, dressed in their best clothes, surrounded by their children and as many of their prized possessions as could be accommodated in the photograph" (7). Photographs were "a means of at once showing respect, preserving a memory and decorating a house," and, at the same time, Robertson suggests, they were "prized also as documents, records to be sent back east as proof positive of the family's continued existence and an illustration of its success" (7). Yet, she recognizes that even to produce photographs was a "rare and practical luxury," that they could be commissioned only by settlers who could afford to pay for them. She contends that her text, nonetheless, affords "a portrait of the rural settlement of the prairies seen through the eyes of the settlers themselves, the ordinary people who did the work," and that most "of the photographs have an objectivity which goes beyond the family snapshot and which gives them a universal, archetypal significance" (7). Pioneer memoirists' photographs are yet another means by which the authors imply their entitlement to homesteads.

The Thomsons had their family portrait taken a few years after their arrival on the prairies. In a chapter called "The Photographer Comes," Thomson remarks that Edmond Auclair, a Frenchman who lived nearby, had been hired "to take a photograph of the farm buildings and all of us" (63). Admitting to the artificiality

of the scene, she recalls that on the day of Auclair's arrival, the "whole farm went into a state of action, for in those old-time photographs every person and every animal in the place had to be seen. We had to bring the cows in so that they would be in the picture" (66). Photographs provide concrete proof of a settler's establishment of a way of life through a display of his or her cultural practices and material goods, yet the photographs themselves are material goods that transmit colonial ideologies pertaining to land.

Key includes numerous photographs to prove her family's success in homesteading, but she does not discuss or, perhaps, even have knowledge of the circumstances under which they were produced. In most instances, material goods serve as the foci for her anecdotes about the life experiences they had, but Key also refers to objects to demonstrate her family's previous high social status. In these cases, they are transformed into symbols designed to convey certain impressions about those experiences. For example, transforming "things" into metonyms that represent her family's utopian vision of the prairies, she lists the multitude of household goods that were packed up to accompany them for the "journey to the fabulous, brave New World, where we were to make a wonderful new life for ourselves" (4). Among these items are "cream and pink, glazed-chintz covered chairs and sofa, the rosewood cabinet for Mother's collection of Goss china, the great black piano with the brass candlesticks, Father's mahogany desk," as well as a "heavy Jacobean gateleg table, the three carved oak chests, the Glastonbury chairs," and a "Nautilus heater [which] was an innovation in England, designed by Grandfather James Petter and made in his foundry in Yeovil" (4-5). She places

emphasis not only on the material wealth of her family in this instance, but on the ingenuity and industriousness of a family patriarch, which no doubt directly resulted in her family's acquisition of that wealth.

Key claims that her purpose in listing her family's belongings is to highlight the labour of having to pack so many items; yet, she betrays an attitude towards them that psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes as a disproportionate investment of concern "in things and their symbol derivatives—wealth, status, and power based on possessions" (92). Key's focus in this and other passages is on "material experience," which Csikszentmihalyi defines by distinguishing it "from one that is social aesthetic, cognitive, or spiritual in character" (92). "In other words," he continues, sounding very much like Heidegger, "just because I am paying attention to a thing, it does not mean that I am attending to its *thingness*" (92; original emphasis). Key's attention to "things" transforms her parents' abundance of material objects into symbols of their wealth.

Tracing the path of goods from England to the prairies, Key states that her family's furniture "and much more was to be shipped by train to Liverpool, then by steamship to St. John, on by train to Alberta, and eventually hauled over the prairie trails on wagons and six-horse teams, to our new home" (5). The route of the Petter family's belongings reflects the bringing of British culture in the form of material goods. It also echoes the Harold Innis's concept of "metropolitanism," which Katerberg describes as "the organization of the staple products trade of broad North American areas through costly and complex transport systems controlled in large urban centres" (205). Innis recognized that "the maintenance of

cultural traits” was as essential to the success of immigrants as was their adaptation “to the new environment,” and, thus, he acknowledges that settlers initially transported their “effects and household goods” from their places of origin during migration (383, 384). The supply of goods, thereafter, was ensured through trade. “The migrant [was] not in a position immediately to supply all his needs and to maintain the same standard of living to which he has been accustomed,” Innis explains (383). Thus, settlers depended on “metropolitan centres” (384). Such was the case for the settlers in my study, who frequently received goods from England or purchased imported goods that had been transported to stores in Calgary or in smaller towns nearby.

Henry Sheppard Sr.’s journal entry on February 9, 1907, indicated the purchase of tea, a commodity that was a staple to the family’s domestic economy. He remarked that two of his sons, “George and Henry rode to Burkes and returned 5 lbs of tea.” The drinking of tea, either as a comestible enjoyed by the family as part of their daily diet or as the focus of social gatherings in the Sheppards’ home, is evidence of both the family’s practice of buying imported goods and their maintenance of British cultural traits. On March 1, 1918, Henry Sr. noted that “Fred Hicks returned the oats I lent him and had tea with us.” Unlike archetypical cowboys, the Sheppards worked with their cattle and sat down to drink tea. In an account for the day’s work on September 30, 1930, Henry Jr. wrote: “Nice fine day. branded Colts yearlings. also 3 calves which we vaccinated. Garstins came to tea.” All of my subjects, with the exception of Bert, frequently refer to drinking tea, and it is always hot, strong, and abundant. In the Sheppard journals, such

indications reveal the recreation of British customs in their new Canadian homes; in the case of the memoirists, references to drinking tea are metonyms that symbolize their families' adherence to British customs and to their practice of British social decorum in spite of their relocation to the prairies.

At times, Key increases her family's prestige further by comparing her parents' wealth to the economic situation of less prosperous prairie neighbours. In an anecdote tempered with humour as a way of deflecting the seriousness of her family's decline, she describes the home of a neighbour as a shack "built of sod, with roofs made of poles covered with straw like untidy thatchings" (24-25). Her father explained that a young English homesteader named Gavin slept in the cabin, but worked elsewhere "to earn enough money to purchase animals and implements," and develop his homestead, for he intended to "bring his bride out from Dorset." "Well, let's hope he can soon provide her with a better home than that!" Key's mother exclaimed, concluding the anecdote by passing judgment on the young man (25). In spite of his lack of wealth, the young man was later deemed worthy of their company, Key recalls, but his prospects were dismal, she adds, for he was "certainly not the strong, rugged type for prairie pioneer farming" (25-26). Key's reference to this all-but-faceless settler serves not only to distinguish her family's class by drawing attention to the Petters' affluence in comparison to his near impoverishment; her declaration that the young man lacked the noble qualities demanded of pioneers and, thus, was not likely to succeed, suggests that her father (and perhaps her mother) possessed these qualities and so,

their prospects were good.¹⁶ Key's entanglement of various factors necessary to a homesteader's success, including the physical capacity to do the work, foreshadows the Petters' success, and defends her sense of their entitlement to the land.

While Key makes disparaging remarks about impoverished neighbours, seemingly, to emphasize her family's wealth and potential for future prosperity, Hopkins comments on neighbours who have less than she does, perhaps, as an attempt to assuage her of feelings of covetousness. She refers to her neighbours the Boltses' ill-kept house in such derogatory terms that her disdain for them is explicit. Using many of the same words that Key devises to describe Gavin's sod hut, Hopkins scorns the conditions of the Bolts' house, claiming that she "could hardly believe [it] was a human habitation!" (23). "Unless you have seen it you cannot visualise such hopeless discomfort as that place was," Hopkins claims; "how anyone can stand is beyond me" (24). "The bedroom is tragic," she protests; "Just a bunk of boards nailed together to one wall, a palliasse filled with straw at the bottom with sheets and blankets on top" (24). Hopkins attributes such slovenliness to her neighbours' lacking in the skills necessary to provide comfortable lives on the prairie and to their lacking in refinement.

¹⁶ Employing a similar narrative strategy, Harry Petter compares himself to less successful farmers in the Nightingale area, relating that they were duped by the CPR into buying, sight unseen, land with "soil that was so alkaline and swampy that it was almost worthless for producing any crop" (142). Petter did not buy into what he calls "one of [the CPR's] infamous colonization settlements" (142). Rather, he bought bare land, hired carpenters to build a well constructed house, and successfully built up his farm on land with a good supply of water (140). His autobiography is part of a community history project, *The English Colony: Nightingale and District*, in which editor Harvey Dougan remarks that Petter prospered by growing flax, alfalfa, and "pedigreed seed wheat, Marquis and Red Fife, and was able to supply many of the farmers in the district with fine-quality seed" (139).

According to Sarah Carter, the “mainly British-Canadian elite that dominated business, politics, education, women’s organizations and other realms worked to ensure that a sense of Britishness [which], combined with whiteness, became equated with Canadianness” (“Britishness” 43). Nonetheless, she observes, “being white and British did not guarantee privilege, power or even acceptance in Western Canada” (48). “Just as whiteness had its own hierarchies,” she explains, “so too did Britishness.” Indeed, there “was no unified British community whose superiority was unquestioned”; rather, “[c]lass distinctions remained sharp, and there was a pervasive anxiety about degeneration from less desirable and poor British immigrants” (48). Hopkins’s scorn appears to be spawned not just from a sense of her superiority over the Bolts, but also from a privileging of her religious affiliations with the Anglican Church. Mr. Bolts’s family in England “are quite well-to-do,” Hopkins explains, “and simply sent him out here as he was an embarrassment to the family, having a tendency to march with the Salvation Army and pray at street corners” (24-25). “At any rate they aren’t likely to go hungry as they get cheques fairly regularly from England,” or so she has been told (25). Hopkins’s pretension of superiority over some of her neighbours seems, at times, to reflect her initial insecurity regarding her own place in the community and in the Church. Jameson notes that, in her later years, Hopkins became an active member “of St. Paul’s Anglican Church [in] Black Diamond” and was “forthright” in giving her judgment of the sermon if it was dull (Introduction xvi). Jameson infers that, when Hopkins was younger, that is, when she first arrived in Alberta, she lacked the level of self-confidence that comes from life experience.

In spite of Hopkins's claims of finding pleasure in the rugged life of a horse ranch, her memoir is often a reflection of day-dreams about a kind of life that was beyond her financial means. Jameson describes Hopkins as a woman who accepted the new country while "retaining something of the graciousness and dignity of the old" (xvii). In other words, Hopkins had a sense of herself as privileged. She betrays her class consciousness when the Enmore Ranch fails to provide her with the kind of sustenance that comes naturally as "unbought provisions," the georgic topic of *sponte sua* analogies (Fowler 16-17). Reality thwarts such expectations for Hopkins, when she finds, the first spring on the prairies, that if she is to feed herself, it must be at the expense of her own labour. In that respect, her memoir is truly georgic. "Gardening is quite new to me," she admits; "I never did any at home, never even had the slightest inclination to do so, though I enjoyed the results of someone else's efforts. Now I am learning that it is quite hard work and I still fail to see where there is much pleasure in it" (52). Cognizant of the fact that her attitude will probably offend "enthusiastic gardeners," advocates and practitioners of georgic ideologies, she moves on quickly to pastoral descriptions of the surrounding landscape. The foothills, she writes, are "various shades of green; the new leaves on the poplars are apple green while the spruce and pine are dark green—the bare hillsides are green, too," and her view of "the Rockies" towering behind the foothills, "all white and glistening with the sun on them [...] was so lovely that it was hard to return to the prosaic work of planting potatoes" (53). She obviously does continue with the task, though, since she writes that she and Billie often ride on horseback in the evening

to work together on the garden, but she does not offer as much detail about the work as she does about the aesthetics of the environment.

Often, pastoral and georgic visions mix in settler narratives as the authors reflect on the natural beauty of their land, while imagining the future aesthetic pleasures wrought from their labour. With such desires in mind, many British settlers planted and maintained trees around the ranches and in the towns. Thomas identifies the many types including: “Russian poplar, Manitoba maple and caragana [which were planted] to give shelter not only from the wind but also from unseasonable frosts” (130). Settlers from Ontario did the same. Thomson observes that her mother, recalling the terrain of Parkland, a previous farm, “missed the oaks and maples and other beautiful trees of Ontario so much that she wanted to get started right away to grow something that would take their place” on the prairies; thus, she wrote to “the government Experimental Farm at Indian Head” for tree seeds (121). No amount of landscaping could have made their homestead a park, however. Thomson relates a story about her mother’s fruitless desire to have a “rockery,” where she imagined planting seeds and having a morning-glory bower (128). The seeds they planted “grew a few inches, but the sun was so hot and the winds so dry in that exposed spot, that they never got to the stage of climbing at all” (128). As the years went by and the family learned which plants were sturdiest, they had “a pretty rockery,” which “continued to be referred to as ‘morning-glory bower’” in spite of the lack of morning-glories (129). In this pastoral vision, Thomson reveals her family’s utopian dreams by referring to their inability to fulfill them.

Henry Sr. sought to create a genteel and pleasant terrain by planting trees around his property and in the cemetery on the outskirts of High River. On April 29, 1913, he “Got the trees from Cluny and planted 73.” On May 8, he recorded that “Jay planted out 50 Russian Poplars.” Following the practice, Henry Jr. planted trees on his farm on the outskirts of High River. He wrote in an entry for April 23, 1936, that while the hired hand, “Ed [was] hauling manure, [he] tried harrows & trimmed trees along the road.” On April 28, he “cut caragana.” Henry Sr. also grew flowers and, being a competitive type of person, entered them in various local fairs. On August 22, 1913, he competed in the “High River Flower show” and wrote: “Splendid day. Splendid show of flowers, everything went off well, everybody pleased. We got 1st prize for White potatoes 2nd carrots 2nd pansies 2nd old lawn.” Thomas maintains that all of the British immigrants “had a kitchen garden and almost everyone a flower garden [which] reflected the transatlantic heritage of the gardeners” (130). “Plants and seeds were exchanged and the hardiest flourished,” he continues, especially varieties such as “Scarlet lychnis or Maltese Cross, perhaps one of the first ‘exotics’ attempted at Sheep Creek” (130). Such were the attempts of the Sheppards and settlers like them to civilize the wilds of the prairies as they sought to realize their georgic utopian vision, which is more than a desire for self-sufficiency; it also implies a gracious style of subsistence.

Henry Sr. reveals why he had time for leisure activities like flower gardening. On July 14, he wrote that he had hired a man named Hatch to cut and stack the hay that would be needed to feed the Sheppards’ herd of horses and cattle

over the oncoming winter. On August 28, 1913, Henry described the weather as “Hot and fine grain being cut every-where and ripening [...]. Drove out to see how Hatch the hay contractor was getting along found him finishing off the last stack.” The next day he observed that “Hatch came in for material to fence stacks with. Very fine and hot all morning.” Henry Sr.’s enjoyment of summer weather seems to come from the fact that he was not working in the fields; he had his ranch work done for him while he “Cut croquet ground and had a game with Bertha and Mary” (23.08.1913). He also hosted a “Municipal Convention., good attendance and interesting meeting,” after which, he watched a “LaCross match and [attended a] banquet in park” (26.08.1913). As well, he hosted a guest named “Mr. Brown” for a week’s visit, drove around the countryside with his sisters Mary and Bertha, who were visiting from England, and enjoyed the gift of a three year old grey horse that his friends “Cyril and Ethel” brought “for me to ride” (24.08.1913). The georgic lifestyle he endeavoured to shape on the prairies depended on the availability of hired labourers to do the intensive agricultural work. One might argue, however, that this is not a georgic vision. At times, the near invisibility of labourers in the Sheppard journals creates pastoral images, which fit within the realm of a dreamy world, “the world of the *Bucolics*,” which, Wilkinson suggests, is “a world of escape” (75-76).

Only a few entries in Henry Sr.’s journals might be considered to be pastoral in style. In one of these, he described a meaningful last visit to the Cottonwood Ranch before he left the house in High River and took possession of the Riverbend Ranch in Longview. On September 14, 1917, he noted that he rode

Tiny, his saddle horse, on a “Beautiful fall day. [...] The old place looks very dilapidated but trees are growing well. [...] Trees getting yellow and quite autumnal.” Clearly, this was a nostalgic moment for him, a remembrance of what he believed to be a “golden age” that was behind him. Henry Sr., the only member of the family who kept a journal while the Sheppards lived in High River, focused more on his church and civic duties than on house improvements. He did not name the family’s town house, nor did he write very much about it in his journals. In contrast, he wrote numerous accounts of the improvements made to the Cottonwood Ranch and to the Riverbend, where he retired. On January 8, 1918, Henry Sr. “Wrote to F Crandell insisting on my resignation from Board of Alberta High River [Rep?].” He participated in municipal affairs, but only part time, such as when he indicated on December 16, 1920, that he “Went to High River to a hospital board meeting.”

Retirement to a house or property in the country is a georgic topic (Fowler 3). It implies a kind of reward for people who possess the prosperity that allows them to conclude their years of labour and live out their years in the comfort to which they feel they are entitled. Virgil addressed the *Georgics* not to absentee landlords, whose large holdings in Italy were worked by slaves, but to “the smallholder or tenant (*colonus*),” Wilkinson states, such as “Cincinnatus, who retired from his dictatorship and returned to his plough as soon as the work for which he had been summoned [by Rome] had been done” (23). Retirement, especially, of military officers, led them to settle on the prairies (Thomas 5-6). They were not always members of the North West Mounted Police, however.

Many of the Sheppards' friends had British military backgrounds. For example, Walter Hanson was the son of Major-General Hanson and was born in India (*Leaves* 127). The Bedingfeld family also came from India after the death of "Captain George Longueville Bedingfeld," who had served in "the Indian Army" (*Leaves* 71). They exemplify settlers who arrived in Canada with considerable financial security and served to establish and maintain British culture in the community. Not all settlers, of course, managed to fulfill their utopian dreams to build ranch houses and secure land holdings on the prairies. Some settlers lacked the financial resources to sustain themselves until their agricultural operations were self-sustaining, while others lacked skills in labour. According to Rasporich, a number of European immigrants lacked common sense.

Utopian myths of prairie settlement have both humanist and religious foundations. Withstanding the uncertainty of success and the disappointments of failure in farming required a kind of faith that is not unlike religious faith. Utopian ideologies are implied, as well, in farmers' anticipation of bumper crops. Such rhetoric was employed by United Farmers of Alberta presidents, not only "idealistic leaders," who, Bradford J. Rennie claims, led farmers to believe they were building "an Arcadian paradise, but also the kingdom of God on earth, a truly Christian society" (256). Faith was bolstered by the many trophies Alberta farmers won "from the Dry Land Farming Congresses of the pre-war years" (245). "Almost never did they question the agricultural production of the province," Rennie continues; "when their aspirations for material comforts were thwarted, some human agency was to blame" (245). Such was the reason many farmers kept

almanacs, for they were useful in determining the best times to plough, plant, harvest, stook, and thresh. Documenting their observations as empirical data may have served to bring to mind abstract knowledge to which farmers could refer again later.

Weather, however, was not something farmers could control. Nor could they prevent the decimation of their crops by extreme weather conditions. They could only alter their plans to accommodate natural phenomena. For example, on August 18, 1921, Henry Sr. had to delay the harvesting of greenfeed due to weather. He wrote: “Henry and I finished getting in greenfeed across river 4 1/2 loads. [...] Afternoon we went up to [section] 7 taking rake but found it was too wet to haul on account of recent shower and came home About 4 a hailstorm came across which lasted for 5 minutes.” The next day, Henry Sr. observed the damage done by the hail and wrote: “Afternoon I started for [section] 7 to mow but rain stopped us Hail destroyed about 20% of Pikes crop and did quite a lot of damage in the district. Alex Thompson & Mrs. came for buttermilk.” The evidence of tersely written notes amid references to unrelated information suggests that weather, including hail storms, was a concern for the Sheppards, yet, not one that required them to construct narratives to recall. Documenting the information in their journals alleviated the necessity of remembering; they could look up the data to discern weather patterns at their leisure. While the Sheppards’ observations were recorded as objective data, the memoirists in my study cite nature or the environment as the reason their utopian desires fail to become reality. They present

dry weather, hail storms, blizzards, and prairie fires as malign, not indifferent, forces that hinder their endeavours to increase their wealth and material comforts.

Thomson recalls a severe hail storm in 1907, after which she and her family members “all felt pretty sick when we saw the ruin of the crop and garden” (215). Key describes with dramatic detail a hail storm that battered their farm, writing that the “wind struck the house like a solid thing. [...] The hail must have been a couple of inches thick” (144). She and her siblings held pillows against the big window in the upstairs bedroom to “prevent the shattering of the glass, when the wind and hailstones hit it”; they gathered the calves and milk cows into the yard, and they drove “the geese and turkeys into the chicken house,” but there was nothing they could do to stop the decimation of their fields (143). In spite of such setbacks, Key recalls, her father having “had an amazing resiliency. He would come in exhausted and taut with a strain after some disastrous happening, a stillborn calf, the chickenhouse raided by hungry coyotes, the first load of new wheat graded 3 instead of 1 hard at the elevator, but after a short rest and a cup of tea he would pick himself up and cry, ‘Are we downhearted?’ and we would all shout cheerfully, ‘No’” (141). Key’s portrayal of her father, emphasizing his noble qualities of tenacity and self-confidence, and his enthusiasm for the work involved in farming, is a valorization that honours him. Yet, it is also a kind of proclamation of entitlement to the land. Moreover, the inclusive ‘we’ suggests that, by association, she, too, was deserving of the wealth accrued by her family’s homesteading project.

There is a suggestion in Key's memoir that she believed her father possessed a kind of naïve optimism, that is, of the kind Rennie and Rasporich discuss. Key describes her father as having a "Mr. Macawber-like faith that when times were difficult 'something would turn up', that inevitably all would be well in the end" (141). Evidence of similar kinds of faith in utopian ideals is found explicitly and implicitly in the life writing of all of my subjects. Reflecting on her father's motivations for uprooting his family from their English estate and transporting them to southern Alberta, Key observes that he "and every soul was convinced that within a few short years he would be returning to his homeland a wealthy man" (4). When the Petters arrived, Key recalls, the "great surge of emigration was at its peak and the waves of colonists were flooding out from Britain towards the Land of Promise, Canada, the Golden West" (4). The time of a *golden age*, Grant McCracken asserts, "is always a historical period for which documentation and evidence exists in reassuring abundance" (107). "Somewhere on the spatial continuum there is always a perfect 'other,'" he observes, "in terms of which locally unobtainable ideals can be cast" (107). Utopian visions exist "in the mind of the believer," McCracken continues; thus, pastoral societies "look forward to the opportunities for perfection that development will bring," while industrial societies "tend toward a certain fondness for pastoral societies," and "[c]olonized countries tend to regard the 'mother country' or the 'fatherland' as the perfect fulfillment of local ideals" (107). Cumulatively, settler memoirs constitute a compendium of nostalgic reminiscence that continues to support popular notions of the period as a golden age.

“Spiritually” Rasporich states, “utopia also represents a refuge or escape from the existing evils of society and projects a new social order based on communitarian ideals” (127). In *In Times Like These*, Nellie McClung reveals that she shares the kind of utopic vision that manifests itself as an antagonism between the country and the city. Sheldon Rothblatt asserts that, among the texts studied as part of a British public school education, the writings of Horace and Virgil “on the benefits of retirement and return to the land” exacerbated “antagonism between town and country” (37). Whether or not she was aware of the source of her ideologies, McClung was a proponent of georgic ideals. Gerald Friesen discusses the obstruction by social reformers of development on the prairies in the early twentieth century motivated by “a widespread dissent from industrial capitalism” and a desire to “build an alternative society” (13). He contends that support for this utopian model came from farming cooperatives, the United Church, and Prohibition movements, which “shared a critique of contemporary North America and a vision of an ideal alternative” (13). Likewise, Henry Sheppard Sr., with his ideologies founded in georgic traditions, shared ideals with those who promoted agrarian traditions and saw industrialization as a threat to a lifestyle they cherished.

Promoting similar beliefs, McClung imagined the city as a place of debauchery, where the retired farmer, out of boredom, will take to drinking (112). An agrarian lifestyle in the country was her ideal mode of retirement. Like Virgil, McClung elevates the farmer above other men, valorizing him for his independence, for being “able to get along without much help from anyone. He could always hire plenty of men, and there are machines for every need” (113).

This logically flawed and internally contradictory statement is not a georgic vision; it is a pastoral image, a dreamy world, Wilkinson states, in which “the earth of its own accord lavish[es] on the countryman an easy livelihood” (75-76). Seeking to regain this mythical happier past, many British immigrants established farms and ranches on the prairies and endeavoured to create country estates.

Some of the first ranchers and farmers may have thought like McClung and imagined themselves as gentle folk, supervising the labourers who actual worked the land so they could enjoy its bounty. In such cases, they imagined the prairies not as the *country*, where rural folks laboured to grow food crops and raise livestock, but as the *countryside*, which Landry asserts, was a place where propertied gentlemen took their leisure (*Invention 2*). Such was not entirely the case for British horse fanciers like the Sheppards and Gardiner. Despite the fact that they were part of an elite social group, their sense of the land appeared to be a synthesis of pastoral visions and georgic traditions, which focused on labour. There was no antagonism between labour and leisure for these settlers; when it came to taking care of their horses, their labour was their leisure. Even Hopkins came to see labour as integral to her life. That is, in spite of the labour intensity of her chosen lifestyle and those of the other authors, they found satisfaction in the pleasure of engaging in equestrian activities. Yet, clearly, this form of leisure depended upon their ability to hire menial labourers to assist them.

As I discuss in my fifth chapter, the personal accounts of the authors in my study reveal that they depended on hired help to ensure the completion of the vast amount of work on their farms and ranches. In having the ability to choose which

tasks they would do and which they would not do, they assumed the dual roles of overseer and labourer. My reading of their life writing does not overlook the tensions that shaped their self-identities as members of an economically driven society that demanded their acquiescence as much as they demanded it from those who worked for them. Marcuse reminds us that “liberty can be made into a powerful instrument of domination. The range of choice open to the individual is not the decisive factor in determining the degree of human freedom, but *what* can be chosen and what *is* chosen by the individual” (orig. emphasis 7). He argues that the “reproduction of superimposed needs by the individual does not establish autonomy; it only testifies to the efficacy of the controls” (8). In other words, he writes, “the concept of alienation seems to become questionable when the individuals identify themselves with the existence which is then imposed upon them and have it in their own development and satisfaction” (11). Marcuse’s discussion of workers’ alienation from their labour brings to mind the fact that the writers in my study had been indoctrinated by a society that placed a high premium on equestrian skills, when these served as demonstrations of cultural superiority and authority, and that they chose to engage in equestrian activities as a result of their internalization of British ideologies. One might consider that immigration to Alberta was not just a personal choice made by these writers, but that they were chosen by governmental design to fulfill preconceived roles as ideal citizens.

The agrarian society that grew in small towns in Alberta, Thomas asserts, was not egalitarian (201). Describing the demographics of the town of Okotoks, which is where he grew up, he recalls that “[t]here were no Indians” (106).

Okotoks “saw itself as a stronghold of British tradition” and, in spite of the fact that “there was little evidence of outspoken racism, there were plenty of indications of a rigid, stratified and complex class structure” even if no one “ever talked about class” (106, 109). The vision of the prairies as an agrarian utopia, one that was clearly shaped by georgic traditions, was meant for British immigrants and Anglo-Canadian citizens. Anglo-Canadian hegemony was promoted by government officials like Frank Oliver, who believed that if Canada “was to be ‘one of the great civilizations of the world,’ a policy of selective immigration was necessary, based on social and cultural considerations” (qtd. in Koroscil 3). “Oliver’s preference,” Koroscil asserts, “was for the ‘right class of British immigrants from the Old Land, [the] Englishman, Irishman, [and] Scotsman [...for he] is of the same race and speaks the same language as Canadians”” (qtd. in Koroscil 3). Day critiques the discourse Canadian officials used to describe “the problem” of immigration and to articulate the solutions. The federal government, he argues, designed programs to assimilate non-British immigrants, believing that populating Canada with desirable types of settlers would result in the “evolution of a British Canada” (153). The language of “Mendelian genetics” surfaced in the rhetoric employed as officials discussed the goals of establishing an ideal Canadian society, Day continues, and while sociologist Robert England attempted to move the “discourse on diversity into a new realm: that of *culture*,” it continued to be used into the 1920s to further the notion of an emerging Canadian race (154-55; original emphasis).

The source of genetic theory might be found in the agricultural interests of the many immigrants who established farms and ranches in the nascent state. The primary focus of many of the first immigrants in southern Alberta was, initially, Thomas states, on the breeding of pedigreed horses. The goal to produce ideal specimens in the breeding of horses and other kinds of livestock was a manifestation of utopian dreams. Such animals had displaced meaning, or, in Bourdieu's terms, they had cultural or symbolic capital. Henry Sr. and other members of the elite group of equestrians who came to Alberta to establish horse ranches endeavoured to produce fine equine specimens by practicing selective breeding. "The origins of selective breeding in England," Landry asserts, are found in the sixteenth century with the "making of the modern thoroughbred from imported Near Eastern bloodstock, especially the purebred Arab" (*Invention* 9). Selective breeding projects found governmental support in Canada. Kathleen Strange writes about her and her husband's poultry operation near Stettler, Alberta (186). For several years, while breeding pedigreed chickens, they sent "official record sheets for the Record of Performance Test [...] every week to the Dominion Poultry Department at Ottawa" (188). Okanagan Valley pioneer Dun Waters's interest in improving dairy cows "led him to develop one of the finest herds in Western Canada," and in 1929, Koroscil maintains, he donated twenty-four head of registered Ayrshire cattle imported from Scotland to the Departments of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, at the University of British Columbia (127-28).

With the goal of social progress in mind, Emily Murphy and Nellie McClung imagined a form of selective breeding as a method to expedite social

development. Thus, such language surfaced, disturbingly, in the eugenics movement, which also promoted the superiority of white Anglo-Saxons (Devereux 30). The eugenics program, Cecily Devereux states, was familiar to “most English-Canadians with the involvement of first-wave feminists in the eugenical legislation in Alberta in the 1920s” (44). Devereux draws attention to McClung’s language in an article she wrote for “the Toronto magazine *Everywoman’s World*,” in which McClung complains that

“marriage, home-making and the rearing of children, are the most haphazard undertakings in our social life. [...] When people raise chickens, they measure the coop and find out how many feet of air each fowl requires [...] and] what feed will cost. These considerations determine the size of the flock. [...] when there are as many bulletins issued from the Department of Welfare as there are now from the Live Stock Department, everyone will understand more about the science of Eugenics.” (Qtd. in Devereux 45)

The concepts foundational to the eugenics program stemmed, perhaps, from the fact that agriculture dominated the daily discourse of many immigrants, although they may have been shaped as well from the *Georgics*, which promoted notions of an ideal society. In Book Four, which describes the husbandry of bees, Virgil lectures on the responsibilities of community members to the welfare of society in general. Moreover, all of the *Georgics* “is didactic,” he claims (11).

Henry Sr. indicates that he also took it upon himself to instruct his community members in proper Protestant morality as a magistrate and as a promoter of Anglican and Georgic ideals. He and his wife Bee, Gardiner, Key, and Hopkins were part of a select social group of British immigrants whose personal development, Thomas asserts, had been “moulded by the educational system peculiar to the upper and middle classes” in England (35). Theirs was a “new

society” that was to be formed on the Canadian prairies, one that “found its ultimate inspiration in Britain” (174). Henry Sr. used his journals to keep track of the number of parishioners who attended Sunday services and to comment on the quality of the sermons as he does on March 10, 1912, having noted: “Church twice Canon Haghen strong at both services. with good congregations.” His religious sentiments are in keeping with his georgic lifestyle.

The way the *Georgics* “asserts moral principles, supports political attitudes, and implies philosophical and religious views” is through allegory, Wilkinson observes; “To a large extent the farmer stands for man in general” (11). W. J. Tregillus, one time president of the United Farmers of Alberta, believed that farm life “was a wellspring of happiness and virtue, [...] ‘the most natural and healthful life we can live’” (qtd. in Rennie 246). In the farmer, Tregillus saw “the Jeffersonian ideal of the honest, contented yeoman—the moral fabric of the nation—tilling the Edenic paradise,” Rennie suggests; “Tregillus’s idealized yeoman was outstandingly masculine. He was gritty, tenacious, principled, a man of faith and action” (246). These are figures wrought from the mythos of the prairies shaped by utopian ideologies. The settlers in my study create images of themselves as models of robust figures to emphasize the intensive labour required in their shaping of the prairies in a georgic vision, a utopian model they endeavoured to create by landscaping their properties into ‘English country gardens’.

This chapter has presented the pattern of cultural development as the pioneers in my study endeavoured to realize their visions of Eden. The Sheppards’

cultivation of a circle of friends with equestrian interests was their goal for it meant a genteel kind of ranch life. The raising of houses and cultivation of gardens served similar purposes for Key, Thomson, and Hopkins. Foregrounding their labour as fundamental to attaining their utopian goals, the authors support their sense of entitlement and maintain suggestions of superior social rank. They also assume that rank through recollections of their performance of roles in British cultural practices such as polo matches and horse races, and the balls, banquets, and picnics that accompanied these sporting events. Horses play starring roles in these events. In my next chapter, I explore frontier myths in which imaginary cowboys and broncos, like knights and steeds transported from an Arthurian England to the Alberta prairies, symbolize power, authority, and entitlement.

Chapter Three – Images of the American Frontier in Settlement Narratives

“[F]or the most banal event to become an adventure, you must (and this is enough) begin to recount it. This is what fools people: a man is always a teller of tales, he lives surrounded by his stories, and the stories of others, he sees everything that happens to him through them; and he tries to live his own life as if he were telling a story. But you have to choose: live or tell.”

(Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea* 39)

In this chapter, I look at American influences on Canadian ranching culture, and their bearing on the creation of frontier myths and mythical cowboy figures in popular history and fiction, and, subsequently, in settler memoirs. Frontierism, an “American myth-history,” describes settlement in the western provinces in terms of a separation of “the frontier from the Old World and emphasize[s] adaptation [to a wilderness environment] rather than cultural inheritance” of European ways (Katerberg 68). The notion of the frontier in Canadian history, William Katerberg states, emerged from two schools of thought: the staples thesis of Harold Innis and the “metropolitan-hinterland” paradigm of J. M. S. Careless (69). These theories, he asserts, provide a basis for a Canadian frontier thesis, which imagined an “interaction between ‘new world’ frontier hinterlands, or peripheries, and ‘old world’ metropolitan centres” (69). The notion of the frontier is still a pervasive power, Richard Slatta observes, one that gives an imaginative quality to the history of settlement (*Comparing* 32, 193). Reflecting on the “diverse influences and environments [that have] shaped the Alberta ranching frontier,” he assesses the theories of historians, such as Patricia Nelson Limerick, Terry Jordan, Blake Allmendinger, Evans, Elofson, and Breen (200). He singles out Breen for drawing attention to the brevity of “Canada’s western agrarian

frontier” and for considering the influence of “eastern Victorian culture” on the cattle industry, thus, adding complexity to “traditional studies [that have] presented ranch life in Alberta as a simple, straightforward northern extension of the American West” (200-1).¹⁷

Alberta’s ranching and cultural history might be seen, however, as a pluralistic gathering of ideas rather than a vying for dominance between various interpretations of social and economic development. By taking a pluralistic approach in my research, I support both Breen’s assertions that eastern Canadian and British cultures influenced the development of agrarian communities in southern Alberta, and Elofson’s assertions that American cowboy culture and the environment had an “impact on the society that participated in the ranching industry” (*Cowboys* xiii). I focus not only on the ways the environment has affected cultural and agricultural development but also on the ways pioneers sometimes imagine it in their memoirs as a malicious force that willfully obstructs the progress of settlement. In these narratives, the characters are pioneer stereotypes that rise to the challenges of a primitive visceral existence and eventually succeed. Much like Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett, actual American pioneers transformed by film and fiction into frontier heroes and embodiments of “the popular ideal of the self-made man” (Smith 88, 111), Canadian pioneer heroes symbolize ambition, industriousness, steadfastness, and entitlement. My study

¹⁷ Slatta refers, perhaps, to Wallace Stegner’s assertion in *Wolf Willow* that “Canadian ranches, [such as] the 76, the Matador, the Turkey Track, and the T-Bar-Down, were simply extensions of cattle empires below the border” (134). Slatta notes that “Breen challenged the erasure of the border” between Canada and the United States (201).

deconstructs the kinds of settlement myths that upheld notions of privilege during the formation of ranching communities in Alberta and continue to do so through the valorization of pioneers by regional and provincial museums that guarantee them hallowed places in history.

Popular culture continually reinvents the frontier in contexts that keep the make-believe region called the “Old West” vivid in the popular imagination. Limerick draws attention to one of these contexts in a “commercialized version” of the frontier in Anaheim, California: Disney’s *Frontierland*, a “concrete, three-dimensional form” (68). It is a playground that invites visitors to “fall into step with the mythic patterns of frontier life, pick up a gun, and blast away at whatever is in sight,” including “plastic Indians” that have been set up for target practice along the entertainment site’s trails and waterways (68, 70-72). In “the field of Western American history,” Limerick states, “the crucial term ‘frontier’” has undergone “critical examination,” which has resulted in “a more carefully thought-out, more inclusive, less ethnocentric definition of the term,” such as Jack Forbes’s definition as ““an *inter-group contact situation*,’ ‘an instance of dynamic interaction between human beings,’ involving ‘such processes as acculturation, assimilation, miscegenation, race prejudice, conquest, imperialism, and colonialism’” (qtd. in Limerick 76; original emphasis). Regardless, the notion of the frontier, Limerick declares, continues to resurface in new forms that have a far greater impact on collective memory than its definition by historians (79). Its most “fervent” articulation, she claims, is found in “the 1986 Paine commission report on the future of the space program,” titled: *Pioneering the Space Frontier* (79).

Yet, a more pervasive influence than civic jargon might be seen in Gene Roddenberry's popular weekly television series, *Star Trek*, whose slogan, "Space, the final frontier," has announced the start of each episode since the 1960s, and is, undoubtedly, the source of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's rhetoric.

For "most Americans in the twentieth century," the term frontier, Limerick contends, has come to mean "a zone of open opportunity," while 'pioneer' refers to an innovator in medicine, in sports, in culinary arts, or in whatever fields advertising employs the frontier trope to market consumer goods (Limerick 67-68). Historian David Wrobel contends that the term frontier "has become a metaphor for promise, progress, and ingenuity" (qtd. in Limerick 68). In its reinvention in Canadian settlement history, the frontier spirit has affiliations with expansionism from east to west, as pioneers from Britain and eastern Canada took up land and "civilized" it; that is, they erased indigenous culture and brought their own to dominance. Other than a couple of entries that record Gardiner's attendance at the first rodeos, there are few references to frontier imagery in his letters. There is no indication in either Henry Sr.'s or Henry Jr.'s journals of the authors' awareness of frontier myths. When they describe cowboys schooling bucking horses, they do so literally rather than ideologically; the horses and the men who rode them are actual beings in the phenomenological realm of their ranching environment. The memoirists, however, reiterate frontier myths to support their claims of entitlement to the land.

Bert Sheppard, for example, exaggerates the personal attributes of pioneers, transforming them into metonymic figures which, as exemplars of admirable human qualities, appear deserving of their success. Drawing from popular Western fiction, he valorizes the cowboys he knew (and some he had merely heard about), turning them into cultural icons or heroes of the Wild West. Reminiscing about the days of his childhood in High River, he imagines a time when cattlemen were kings and cowboys roamed the streets. “A western atmosphere prevailed in the town,” he claims in *Spitzee Days*; a “town scene in television’s *Bonanza* gives one a pretty good picture of what High River was like in those days,” but he adds that High River “could hardly be called a cowtown” at that time because of its rapid development (47).¹⁸ Bert depicts the era, paradoxically, as a time of adventure and drama, when carousing, drinking, and celebration were the norm, and a time of stringent moral standards, when “old fashioned values” censured if not restricted certain cultural practices. The horse, the cowboy, and cattle are symbols of this time and place, or what he calls “The Wild and Woolly West” (*Spitzee* 278).

Often, Bert portrays even his own life as if it were an episode in a classic Western. He relates that, after attending “school for ten long years,” he began his career as a cowboy in 1918, when, sounding like a kind of Huckleberry Finn, he “got away [...] into the hills where there were still lots of horses to ride” (47).

Subsequently, Bert aligns himself with the cowboys, who did the same—the “bow-

¹⁸ Dianne Vallée remarks that in the mid-twentieth century, community members of High River, including members of the Chamber of Commerce, decided to restore and preserve buildings that had been constructed in the early twentieth century and shape the town centre in a frontier theme as a means to increase tourism (Conversation).

legged men of the range [...who rode] their horses down the street” (47). In his memoirs, Bert creates characters that embody what Jane Tompkins describes in *West of Everything* as a rejection of eastern ideologies that subjugated the individual and required him to conform to social restrictions (39). Much like Western novelists, Bert depicts cowboys as strong and autonomous, disseminating notions that not only can they shoot better and ride better than most other people, but that they are morally superior and possess the qualities of courage and sagacity that entitle them to assume positions of leadership.

The “real working cowboys” of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Allmendinger asserts, were not leaders among men; they were itinerant menial labourers, men of low social status who accepted jobs shunned by men of privilege and wealth (12). “Despite the often romanticized descriptions of cowboy culture,” Gregory Nobles observes, cowboys were “men with few options,” who worked for low pay during seasonal employment in the cattle industry, and were despised by conservative community members, “who aspired to a more genteel society” (199). They existed literally and metaphorically on the periphery of social centres and created myths about their isolation and self-imposed exile, myths that took the form of an oral and “‘invisible’ discourse” about branding, castration, and drifting, and were passed “from mouth to mouth, or from one singer to the next” (Allmendinger 9). Bert Sheppard captures some of these myths in written discourse.

In “Cattlemen and Cows,” a chapter Bert wrote for *Leaves from the Medicine Tree*, he imagines the code they lived by and writes: “In those early days,

men were rated by what they could do, rather than by the clothes they wore or the money they were supposed to have” (254). Celebrating their courage and their vigour, he reasons that pioneer ranchers chose their lives because

they had adventurous spirits, and by necessity and environment they were men of action. The very nature of their work, handling wild cattle and horses, swimming rivers, fighting prairie fires and bucking blizzards, made them observant and resourceful. Their very existence often depended on judgment, coolness and quick thinking, in dealing with a runaway team, a drowning saddle horse or other emergencies. (245)

One of Bert’s metonyms for emergencies—a drowning saddle horse—seems to have been based on his very own real life experience, a near tragedy that his father recorded in his journals on May 24, 1929. Henry Sr. wrote: “Bert rode Davis’s gelding to Sam Smiths. The horse got dizzy in the river at Bull Creek crossing & headed down stream. fell down on the big rocks with Bert under him. Bert got free and was washed down by the whirlpool which nearly got him but he swam downstream and landed by the lone tree, got some dry clothes from Jack Dixon and went on to Sams.” There is no reference to this event in Bert’s memoir or in the history of the TL Ranch, for his survival was not an act of heroism; it was one in which he averted his annihilation by an indifferent, natural force. Bert tells a surprisingly similar story, however, about a man named Herbie Jones, who nearly drowned in the whirlpool at Bull Creek Crossing one day when “the river was high and swift. [...] Being a strong swimmer, he just managed to get out on the south side. His horse did not get into the whirlpool, and got out on the north shore,” so to retrieve his horse, Jones had to make “a one hundred mile trip” (*Spitzee* 161-62).

There are only a few references to death by drowning and other accidents in Bert’s memoirs and each is presented as an unfortunate tragedy caused,

possibly, by the hubris or lack of caution of the victim. Bert may not have wanted to broadcast the news of his close call when he decided to ford the creek near the whirlpool, for such a story would have portrayed him as lacking in the wisdom and skills of an experienced frontiersman. He was merely lucky to have survived. In Henry Sr.'s journal, Bert's near fatal encounter with a natural force is an anomalous event without metaphorical meaning, and the whirlpool, in Heideggerian terms, is a "thing" of his and Bert's concern, a "thing" that the authors could not buy, make, nor manipulate: *das Vorhandene* (Ricoeur 172). Heidegger's theories of phenomena afford new ways to conceive of the components of settlement memoirs for material theories serve to distinguish between the objects or things to which the Sheppards refer in their journals and "things" that Bert transforms into metaphors and symbols. In his memoirs and in the anecdotes Bert composed for *Leaves from the Medicine Tree*, they lose their existential constitution and become *das Zuhandene*, "things" Bert can manipulate. In his tales of adventure, he transforms dangerously swift rivers into a symbol of the environmental challenges men faced on the frontier.

The lives of heroic cowboys are full of close calls, for screenwriters incorporate them into Western dramas to add tension to the plots. The lives of real working cowboys, in comparison, were tedious at times and stressful, perhaps, even traumatic at other times; they were not glamorous, nor were the cowboys as the photograph below reveals. Today, Westerns still arouse the public imagination as they did the imagination of early cowboys and cattle ranchers, and while frontier "[f]iction, film, painting, and mythology" have the capacity to "capture

some element of historical ‘truth,’” Slatta warns that they “are not history” (*Comparing* 180-81). “Cowboy myth and history both have a place” and, as “a temporary escape to ‘those thrilling days of yesteryear,’” Slatta maintains, “a dose of cowboy mythology is healthy and enjoyable” (*Cowboys* 231). Nonetheless, he adds, “we must try to distinguish between them” (231). Bert combines history and myth in his memoirs, but he does not differentiate between them. He leaves clues, however, that enable the reader to make such distinctions. There are, for example, changes in voice, which indicate whether a passage is actual history or whether he is indulging his penchant for writing fanciful tales.

Bert’s colloquial diction in the following anecdote indicates its fictional quality and attests to the influence of Western fiction and film on his writing style. In this anecdote, an anonymous cowboy hero, a “big tall hand from Montana,” rescues several ‘damsels in distress’ (*Spitzee* 69). Implying that something of high moral value can be learned from the experiences of the past, Bert writes: “Today, sex is bandied about from every quarter: television, radio, cinema and magazine. When I was a kid, there wasn’t all this hullabaloo. I guess people just did their thing, as the saying goes, at least they did around High River” (69). Bert does not quite get around to explaining what is wrong with the world today; rather, he employs his cynicism to begin an anecdote about some of High River’s shady history and a cowboy hero’s enactment of social justice.

“There were no less than five houses occupied by ‘ladies of easy virtue’ in the old cow town,” he divulges; “[o]ne was a big two storied house built for the purpose,” near a well-used thoroughfare, but “set back in the trees” (69). “I knew

the man that had it built,” and he “told me that he was a member of the Methodist Church,” Bert explains, drawing attention to the irony of the enterprise (69). As well, implying a justifiable leniency, he recounts that the Mounted Policeman, who received “frequent complaints” about the goings-on in the house, was “a sympathetic soul [and] would ride up in full view of the premises, rest his horse a bit, then ride slowly up to the house, which gave any visitors a chance to get out the back door [...] and the girls a chance to tidy up a bit before being interviewed by the mountie” (69). One afternoon, Bert’s narrative continues, a few “young bloods from town” were “giving the girls a bad time,” when the anonymous cowboy just happened to be in the vicinity. Being the hero that he was, he “pulled a six shooter, kicked open the door,” and the trouble-makers “made a dive for the back door and were seen no more” (69). Bert creates the kind of character typical of Hollywood Westerns. His detailed description of the cowboy: a handle-bar moustache, a big black hat and black angora chaps, and a six-shooter, transforms what is already a mythical figure into what Slatta identifies as a “unidimensional” caricature (*Comparing* 139). Bert concludes his story with one final bit of irony, adding that the house later became a Maternity Hospital, and leaves the reader to wonder if his tale of social justice—conducted in a brutish manner and with bravado—is contrived to augment the portraits of cowboy heroes his stories create, or whether his discussion of social issues is an attempt to present his moral position, for he vaguely articulates his point. Whichever the case may be, his anecdote reinforces stereotypical depictions of pioneers that support claims of

entitlement by individuals, such as cowboys, whose noble and even heroic qualities bolster their right.

The mythologizing of masculine figures in frontier narratives is a discursive strategy employed to maintain notions of racial superiority of the dominant cultural and political group over people of other ‘races,’ and to maintain class privileges over those lacking in financial resources and the material goods that serve as signs of affluence. In colonial discourse, such figures acquire their power through repetition (Bhabha, “Other” 66). They also acquire power, Nobles adds, through their “simplicity” (x). Frontier myths offer “one-sided views that implicitly separate the world into ‘good guys’ and ‘bad guys’” in tales “repeated over and over” until, Nobles asserts, they have permeated popular culture to form an enduring “‘master narrative,’ which provides both an explanation for the past and a justification for the present” (x-xi). In a revisionist critique of Turner's essay, Nobles draws attention to the ethnocentrism or Eurocentrism of the concept of the frontier, maintaining that Turner’s “description of the frontier as ‘the outer edge of the wave—the meeting point between savagery and civilization’ made clear his preconceptions, even prejudices,” for the assumption is that it “was European ‘civilization’ that met Indian ‘savagery’ at the farthest point of European penetration in the New World wilderness” (11). These prejudices have been transmitted to subsequent generations through Western films in much the same way that Charles Kingsley’s literature indoctrinated British children to believe notions of British superiority.

Bert identifies one of the sources of influence for his myths about settlement on the frontier in his brief history of the Wales Theatre in High River, which was named in honour of the Prince of Wales and was opened at “the start of World War One” (*Spitzee* 246). The theatre featured “old flickering silent black and white movies,” he recalls, films “portraying the cowboy comedian, Universal Ike, Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin, and a western serial that came on once a week called *The Fighting Trail*” (246). Entries in all three sets of Sheppard journals attest to the frequency with which family members attended shows at the Wales Theatre. The first reference to film viewing is found in Henry Sr.’s journal entry for March 9, 1912, when he noted that he had “Cutes and Edwards up for disorderly conduct in Picture show.” The first reference in Henry Jr.’s journal is on March 30, 1929, when he wrote that “Mary Bert Mack & Mickie came down [...and] we went to picture in afternoon.” In an entry for August 20, 1929, he wrote that: “Ruth [and] Doreen [Runciman] rode down [and] Eve took them to see Mr. Sibleys moving picture.” Bert, too, recorded going to the pictures in his journal. On August 4, 1938, he noted that he went with “Rumpus [?] Joesphine and Ruth to picture show.” The cowboy characters imagined by Hollywood films shaped public perception of the personalities of the men who worked in the cattle ranching industry and proliferated a skewed history of its development. The frequency and consistency of the Sheppard family’s attendance at the movie theatre suggest that Hollywood actors, dressed in iconic cowboy attire and playing the roles of cattlemen, are the kinds of figures that served as models for Bert’s retelling of that mythical period.

Bert was mesmerized by the earliest Westerns about cowboy heroes, no doubt, just because of the novelty of the medium. Innovations in the 1930s, such as musical sound tracks, added to cinema's manipulative power. The "subliminal role of music in the movies," Fredric Jameson asserts, is "a means of guiding our 'consumption' of the plot" (23). The music in Western films evokes emotional responses to the visual images of scenes and characters, facilitating the transformation of rugged and sometimes ragged cowboy characters into heroic figures. Jameson identifies the effects of music as aural hypnotism enacted through "the repetition of easily recognizable themes not unlike advertising slogans" (16). The result is a domination over the audience's senses so that the "quality of their listening deteriorates [and] they lose that autonomy of judgment" (16). An example of such music is "The Ballad of Davy Crockett," the theme song of the Disney television series, *Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier*, which, "[p]layed or sung as background music for the screen action," Nobles observes, "could be as light and jaunty as the canter of Davy's horse or, in more serious moments, as slow and solemn as a hymn" (x-ix). One can only imagine the level of emotional investment Bert might have had in the images of highly masculine figures, such as frontiersmen and cowboys, and speculate on the reasons he chose to continue the myths of authority embodied in them.

A more long-lasting effect than temporary aural hypnotism, an effect that, in part, accounts for the continuing popularity of Western films and constitutes the danger inherent in them, is the power of the musical score to arouse political and racist ideologies. Witold Rybczynski draws attention to the fact that "a reverence

for the past,” which often arises in reaction to “a world characterized by constant change and innovation,” results in the invention of traditions (9). Bert betrays such sentiments when he writes about the changes in techniques of cattle management brought about by mechanization. I discuss these passages shortly. Rybczynski also warns of the national sentiments foundational to the emergence of pioneer traditions. He cites the creation of national anthems in England and most European nations in the mid-eighteenth century, and the invention of Colonial furniture in conjunction with the Centennial celebrations in the United States (9-10). “The Centennial encouraged the founding of many so-called patriotic societies” and a rising interest in genealogy, both of which, Rybczynski asserts, reflected the “efforts by the established middle class to distance itself from the increasing number of new, predominantly non-British immigrants” in America (10). Such interests arose as well in Canada during Centennial celebrations. As I will show in chapter five, Hopkins’s, Key’s, and Bert’s memoirs betray racist and nationalistic sentiments.

The music from films like *The Big Country* (Moross) and *How the West was Won* (Newman and Darby) is played in Western pleasure classes at horse shows to provide ambience; yet, as well, it embodies, honours, and preserves the traditions of cowboy culture, and keep the nationalist ideologies associated with frontier imagery alive in the collective memory of the participants. The title of Newman and Darby’s film is, undoubtedly, a re-articulation of the theme of land entitlement pronounced explicitly in historian and American President Theodore Roosevelt’s *The Winning of the West*, which charts the expansion of settler culture

across the continent as a kind of conquest. Richard Slotkin asserts that Roosevelt's "frontier Thesis [...] was far better known than Turner's"; however, their respective theses merely proliferated many elements that "already belonged to the complex of traditional ideas that had accumulated [...] since colonial times" (29-30). Bert plays a significant role in promoting such notions in popular Canadian history through his retelling of stories of settlement as a kind of manly conquest in southern Alberta.

"Clearly," Nobles states, "no one would dare write about 'How the West was Won' today; rather, "historians are now rethinking the notion of the frontier as a place of 'interactions among the various cultural groups who lived in or passed through the area ... a cultural crossroads rather than a freeway to the West'" (Peggy Pascoe qtd. in Nobles 14, original ellipsis). Yet, Limerick points out, "the work of historians has had virtually no impact" on the public imagination or on the media (72). Reiterating phrases that sound often like slogans, Bert reveals the impact of popular culture on his writing. His reference to the influence of mid-twentieth century television shows like *Bonanza* and to earlier cinema in his hometown suggests that he was conscious of the Western genre and of contributing to it when he writes about the cattle barons, "George Lane, A. E. Cross, Pat Burns, and A. J. Maclean," as the "four Alberta Cattle Kings" (*Spitzee* 128). While entries in his father's journals refer to Lane and Herb Millar amidst the details of the workaday world of ranching and offer evidence of their human capacities, Bert, nonetheless, portrays them as larger-than-life in his rekindling of frontier myths in

the 1970s. Thus, he renews the potency of colonial ideologies embodied in these figures.

Bert's selective portrayal of pioneer ranchers serves to shape his self-identity, for his affiliation with pioneers, the "old time" cowboys who lived during the early stage of prairie settlement, allows him to draw upon their legacy to fashion his self-portrait. That is, by emphasizing their admirable qualities and their accomplishments, he furthers not only their reputations, but, by association, his own. He aligns himself with Millar and Lane, who developed the industry after George Emerson, Tom Lynch, and others, brought cattle from Montana and settled in southern Alberta in the late nineteenth century (*Leaves* 20-24). In his memoirs, Bert laments the passing of these "old time" cowboys. At the time of writing, he reminisced that "Herb Millar and Rod Redfern are the only ones left" of the cowboys he knew and the "old style saddles that they rode are museum pieces now in big Western cities such as Denver and Cheyenne" (*Just* 112). Anticipating his own passing, Bert placed his saddles, bridles, chaps, and other tools of the ranching trade in the Stockmen's Foundation Bert Sheppard Memorial Library and Archives, perhaps imagining that doing so would serve to immortalize *him*.

Valorizing the cowboys who developed the Alberta ranching industry, Bert's narratives transform them into symbols of Canadian frontier myths. The anecdotes that constitute Bert's memoirs exemplify those that fill "the more recent publications" of regional histories, narratives "related by the children of those who participated in the events," not by settlers themselves (Dempsey, "Local" 179). They might be better categorized, Dempsey asserts, as "tall tales and folklore" or

tales of the “wild west” (177). One of these tall tales is Bert’s retelling of Tom Lynch’s founding of the TL Ranch in 1887 or 1888 (TL 1). Bert attributes the source of the information to Lem Sexsmith, an old-timer and one of the first pioneers in High River. Sexsmith, according to *Leaves from the Medicine Tree*, died in 1954 (43). He would have been about eighty years old at the time he passed the story on to Bert, and about twenty years old the summer when, as Bert relates, Sexsmith “was haying at the Rio Alto Ranch, located about three miles south of Sullivan Creek on the Highwood flats” (TL 1). Despite the fact that six decades had passed, Sexsmith claimed, when he told the story to Bert, that he “vividly remembers the day the TL was started sixty years ago” (1).¹⁹ Bert retells the story in the style of a yarn—which no doubt it was in its original form—emphasizing the machismo of Lynch’s men in response to the threat of competition for the land posed by the Rio Alto Ranch crew. He writes:

Lynch’s four horse outfit piloted by Old George Baker on a saddle horse, who by the way was a top rider and supposed to be an ex outlaw from Wyoming, pulled into the Rio Alto or OH Ranch for dinner. The OH owners got wise to what he was up to and decided to keep an eye on him, and if he tried to locate too near them to run him off.

As soon as Baker and his man left the ranch, Lem was instructed to run in the horses. All hands promptly saddled up and followed the wagon tracks. Seeing where Baker was headed, they decided to beat him too it.

Loping up Flat Creek which parralels Sullivan Creek, they made a quick gather of some of their cattle and threw them down onto the Sullivan Creek meadows. Baker arrived at the same time and sizing up the situation unstrapped a Winchester off the back of the wagon seat and rode

¹⁹ Bert’s assertion that sixty years had passed between Baker’s experience and his telling of the yarn to Bert affords an approximate date of the TL Ranch history’s composition as 1947 or 1948. Bert states that it took him four years to gather the information and type up the manuscript. His last paragraph identifies the year 1951, he recollects that in “June 51, we had an exceptionally unusual and severe snow storm.”

up to the OH outfit with his rifle resting across the front of his saddle. The OH owners claimed it was there range, Baker said it wasn't, he said these cattle have just been driven in and they are going out a dam site faster than they came in, and I'm starting a ranch here in half an hour. Having got this off his chest he sicked his dog on the cattle. The OH outfit headed for home, and the TL came into being. (TL 2)²⁰

Bert's presentation of the inception of the TL Ranch as a stand-off by two opposing "outfits": the men of the Rio Alto Ranch and the crew of cattle drivers under Lynch's employ, bears similarity to the kinds of stories offered by the pulp fiction Westerns of Louis L'Amour and Zane Grey. The prime objective of L'Amour's protagonists is to claim the land and settle it for their own use and material gain, an objective often achieved by way of brute force in a battle that ends in bloodshed. Such a depiction resembles tales of the disputes over property ownership that marked the development of ranching in the United States. According to Breen, settlement of rangeland in the United States was brought about through a system of squatter sovereignty, which, initially, worked well, "but as the range became more crowded [and] ill-defined range rights proved difficult to defend by legal means," conflicts over land escalated into violent range wars (21). In contrast, settlement of the land in Canada was brought about by a system of surveying under governmental supervision and legal claims were protected by the Northwest Mounted Police (21, 85). Yet, Bert dramatizes the events that marked the inception of the Canadian cattle industry as an American-style frontier tale.

²⁰ Such tales of the West sometimes find their way into scholarly accounts. Edward Brado's *Cattle Kingdom* is one of these. Brado has revised two pages from Bert's history of the TL Ranch to correct typographical, grammatical, and spelling errors before presenting the information as a brief, albeit, dramatic historical narrative (49).

Despite the fact that the Canadian frontier was brief—a mere two decades in duration according to Slatta (*Comparing* 200)—Bert laments its closure and the passing of the men who were part of it. He writes:

The terrible winter of 1906 and 1907, which liquidated seventy-five per cent of the range herds, had joined hands with the homesteaders and sod busters, to break the back of the open range beef cattle industry. [...] So ended an epoch that started only a quarter of a century earlier in this country; yet such was the color and romance of its brief duration, that its ever lengthening shadow lives on, in western garb, in fiction, on the screen, in rodeo, and on the ranches. (*Spitzee* 45)

Bert clung to a belief in hallowed frontier traditions, especially those associated with the open range system of raising beef. His reminiscence of a glorious age now gone typifies the kind of nostalgia that resonates in the title of Hugh Dempsey's colourful history: *The Golden Age of the Canadian Cowboy*, in which his “carefully crafted description of the heroism of individual cowboys and ranchers in the face of implacable nature” during the winter of 1906-07, serves “as the closing chapter” (Evans 134). Depicted in such a way, the winter was, also, the closing chapter of Alberta's open range ranching system, a notion perpetuated by myths of the frontier that transform natural phenomena into malevolent forces.

Evans implies that Wallace Stegner offers a more pragmatic view than other observers by maintaining that “[t]he net effect of the winter of 1906-07 was to make stock farmers out of ranchers” (qtd. in Evans 134). Yet, the impression Stegner creates in *Wolf Willow*, his expertly crafted memoir, is that the winter that year was the worst ever seen, that it remains “in the minds of all who went through it, as the true measure of catastrophe” (137). It was “the year of the blue snow,” he asserts, and was a “great event, [for] it had the force in history of the Cypress Hills

country that a defeat in war has upon a nation” (137). Attempting to counteract exaggerated claims of the severity of the weather promulgated by myths, Joy Oetelaar asks “was it really ‘the worst’ winter on record?” (qtd. in Evans 134). The Sheppard journals, which document daily temperatures from 1907 to 1953, reveal that it was not. For example, Henry Sr. recorded the temperature as “30° below zero”²¹ on January 11, 1913; “40° below” zero on February 13, 1923; and “33° below” on February 1, 1932. On these days, while he might have remarked on the cold, his account of the activities he did indicates that the operation of the ranch continued as usual.

Like Stegner, Bert dramatizes the severity of certain winters. His father’s and brother’s journals provide support for Evans’s “skeptical” view. Evans maintains that the numerous stories of exceptionally cold winters were “coloured” by the “perceptions” of witnesses, who “had their own visions of development and agendas to pursue” (134). It is his opinion that there is a lack of consensus among observers, because there is an “absence of any authoritative estimates of the losses incurred” (137). Thus, while some witnesses testify that ranches such as the Matador lost “40 to 50 per cent of their two-year-olds,” others claim that ranches in the Cypress Hills area “lost 60 to 65 per cent” of their herds (136). Hard evidence of the intensity of the cold the winter of 1906-07 can be found in the form of empirical data in farmers’ logs and journals, such as those kept by the Sheppards. An “empirical examination of ranch society,” Slatta contends, is a means of undermining the influence of “heroic, epic, and mythic” depictions of

²¹ All temperatures in the Sheppard journals are measured in Fahrenheit.

frontier traditions (*Comparing* 139). Indeed, he remarks on the value of “firsthand records” constituted by the “detailed accounts” ranchers kept of “their operations” (169). He cites, as examples of valuable written accounts, a letter by A. E. Cross, “dated September 21, 1892,” and Monica Hopkins’s *Letters from a Lady Rancher* (170). Reading Hopkins’s “letters” phenomenologically offers insights that an ideological analysis cannot provide; yet, the depictions of winter weather found in the manuscript is, arguably, shaped to insinuate either hardship or pleasure.

The Sheppard journals portray extreme winter conditions as a phenomenological reality to which the authors responded by increasing the surveillance and tending of their animals. On January 13, 1907, the first of three consecutively cold days, Henry Sr. recorded the temperature as “27° below” and wrote that he “Fed cattle,” while the hired man, “*Aubrey* went to Walshes.” The next day, the temperature dropped to “32° below [with a] very cold wind *Aubrey* hauled sheaves from across the river, and fed cattle a load of hay.” The third day was colder in the morning: “33° below, warmer afternoon. *Aubrey* hauled a load of hay.” Henry Sr. indicated that, on several days, he had to keep his cattle and horses in the barn or in the stable yard, and give them extra feed to enable them to sustain the severe cold. The following year also brought extreme cold. Henry Sr. recorded the temperatures in his journal entries for December 1919 and January 1920, and depicted the fluctuations of the weather in more nuanced terms than Bert does in his memoir. On January 19, “about 10 inches more snow” fell and he noted that his “Boys went to feed cattle in [section] 7 starting on the 2 yr old stack of hay.” The next day, Henry Sr. recorded the temperature as “20° below zero” and

indicated that he “rode up to [section] 7 [...] to see if cattle had finished the hay. Bert went to Royals field to open waterhole.” Henry Sr. watched the thermometer on several days, beginning with January 22, 1920, when it recorded a temperature of “40° below zero. 25° below all day.” Temperatures stayed at around “26° below” until January 27, when a “Chinook blew at 9 PM” and the weather “Turned warmer”; indeed, the “thermometer rose to 40°.” One can conclude from the journal entries that winter consistently brought cold weather, and while ranchers might find some relief in the form of Chinooks, they had to have stores of hay to provide feed for their animals to ensure their well-being.

Bert and Henry Jr., like their father, also fed their cattle well and provided them with shelter when needed. Henry Jr. wrote on January 28, 1947, “Cold & dull all day little snow fell during the night Red Calved in shed Calf pretty Cold ears frozen we put him in Cow stable.” Bert also recorded extreme cold in an entry for January 30, 1947: “25° to 30° below zero. Cold winds, Walked down to Longview. Afternoon Warren [Zimmerman] & I went to see 7. Fed cattle two loads of straw. Wind in the north. Warren froze his nose & ends of fingers on the way home. We found out afterward that it was 42°.” Bert and his cohorts sheltered calves in sheds when the weather warranted their protection. Bert’s journal entries for January, February and March, 1938, document the renovation of a chicken-coop in preparation for its use as a calf-shed. On January 25, 1938, Bert noted that he “Went with Fred to sand grade, after that we started pipe-line to chicken house. [...] Afternoon finished line, Rumpus put stove in chicken house.” Presumably, the pipeline was to supply fuel for the stove. On March 21, 1938, he wrote: “20° frost.

Slight snow flurry in the night another calf born. Fred fed cattle in [section] 7 and brought home a load of hay. Cleaned out chicken house of [rubbish?] ready for calves.”

The Sheppard journal entries record few deaths among the family’s horses and cattle during cold winters and none from starvation or hypothermia; rather, they appear to be due to old age or attacks of colic. Henry Jr. recorded the death as a result of old age of one of his horses. On January 13, 1938, he recorded the visit of the veterinarian, “Dr Little [who] Came to look at Majors teeth, but did not pull them.” On February 11, 1938, he wrote that “Major died.” For horses, poor teeth are a result of age. No doubt, such was the case here. Yet, death sometimes came from sudden illness, too. On April 2, 1920, Henry Sr. noted that “A red 2 yr old steer died from indigestion.” Two days later, another steer became ill and Henry “rode to Shakerleys to get stomach pump for sick steer. [...] Boys doped steer with raw oil & ginger.” In spite of their efforts, the next day, the “Sick steer went down to River and drowned himself.” Significantly, the Sheppards did what they could to alleviate the suffering of the steer.

During the winter of 1906-07, a lack of food, water, and shelter was the established cause of death for many Bar U cattle. Henry Sr. observed on January 27, 1907, that an unidentified person “hailed out the dead Bar U bull that died here.” Likewise, Thomson writes about a heifer that came into their farmyard seeking food and shelter that winter. She recalls that the cow “had the ‘Bar U’ brand and we heard later she was the last survivor of a bunch that had perished to the north of us” (213). The Thomsons called her “Mrs. Buffalo Bones,” because

her “ribs and hip bones [stuck] out.” Her “ears and tail [were] frozen off,” and when they fed her, she “tore at the hay in a famished way” (213). The heifer was “weakened by starvation and she couldn’t get to her feet,” so Thomson’s brother Jim shot the animal “as an act of mercy” and her father immediately informed the Bar U managers (214). Her narrative serves not only to criticize the treatment of cattle by the ranch operators but also to emphasize the harshness of the climate that she and her family endured.

While Henry Sr. bluntly recorded the death of a Bar U animal on the Cottonwood Ranch, in an entry later that winter, he wrote—again, without embellishment—that stray horses had wandered into the yard and a “bunch of steers came in at south gate,” attracted, likely, by the hay and sheaves the Sheppards put out for their own animals. The Sheppard journals reveal that cold winter temperatures presented a reality that the authors not only anticipated, but to which they adapted by drying, cutting, and storing hay in the summer to distribute to their animals during harsh weather. Like other ranchers in the region, the Sheppards fenced their hay stacks to save them from free ranging cattle. Brado observes that “many farmers had difficulty protecting their stacks of hay from the ravenous wanderers” in the winter of 1906-07 (270). “The greatest danger” presented by the weather that winter, he acknowledges, was to “range cattle on ranches [whose operators] had not bothered to put up hay” (270). The Sheppards’ cattle were not among these fatalities.

Gardiner criticized the short-lived open range system in a letter he wrote to his mother, dated June 29, 1894, in which he observed: “A good many of the cattle

owners do not [feed cattle in the winter], but I think the cattle pay for looking after; you do not get so many die” (10). His sense of self-righteousness implies moral superiority over the rough and ill-mannered cowboys and ranchers with whom he was forced to associate during his career as a hired hand on the Bell Ranch. In August, 1885, after he had purchased his own ranch, the Wineglass, he prepared to cut and store hay, and wrote that he “intends to put up about 50 ton of hay [...]. The crop is looking good” (45). In September, he managed to put up only forty tons. He outlined his plans to create a shelter for his calves by building it from “unedged boards and battening the cracks with slabs [which] will make a good strong shed” (46). The animal husbandry practices of ranchers like the Sheppards and Gardiner is an indication of the philosophy and methods of the georgic traditions, which the British equestrians and cattle ranchers imported and adapted to the prairie climate. Indeed, these traditions were a cornerstone of the culture they brought with them. Jordan asserts that irrigating land, haying, building barns, and “carefully tending cattle” are indicative of the British animal husbandry methods practiced and transmitted by the American cattlemen who brought the first herds to Canada (226-27). A phenomenological study of settlers’ animal husbandry practices offered in an examination of the Sheppard journals and Gardiner’s letters serve to deconstruct and undermine the validity of frontier myths that valorize the open range ranching system by providing more ethical alternatives; yet, such a mode of inquiry also yields evidence of the way that European traditions were brought to dominance on the prairies and supplanted subsistence practices that had sustained Indigenous peoples for decades.

The Sheppards' employment of georgic methods of animal husbandry proved successful for they saw increasing numbers of horses in their herd. The Sheppards used their journals as a kind of stud book to record the numbers of horses they had in their possession, the names of their breeding stock, the dates of the births of foals and their gender, and other data pertaining to the raising and training of horses. In 1907, the Sheppards had fifty-three horses. At the end of his 1908 volume, Henry Sr. recorded that they had ninety-four.²² The Sheppards also used their journals to record the number of stacks of hay they built in the summer and the amount of hay they fed in the winter. In an entry for January 5, 1918, Henry Sr. wrote: "George hauled hay making 25 loads from stack in [section] 7." In a summary for August, 1940, Bert noted that it "turned out to be a perfect haying month with no rains and practically no showers or wind. [...] altogether we got about 80 tons of hay up." Perhaps, Bert determined the cycle of dry summers and severe winters by reading his father's and his brother's journals, for both authors consistently recorded the daily temperatures over the course of each year. In his hand-typed history of the TL Ranch, Bert observes:

some things are pretty obvious. One is that things are apt to go in cycles. A series of wet year, a drought of several years duration, a stretch of years such as 1939 to 46 when we had very mild winters, sometimes practically no winter at all. Every ten years or so an exceptionally hard winter such as 46 and 47 when about twelve feet of snow fell here. (30)

²² About 1910, with the introduction of motor vehicles, which decreased the need for horses, the Sheppards shifted their focus to cattle ranching. The 1910 and 1911 volumes of Henry Sr.'s journals, which would have recorded the reduction of their horse herd, are missing.

Andrew Isenberg indicates that prairie farmers became aware of weather patterns after a number of years of observation, and realized that “the western plains climate [was] characterized by droughts of several years’ duration interspersed with years of above-average rainfall” (17). Noting that 1917 and 1939 were “killer years” when the drought “was so severe that it killed grass on the range,” he asserts that, retrospectively, we can now estimate that the “average period between droughts was just over 20 years” (18). Henry Sr.’s reference to “the 2 yr old stack of hay” in the entry for January 19, 1920, reveals that the Sheppards prepared for eventualities, such as a low yield of hay in one harvest, by stockpiling hay when it was plentiful. While Henry Sr.’s and Henry Jr.’s journals documented the success of georgic agricultural practices on the prairies, Bert’s memoirs depict the environment as a nexus of unpredictable forces. Both versions of history depict the bringing to predominance of georgic agricultural practices on the prairies.

Bert employs his fictional anecdotes to bolster pioneer memoirists’ claims of the severity of environmental challenges and the deserving of those whose tenacity enabled them to survive. For example, he claims that during the hard winter of 1919-20, he “count[ed] over thirty dead cattle in about a quarter section, and twenty-three dead horses in a small area [...] the hair worn off their jaws from pushing their heads into willow clumps trying to get a few blades of grass” (*Spitzee* 215). Whether Bert recalled his experience from memory fifty years later or drew these details from his father’s journals is undeterminable, yet, he appears to refer to his father’s journal entry on April 21, 1920, which indicated that in the

afternoon, “George & Bert [...] rode to [section] 24 and saw about 20 head of dead horses.” Nonetheless, rather than focus on the tragedy of the loss of animal lives, Bert concludes his anecdote by blaming the deaths on the lack of precipitation during the previous summer and a scarcity of hay as a result, and emphasizes the loss of “some cattlemen” who had failed to get returns on their investments “when the bottom fell out of the market” in the fall of 1920 (215). By dramatizing the fluctuating levels of precipitation, Bert offers a narrow or selective view of the settlement era and contradicts the information documented in his family’s journals. Bert demonstrates, in this case, a clash of capitalist and georgic ideologies. Prominent figures in Alberta’s history—George Lane, Fred Stimson, and Pat Burns—saw ranching as a means to an end, a capital investment or, as Evans states, “a means of turning grass into money” (90). In contrast, settlers like Gardiner, the Petters, the Thomsons, the Hopkinses, and the Sheppards saw ranching as a way of life centred on animal husbandry and engaged in practices of stewardship.

In a lengthy discussion of the practices of large cattle companies to winter cattle on the prairie without offering the provisions required for their survival, Evans implies that the deaths of thousands of cattle every decade or so were due, not to extreme winter conditions, but to the decision of cattle barons not to feed, water, and shelter the animals, for, he asserts, with profit in mind, the operators of large cattle companies made conscious decisions to feed some but not all of their livestock (134). Evans contends that in spite of the heavy losses of animals’ lives, which revealed the flaws of the open range system, some cattlemen in the early

twentieth century were still reluctant to change their methods (136). The history of pioneer ranching in Canada told in the trope of the frontier creates myths that serve to justify the entitlement of settlers to the land by emphasizing their success in meeting the challenges of a rugged environment. Frontier myths can also mask the failures for, by depicting weather as a malevolent force, the authors of these kinds of narratives draw attention away from the fact that the open range system was, debatably, an unethical means to maximize profit. “Whatever meanings historians give the term” frontier, Limerick argues, “in popular culture it carries a persistently happy affect, a tone of adventure [and] heroism, [...] very much in contrast with the tough, complicated, and sometimes bloody and brutal realities of conquest” (75).

Alberta settlement history has long celebrated the lives of Lane, Cross, Burns, and Maclean. Yet, Evans claims that historians do not need to ““spice up”” stories about these men or “glamorize” the parts they played in the history of the cattle industry, for they already “tower larger than life over the oral and written record, and the story of their achievement needs no embellishment” (xv). They have been portrayed as bold and enterprising pioneers, and, thus, deserving of their success. Indeed, the Calgary Stampede, a Canadian adaptation of frontier history, has annually celebrated the lives of these four entrepreneurs. Evans paraphrases stories published in the *High River Times* on May 30 and June 6, 1912, stating that Lane saw the “Stampede as a perfect way to show off the achievements and the potential of the growing progressive west, while at the same time celebrating its frontier past” (180). Bert identifies Lane, Cross, Burns, and Maclean as producer

Guy Weadick's financial backers for the first Calgary Stampede in 1912 (*Spitzee* 128). He also mentions Weadick occasionally in his journals as one of the men with whom he shared the workaday world of ranching and, sometimes, the not so common experiences of life. Bert wrote on February 6, 1947, that he "Walked to Longview. met Joe [Bews] & Guy Weadick, went with them to *High River* We all went to Henry's for lunch. We all went to Ed Marston's funeral. Guy, Joe, Sam Smith, [?] Fraser, Henry & self acting as pall bearers. Got back to River Bend about 6:30."

In his memoirs, in contrast, Bert valorizes Weadick and portrays him as an extraordinary individual—an iconic figure in a mythical version of history that depicts settlement as unfolding on a Western frontier. Bert explains that Weadick, with his cowgirl wife, Florence La Due (born Grace Maude Bensell), entertained audiences on the vaudeville circuit in the United States in the 1910s and established the first dude ranch, the Stampede Ranch, near Longview, Alberta, in 1920 (*Spitzee* 131). Enamoured with entertainment idols, he boasts that Hollywood producers used the Stampede Ranch in 1925 to shoot a film starring former bronc rider and racecar driver Hoot Gibson (131). Bert features images of Weadick and La Due in *Spitzee Days*, and tells several humorous anecdotes about their adventures while operating the ranch. He also includes an image of a poster advertising the Stampede Ranch, which describes it as "Western Canada's Pioneer Guest Ranch," offering chuck wagon trips, mountain pack outfits, range riding, cowboy and Indian guides, log cabins and Indian teepees, electric lights, and "*No Snakes!*" (133). In promoting the Calgary Stampede as a celebration of frontier

settlement and the Stampede Ranch as a holiday resort, the Weadicks mythologized the pioneer experience and created imaginatively stylized models of cowboys for real people like Bert Sheppard to emulate.

Dramatic images of cowboys on bucking broncos that grace historical narratives of cattle ranching create a skewed presentation of settlement by transforming cowboys into heroic figures. Bert includes many of these images, seemingly, to liven up his memoirs. One of them is a painting by Bert Smith. Bert may have commissioned it. He relates that he supported cowboy artists by teaching them cowboy skills while they honed their skills as artists (TL 36). In subtle ways, through visual artistic rendering and in stylized verbal descriptions, Bert implies that men with highly developed skills in equestrianism were entitled to success and, especially, to the land they claimed to build their ranches. Images of skilled riders on bucking horses help to build and support the hegemony of settler culture.

Obviously, the horses in photographs had earned reputations as incorrigible buckers before photographers were commissioned to capture their performances. As Roberston reminds readers in her discussion of settlers' family portraits, the scenes in photographs are staged (7). Bucking horses were and still are rare, valuable, and coveted by rodeo stock contractors. Evans observes that a few "outlaws" on the Bar U "ended up in Madison Square Garden in New York" and became the co-stars of an entertainment business (275). The insertion of images of broncs and cowboys into settler memoirs and history proper gives the impression that riding wild horses was a regular part of a working cowboy's job; yet, in the workaday world of cowboys, stubborn horses were just a nuisance. "Horse

breaking consists of encouraging a horse to do the right thing and discouraging him from doing the wrong,” Bert maintains; thus, when a horse bucks, he is discouraged from doing so by whipping (*Just* 108). The Sheppard journals suggest that bucking horses were a rarity and that the ability to train them out of the habit of displaying that vice distinguished exemplary cowboys from the common variety.

Cumulatively, the Sheppard manuscripts tell the story of an exceptional cowboy. In 1919, Henry Sr. hired an expert horse trainer to school Bert’s “3 year old roan mare,” for Bert, only eighteen years old at the time and lacking experience, found her too much to handle. He wrote on June 3, 1919, that the “roan bucked pretty badly.” Henry Sr. identified the cowboy as Billy Barlin. In an entry for the same day, Henry Jr. identified him as Bailey. He wrote: “Bert rode one of his colts Thompson went up to Bruce’s to take porcupine quills out of steer. Bailey came down from Bruce’s to ride Bert’s mare.” In the history of the TL Ranch, Bert identifies Bill Bailey as a young cowboy who, like other cowboys, worked as a hand for wages on ranches in the area including the Eden Valley Ranch (9). He also worked for the TL Ranch for a time, and, as Bert affirms, Bailey “could both ride and rope, and was considered one of the top hands in the country” in 1917 and 1918 (TL 8). His ride on the Riverbend Ranch that day might have become famous had a photographer been available to capture the moment, for Bailey, having had established a reputation as a skilled rider, and the mare, a reputation as a stubborn buckner, attracted the attention of people in the community. Yet, for the Sheppards, the presence of an uncooperative horse was an

inconvenience, an unwanted expense (for they had to pay Bailey to school the mare), and a danger.

In his memoirs, Bert does not address the fact that bucking horses posed a threat to him and other members of his family; rather, he depicts expert riders in mythical dimensions, exaggerating their tenacity and valour. In the marketing of rodeos as a form of entertainment, exaggerating the magnitude of a cowboy's riding skills is standard practice. Among those who capitalized on this scheme was Weadick. As an entrepreneur, he made considerable contributions to cowboy lore and legends of the frontier. When Weadick arrived in Calgary in 1908 with the "Miller Brothers 101 Ranch Wild West show," Donna Livingstone explains, he saw an opportunity to build on the myths of the frontier already circulating among community members by hosting "a frontier days celebration and championship cowboy contest" (26, 31). The formalization of cowboy competitions as a new kind of entertainment prompted the creation of a rodeo circuit, constituted by annual rodeos in small towns around the province.

Bucking horses and their riders add to the legends and artistic renditions of the frontier. Bert Sheppard observes that "thousands of people [...] each year take in the Stampedes and enjoy the spectacular bronc rides put up by the Rodeo performers" (*Just* 104). Not all pioneers supported the notion of rodeos as forms of entertainment, however; an unnamed author of a letter to the editor of the *Grain Growers' Guide*, dated September 17, 1913, reacted negatively to the promotion of rodeo as entertainment, "likening the scene to a relic of bygone times or a Spanish bullfight" and, annoyed "by the lack of practical application and the irrelevance to

the progress of the west, especially of bucking, [...] snapped, ‘We have improved our horses out of those habits, and we should be ashamed of them’” (qtd. in Jones 461). Likewise, the Sheppards seem to have had little interest in rodeos and only a few experiences with them.

Claude Gardiner saw the spectacle of a good rider schooling a bucking horse as a relief from the tediousness of the work he did as a cowboy. He wrote in a letter dated May 26, 1885, that he has been on a roundup and was entertained by watching “some fine bucking” (39). “Franklin had a horse he was riding that is a regular outlaw [and] bucked for a long time when he was mounted,” Gardiner explained, “but Franklin has him cured of it now. He is a good rider. They reckon him the best in the Territory” (39). In an undated letter to his mother, in which Gardiner referred to Buffalo Bill, one of the major figures of frontier myths and original promoters of Wild West dramatizations as entertainment, he described going to Fort Macleod for amusement. “They have been having a small show and some races in Macleod 3 days last,” he wrote. “I wish I could have shown them to you for you would then see the Wild West,” Gardiner continued:

You would think it was Buffalo Bill’s turned loose. There were cowboys in their get-ups, Indians in blankets and red paint [...]. Then there were races [...] a cowboy race [in which] you ride up course, round a barrel, back around another one, and home. Of course you must ride a good cow horse to turn so short. Then there was riding the bucking horses for a prize. It was very good; they got all the worst horses they could and they did buck. (21)

Gardiner expressed admiration for the skills of the cowboys, perhaps, internalizing the myths of masculinity that were carried by frontier imagery; yet, he was also amazed and disappointed by the difference between the equestrian culture on the prairies and his own back home in England. In a letter to his mother, dated June

17, 1894, he complained of the poorly trained horses he was given to ride. He wrote that he had been on his first roundup, and judged “the horses [as] rather raw to ride, nothing as good as the English horses” (8). Evans discloses that seasonally hired herders were given rough-broke broncs to ride, and invariably, would get bucked off. In the 1880s, Millar had little time to break the horses that these men were to ride other than to “teach [it] to stand while being handled and saddled, and while a rider mounted and dismounted. He would ride a young horse a couple of times and try to teach it to respond to the reins, but it was incomplete ‘schooling’ to say the least!” (93). Evans adds with a degree of irony that the “impromptu bucking contests which occurred on the first few mornings of any roundup showed that cowboys were expected to be able to handle a good deal of ‘mettle’ in their mounts” (93). His comments on the reality of the lives of hired hands imply the risk of bodily harm in such practices and question the myths of cowboy machismo.

Gardiner acknowledged that he was given better treatment the second year of his employment on the Belleview Ranch and wrote in a letter dated May 26, 1885, that he had been on another roundup and that “Franklin gave me a very good horse to ride and we had good fun” (39). Gardiner was a keen and competent equestrian, whose letters suggest that his confidence was based on experience, which, in turn, prepared him to take on the work of a cowboy. His direct personal experience of the first versions of rodeos demonstrates that, contrary to frontier myths, riding bucking broncos was not part of the regular routine of a working cowboy. For some cowboys, rodeo became a sport in which they competed for prize money. Gardiner proudly stated that his friend, Reed, won prizes, both for the

cowboy race and for the steer roping that took place later when he wrestled a steer and tied it, scoring a time of “2 min. 12 sec” (22). The day of entertainment was short lived, however, and Gardiner soon found himself back at the ranch “helping Old Watson get in a little hay and dig his potatoes” while Bell the ranch owner was “away on a roundup branding calves.” His letters offer views of cowboys’ lives that contradict their mythologizing.

The Calgary Stampede has served to establish Anglo-Canadian culture (albeit with a Western flavour) as the dominant culture in southern Alberta. By presenting bucking horse contests and other rodeo events as a form of entertainment for a century, it has promoted and maintained frontier myths that romanticize the open range system. The Stampede has long occluded the suffering of horses and cattle incurred by such practices and, moreover, by transforming cowboys into heroic figures—that is, by praising them for their ruggedness—it has masked the exploitation of the real working cowboys. Elofson states that, in Alberta history, cattle barons like A. E. Cross and Senator Matthew Cochrane “have been viewed as shrewd businessmen with foresight and vision”; however, their success was temporary at best, and depended partly on keeping “the numbers of cowboys they hired to drive and tend the cattle on their spreads” as low as possible (*Cowboys* 6). Bert overlooks the politics behind such practices and depicts early ranch life as necessarily brutal. Moreover, he implies that one had to be tenacious to survive.

In the following anecdote about a cowboy’s bravado and skill, a yarn called “The Old West,” he reflects on an event that had happened when he was a child or

before he was born. One day, he begins, “Charlie Lehr, the old Bar U roundup cook” was given a team of two horses by “his friend and former boss, Herb Millar,” the Bar U manager (*Spitzee* 116). The horses had yet to be broken, Bert explains, so they were driven into a log corral so the job could be done. He provides a description of the process, writing:

Each of these horses in its turn was front footed, thrown and hog tied, leaving the near hind leg free. The horse was then haltered with a heavy bronc halter. A strong rope was tied low down around the horse’s neck and his free leg was pulled ahead a little with the rope and securely tied, so that when the horse was let up, his foot was just off the ground. [...Soon after] he was hooked to the wagon with a break horse, and given a whirl around the prairie, with the judicious use of a good rawhide centered buggy whip. The bronc was then unhitched, unharnessed and tied up to the corral to think things over. [...] Millar now considered the team was ‘broke,’ and told Lehr to drive them home. [...] Charlie Lehr was equal to the occasion. He had not driven a chuckwagon, pulled by four horses, over the open range in Southern Alberta for years for nothing. (*Spitzee* 116)²³

Significantly, in spite of the fact that horse trainers jeopardized both themselves and the horses when they employed the brutally expedient method of rough breaking, Bert downplays the risks they took. Indeed, in his memoirs, at least, he omits references to the physical discomforts and pain they experienced.

Bert identifies the many men who worked for the Bar U Ranch between 1882 and 1937, not as bronco busters, but as real working cowboys, such as himself and his brother Jay (*Just* 76-77). There are over one hundred names. Among them are Jonas Sam Rider, Frank Bedingfeld, Guy Pallister Sr., and Herb

Millar. Whenever any of these men are mentioned in the Sheppard journals, they are depicted as ordinary beings, that is, ordinary, not in the sense of their status, for they were privileged members of the agrarian community, but in the sense of their corporeality or mortality. Bert demonstrates these human qualities in his journals. For example, on February 29, 1940, he remarked: “After supper went to see Herb Miller who was sick abed with the flue,” and again, on March 3, 1942, when he wrote: “I went out to the see Herb Miller, Herbs 80th birthday.” Likewise, Henry Sr. mentioned George Lane in a mundane context, writing on March 5, 1912 that he “Saw George Lane about a sale for sewage disposal plant.” The Sheppards knew Lane very well, not as a mythical figure, but as a friend. In frontier tales, men like him are made legendary and seem larger-than-life. Even Evans describes Lane as a man who could “could out-ride, out-rope and out-shoot most of his employees [which] did much to establish his effortless authority” (118).

Relishing the glorious past of an imagined frontier, Bert commissioned several bronze sculptures and bequeathed them to the Bert Sheppard Memorial Library and Archive. Many of them are bucking horses and all of them present aggrandized images of cowboys. One sculpture is by the celebrated cowboy artist, Rich Roenisch, and two are by Steve Hoar (*Just* 100, 130-31). No doubt, the most famous sculpture that Bert commissioned is the twelve-foot bronze of Lane

²³ In contrast to pioneer memoirists, who celebrate the frontier, Tompkins questions Western legends that applaud the brutal deeds of real pioneers. During her visit to the Buffalo Bill Museum in June 1988, she was particularly repulsed by the paintings of typical frontier subjects and themes, especially the Remington painting *His First Lesson*, which represents a cowboy rough breaking a horse, having tied one of its hind feet off the ground to immobilize it in preparation for saddling and mounting it for the first time (182). She argues that the manner in which artifacts of the early days of ranching are presented in museums glorifies what she implies is an “imperialistic conquest of a continent, with the wholesale extermination of animals and men” (202).

shooting several wolves from horseback (Sillars). Les Sillars states that the scene of Lane using a “six-shooter” to shoot “hot lead” into wolves that were attacking him one winter day in 1886 was “immortalized in a work by famous western painter Charles M. Russell.” In March 1995, Bert was approached for donations by the Friends of the Bar U Historic Society, and in lieu of money, he commissioned Roenish to create a “life-size-plus-10% bronze” to honour the man who gave him his first job and who, Bert states, “taught me the business” of cowboying (qtd. in Sillars).

While Bert eulogizes the cowboys he knew, Hank Pallister, son of Guy Pallister Sr., eulogizes Bert. In his memoir, *Smoke from the Branding Fire*, Pallister recalls an anecdote Bert related to him when Bert was ninety-two years old (149). As the story goes, Jonas Rider had sold a horse to the Bar U Ranch that, supposedly, unbeknownst to the ranch foreman Herb Millar, was a renegade. One day, Bert chose to ride him to assist with the task of branding. Pallister relates that

Bert had been asked to heel calves that day, and was sitting on his horse waiting for the branding irons to heat. The big horse felt Bert relax and decided it was the right time for some action. The big gelding went to bucking and Bert rode him straight up without any problem [...] By time the action was over, the irons were hot so Bert heeled calves off the horse all day, as some revenge for the rough ride he had received earlier. [The Stoney men hired to help brand] recognized the horse, and after the good ride Sheppard made that morning, named Sheppard ‘Bronco Buster!’” (150)

Clearly, this was not an ordinary day in the life of a working cowboy. The incident was unusual enough to warrant its repeating. In spite of Bert’s managing of the horse, another cowboy recognized the animal as dangerous and killed him. The unnamed cowhand “left the Bar U corrals” with the gelding, but by the time they had crossed the Bow River, “the horse had bucked him off several times,” so he

“hobbled the horse, blindfolded him” and, according to Pallister’s informants, “killed him with a fence post!” “The cowhand,” Pallister remarks, “was a hot-tempered individual who was known to be mean and hard on horses” (151). The gelding was “wall-eyed,” Bert explains, and had it not been for his poor vision in one eye, he would have been sold for rodeo stock (Interview). Pallister recalls that when Bert was ninety-seven years of age, he asked him “why Herb Millar would have purchased an aged horse, especially when the Bar U were raising so many good young horses. Sheppard’s only reply was, ‘I think Herb knew how the horse could buck and wanted to find out if I could ride him’” (qtd. in Pallister 151). A tale like this valorizes not only Bert but also Millar, an iconic figure in the history of the early days of the cattle industry. Bert elevates his own stature by associating himself with Millar and by allegedly gaining the respect of a cowboy, who was considered an authority and exemplary model of a pioneer rancher.

Bert emulated Millar and admired him for his superior riding skills, for, he claims, Millar “rode some of the worst outlaws and made it look easy” (*Just* 110). “Different people have told me that he was the prettiest rider they ever saw,” Bert continues; “and a lot of people thought he was the best rider in the country” (110). Evans contends that Millar played the role of the tough ranch manager, eliciting the respect of the younger horse trainers under his employ by “rid[ing] a bucking horse to a standstill” to show them he still had the mettle it required (182). In the masculine culture of frontier cowboys and ranchers, a man’s ability to discipline a buckler was a test of his prowess and courage. Tales of mighty cowboys subduing

wild broncos, like the often repeated images of mythical figures in colonial discourse, contribute to a false history of settlement.

The Sheppard journals reveal that there were no bucking broncos on their ranches, for the standard technique used for training horses on the Cottonwood and Riverbend Ranches was a methodical and humane process called gentling. Likewise, Evans observes, Millar employed this disciplined classical gentling method in the training of Percheron geldings that were to be used as draft animals and in the training of the horses that had been selected to be sold “to the North West Mounted Police” (182). This is a georgic practice, one that Virgil advocates in Book Three, in which he advises beginning the training of a colt as soon as he is “weaned,” for when the colt is “still weak and trembling, still / Unused to life,” it is the optimum time, Virgil asserts, to, “by degrees entrust / His mouth to gentle halters” (3.188-91). Such methods were standard among British immigrants like the Sheppards who hand-raised the colts they bred on the ranch.

Henry Sr. used his journals to track the progress of the horses in training. British horse master Samuel Sidney’s description of the method facilitates the reader’s comprehension of Henry Sr.’s brief notes. He divides training into four parts: halter breaking the colt, introducing the saddle and mounting the three year old, teaching the green broke horse “the indications of the bit and reins,” and finally, teaching it “the paces and manners of the trade—hack, lady’s horse, hunter, or harness horse—for which he is intended” (557). Henry Sr.’s journal account offers a phenomenological view of the practice, for the horses to which he refers were actual living beings, not fictionalized characters as they are in Bert’s

memoirs. Henry Sr. began the process of training by bringing his colts into the stable yard and grooming, feeding, and handling them for a period before returning them to the pasture. He worked with colts in pairs, as he noted on January 2, 1907, when he wrote that he “Turned out of stable Sallys and Maudes colts.” The next day, he brought in and “Halterbroke Pruks and Brownies colts.” On March 22, he “Turned out Idahos colts and got in sorrel and [...] gray. Caught Pepper and bathed him.” Henry Sr. noted that, in the stage that followed halter breaking, he worked the young horses in the corral for several days before harnessing them to a cart or wagon. On March 26, 1907, he “caught Pepper and drove him about corral.”²⁴ The next day, he “Drove Pepper for first time” out of the corral, and the next he finally put Pepper to work when he drove him “up to Walshes and got a bag of turnips from them.”

Bert also employed the gentling technique when he trained horses for neighbours and family friends. Henry Sr. wrote on April 20, 1921, that “Bert halter broke the brown colt.” It was not until a month later, on May 21, that Bert began riding it. By the autumn, Bert had managed to bring the brown colt along in its training to the point that he could use him for work. Henry Sr. wrote on October 8, 1921: “Glorious hot day. Strong West wind afternoon Bertie and I rode over to [section] 24, Bert riding his brown colt, and brought back cattle.” The journals reveal that the process demanded patience and took several months to complete. Gentling was necessary to produce the highly responsive sports horses, such as those used for gymkhanas and larger horse shows and for polo. Rees’s history of

²⁴ Henry Sr. used the British spelling for corral, waggon, and forrest.

polo in Canada reveals that traditional British methods of horse training in Alberta were employed as early as 1890 (7).²⁵ Informal equestrian events were the basis of community get-togethers; large horse shows, such as those held in Calgary, brought together participants from many rural communities. They were opportunities for developing social connections as much as for pleasure. Henry Sr. was a keen competitor at the annual Calgary Horse Fair. In an entry dated April 9, 1912, Henry Sr. wrote that he and Lony competed in the “heavy weight Polo Pony class” and “got 3rd prize in a big class.” The following year, he rode “Lony in the heavy weight Polo pony class and got 5th prize.”

The entries that record Henry Sr.’s competition are analyzable within both ideological and phenomenological frameworks for the sequence enacts what Shukin describes as a shift in the conceptions animals as they “vacillate between literal and figurative economies of sense” (5). Initially, Henry Sr. seems to acknowledge Lony as a sentient being with a will of its own. This will is demonstrated when Henry began preparing for the Calgary Horse Fair in 1912. He wrote that he “Rode to Valley ranch and schooled Lony over jumps with help of McDonald. he jumped well” (3.25.1912). Likewise, two days later, he “schooled Lony [over] jumps in [a] corral. He jumped well.” On April 9, 1912, however, when Henry Sr. arrived at the Calgary fair ground, he “Tried Lony at 4-6 hurdles which he refused.” A shift occurs the following year, and Henry Sr. begins to refer to the horse as a commodity that serves a different purpose than providing him

²⁵ Polo arrived in Halifax in 1889, Rees observes, and “gained popularity [among] a mix of military and civilian players” (7). A. E. Cross was president of the Calgary polo club in 1925 (171). Evans notes that Herb Millar “played polo regularly for the Pekisko Club” (182).

with the pleasurable experience of riding. He transforms the horse into both real and cultural capital. In an entry dated June 5, 1913, he wrote: “Showed Lony to the Mounted Police and sold him to Commissioner Perry²⁶ for his daughter for \$173-[-.]” An equine specimen of such value was the culmination of selective breeding techniques and of the masterful use of gentling as a training method, for the gelding was, no doubt, a well-mannered and amiable mount, suitable for a girl or a young woman.

The dominance of gentling as a training method in the early twentieth century casts a shadow of incredulity on myths of the frontier, which suggest that brutality was a necessary first step to the kinds of civility that followed. Yet, Bert omits references in his memoirs to gentling discipline. Moreover, he rejected most of the practices of the culture his parents imported from Britain. Henry Sr. and his male friends were genteel members of society. Having attended Oxford University, Henry Sr. and men in his social circle would have acquired the kind of education Rothblatt describes as a liberal education, which was thought necessary “to lubricate interpersonal relations and to promote public affairs” (44). Not all members of English society agreed with the results of humanist education, Taylor points out; many “were tempted to hold that civility enervates us, renders us effete” (*Modern* 38). While Henry Sr. and those in his social circle sought to balance their lives by engaging in strenuous physical activities, both in the

²⁶ Commissioner Perry was the commander of the North West Mounted Police mounted squad, which, according to a report of the ceremony in an edition of the *Edmonton Daily Standard* newspaper, dated September 1, 1905, performed in Edmonton on the occasion of Alberta’s entry into Confederation (Brune *et al.*).

operation of their ranches and in their participation in horse sports, Bert found the enervation of his father's generation displeasing. Whether he chose to write in the frontier trope as a means of countering it by promoting rugged masculinity, or whether the death of his mother when he was a youth precluded his indoctrination through training and education into the polite society of Anglo-Canadian equestrians, is a matter of conjecture. As I have discussed in this chapter, whatever Bert's motivation was when he chose to celebrate the masculine and rugged world of the frontier, his writing perpetuates a version of pioneer history that contributes to the genre of Western fiction. In the next chapter, I discuss Bert's process of composition and revision as he took information from his and his father's journals to create pioneer heroes who live action-filled lives in his memoirs. By comparing the personalities of the people to whom the Sheppards refer in their journals to the characters of Bert's fiction, I reveal how Bert embellished the details to valorize the men he knew as a means to justify their entitlement and, by association, his own.

Chapter Four – Settler Life Writing and the Shaping of Pioneer Heroes

The previous chapter explored the notion of the frontier and Bert Sheppard's creation of characters that are metonymic figures or symbols of pioneers in frontier myths. This chapter explores his revision process and the reasons he transforms the variety of personality traits of people he knew and admired into simple characterizations like those found in Western pulp fiction. Settlers were people, not symbols, and they were complex. Bert was a complex person, whose variety of personality traits are masked by the self-portrait in his memoirs and by the legendary figure emerging from the selective display of his material possessions housed in the Stockmen's Foundation Bert Sheppard Memorial Library and Archives. A presentation that focuses solely on Bert during his career as a ranch manager, as an adult in his prime with well-honed skills, falls short of considering the whole of Bert's life; his father's journals offer a broader view of Bert for they reveal that he started "cowboying" as a youth. He was, most likely, a "cow boy" in the original sense, tending his father's herd "without compensation," which is how Paul H. Carlson describes the young Childers cowboy, "a thirteen-year-old kid and his younger brother alone on a Cooke County [Texas] cattle range working their father's herds," mending fences, checking water holes, and turning back any drifting cattle (1, 9). I compare the representations of the Sheppards and their friends in the journals to Bert's auto/biographical memoirs to disclose that his selective representations of them are designed to support notions of superiority and, thus, entitlement to homesteaded land.

All four of the Sheppard sons helped with the work and probably without compensation. Henry Sr. recorded the days on which horses and cattle were tended or moved to new pasture and which of his sons completed the tasks. In an entry for April 13, 1909, he noted that Jay and George “took 65 head [of horses] to McIntosh field. and left 21 yearlings and 2 4 yr old geldings at Christies place.” A month later, “George and Jay brought horses down for Bond to take to Buffalo hills. [...] 85 head including Jock [a stud] 24 of which are yearlings.” Bert and Jay also worked at the Bar U Ranch. Henry Sr. wrote on January 4, 1912, that “Jay came down from Bar U to get a stud horse [George] Lane bought in the States.” Henry Sr. did his own share of horse training, wrangling, and “cowboying.” On July 3, 1930, he “Got up at 4 am and went to [section] 23 for 9 yearling heifers to go to forrest reserve. branded two of them. [...] Great preparation for food and camping outfit. Crossed cattle over river.” He was sixty-nine years old at the time.

The Sheppards were never “real working” cowboys, however, at least not according to the criteria Allmendinger uses to define the cowboys of the late nineteenth century: uneducated, nearly impoverished, living on the periphery of society, and subordinate to their employers, the cattle barons (3). The real working cowboys and the cattle barons existed at opposite ends of the social scale; the Sheppards existed somewhere in between. While Bert and his brother Jay had worked in their young adulthood as cowboys for the Bar U Ranch, with their education, experience, and skills, they became responsible and somewhat influential members of the ranching society, contributing through their selective breeding programs to the building of the cattle industry and, especially, to the

development of the horse culture in southern Alberta. The Sheppard journals chart almost fifty years of the development of a ranching culture that evolved from a synthesis of British farming methods and American ranching methods, which share a common foundation in the georgic traditions of animal husbandry. As ranchers, the British adapted to Western styles of life and labour by exchanging their English hacking saddles for stock saddles and by building on their equestrian expertise to develop the skills necessary to manage livestock on horseback. Bert falls short of acknowledging the origins of ranching society in Alberta when he writes about it in the trope of the frontier.

It is clear that Bert used the information captured in his and his father's journals as the basis for his memoirs, and that he was selective and omitted details not contributing to the impression of his life that he wished to present. He collected and revised information in the TL Ranch history to shape the narratives in his memoirs. This enterprise is much like that described by I. S. MacLaren as the four stages of revision through which travel narratives or histories of exploration pass as authors prepare them for publication (41). The first stage is "the field note or log book entry, which is written *en route*" (41). In the process of revising in the second stage, "[s]ingle words, phrases, or names from field notes might be built into sentences and paragraphs" as the traveller "begins to shape the experience [...] informing it with continuity and purpose if these did not exist to begin with" (41-42). It is equally probable that material will be "edited out" (42). The development of the written material from the second stage to the third, the "draft manuscript for a book," and to the fourth stage, "the publication," depends upon audience (43).

The differences in the projected audience of a given text are based on their degrees of sophistication, and these vary so greatly that, MacLaren states, it is necessary to discuss the publication stage by proceeding with the enquiry “inductively, book by book” (43).

Employing the same analytical framework, I compare Bert’s various forms of life writing. For example, he revised the entries of his 1939 journal, the first stage, pertaining to the purchase and development of the TL Ranch to provide a narrative with continuity when he wrote its history ten years later, the second stage. He noted in his journal, in a summary for January 1939, that “Patterson[,] Joe Bews and myself bought the Old TL from Macleod and Thompson.” He observed in an entry dated May 8, 1939, that he and his partners took over the deed to the ranch, having written: “Left for *High River* about 10.20 arrived at H.R. 11.10. Completed deal for TL at 12. Oclock.” A decade later, writing the history of the TL Ranch and anticipating it being read by others, Bert identifies his partners as Raymond Patterson and Joe and Johnny Bews, and refers to himself in third person. He writes: “Thompson and Macleod wishing to dissolve partnership, offered the ranch for sale. It was purchased by Bews brothers, Raymond Patterson and Bert Sheppard. The deal was completed in April 1939” (15). When their partnership dissolved not too long afterward, Bert explains that in “the split up Sheppard got the old ranch site and the land surrounding it, while Patterson and Joe and Johnny Bews got the land adjoining their respective ranches” (TL 15). He elaborates further by stating that the “Bews boys own[ed] the old Sullivan Ranch

at the mouth of Sullivan Creek, and Patterson the Buffalo Head Ranch that was started by George Pocaterre” (15).²⁷

Writing about himself, at times, Bert seems to be trying to obscure his presence as the author and narrator, and portray the material as objective history. The third person reference is not consistent, however; frequently, Bert refers to himself reflexively as *himself*, and sometimes only as *self*. In his journals, at times, he used several forms of self-identity in one entry as he does on January 26, 1939, when he wrote: “Slim Dan and I changed rack to wagon, having been able to haul one load on the sleigh. [...] Afternoon Slim and self chopped oats.” Curiously, neither Bert’s father nor his brother, Henry Jr., identified himself as “I”. More often than not, they left their sentences grammatically incomplete by omitting personal pronouns and starting their sentences with verbs. Bert also leaned toward this practice. For example, he left out “we” when he wrote “Branded 77 calves” on June 22, 1939.

The reference by the author to him or herself in the third person seems uncommon in life writing. Lejeune suggests that the protagonist of an autobiography tends to be left unnamed and yet is implied as being synonymous with the author through the “autobiographical pact” (17). He maintains that the “protagonist does not have a name in the narrative [of an autobiography], but the author has declared explicitly in an initial pact that he is identical to the narrator

²⁷ R. M. Patterson was born in England in 1898 and, like Jay and Henry Sheppard Jr., served in the army in World War I. In the foreword to Patterson’s memoir, *The Buffalo Head*, Gray Campbell mentions that Bert Sheppard, one of the “old-timers,” visited Patterson when he retired to Vancouver Island (n.p.). Like Bert, he wrote several memoirs.

(and thus, to the protagonist, since the narrative is autodiegetic).” The fact that the name “*of the protagonist = the name of the author* [...] excludes the possibility” that the text is fiction (17; original emphasis). Thus, the Sheppards, without identifying themselves, declare their diary entries, recorded, for the most part, in the form of empirical data, to be literal experiences without fictional embellishment. The Sheppards recorded the information for pragmatic reasons, yet it is subjective. Bert wrote his memoirs for various reasons, some pragmatic; however, they are embellished to such a degree that, despite the fact that the author and protagonist are the same, one wonders whether they represent a real or a fictitious life.

Just as travellers take a single word, phrase or name and expand on it in the journal stage, Bert seems to have expanded on the notes he wrote in his journal in May 1939, to recreate a literary depiction of the day that he and his outfit took possession of the ranch. Moreover, in the way a traveller might shape an experience by “informing it with continuity and purpose” (MacLaren 41), Bert “edits out” material that does not contribute to the re-imagined scene. In his journal entry, dated May 17, 1939, he wrote that it was a “Fine morning, Slim Fred Jack and myself took mares and stud to TL. Afternoon moved cows and calves out of [section] 14. Fred and I rode home after supper, went up to Miss Shakerleys in the car. Rumpus away at Willow-Creek with Graham.” In his history of the TL Ranch, Bert omits some of these details, adds others—the name of a palomino stud for example—and embellishes the information by ascribing to it an emotion he imagines he felt at the time (or, perhaps, he felt in recalling the day). He writes:

“On May 17 a fine spring morning, with high hopes we saddled up at River Bend and accompanied by Rock Robin and a bunch of mares rode to the TL to take Possession, arriving there at noon” (TL 16).

Bert’s motive for fictionalizing his experiences in the writing of his memoirs appears to have been a desire to reminisce about his younger days when he was an active and hard working man engaged in the masculine culture of cattle ranching, for he endeavours to portray himself as a powerful individual in command of a crew whose compliance with his will allows the development of the TL Ranch to proceed according to his vision or plans. He invested a great deal of time and effort in the development of the TL Ranch and he documented his labour in his journals and in the TL Ranch history. While the property was a sign of his prosperity and prestige in the cattle ranching community in southern Alberta, his documentation of the long process of improvement was proof of his entitlement to the land. In the neo-georgic tradition of creating literary monuments to valorize estates and their landscapes, Bert dedicates several pages of the TL Ranch history to describing the building of a new log house in 1939, which was necessary when the old “log house and the log bunk house burnt down. Leaving only a frame shack twelve by sixteen in which to live” (17). Much of the rest of the manuscript valorizes the men who, under Bert’s direction, took part in the project of realizing the ranch’s potential.

A consideration of the self-image that Bert presents in his memoirs poses questions about the nature of self-identity. The first is: Was he the self-assured man in 1939 that he appears to be in his writing of the history in 1951—over a

decade after assuming title of the ranch, when he knew how things would turn out—or did he experience trepidation when he signed “the deal” with his partners? The second is: Was Bert the man he portrays in his memoirs—the rugged cowboy—or was he the person who lived the life and performed the mundane activities recorded in his diaries? For example, Henry Sr. wrote that on a snowy Sunday afternoon late in October, 1919, Bert took it upon himself to make “cinnamon buns.” In 1938, Bert took on the task of household renovations and wrote in an entry for February 15, 1938, that he and a cohort prepared to lay new linoleum on the kitchen floor. Bert wrote, “Fred and I blocked kitchen floor.” Two days later, they “Laid oil-cloth in kitchen,” and a few days after that, they “Waxed kitchen floor” and “scrubbed ceiling.” Activities including laying down linoleum in the kitchen and baking cinnamon buns are omitted in Bert’s memoirs, for they would undermine the impressions he wishes to give. Yet, the material realities of the Sheppards’ existence, documented in his and his father’s empirically-based accounts, refute his literary constructions of self-identity nonetheless.

It is only in his journals that Bert reveals the mundane aspects of daily life, for the men on the TL and Riverbend Ranches scrubbed floors and washed clothes, hauled manure from the barns and chicken coops, fed pigs, and milked cows. On January 24, 1938, he noted that he “bought pigs” and on March 12, 1938, he “cut pigs in the afternoon,” that is, he castrated them. On other days, he and his crew poured cement, cut timber, fixed car engines, and completed many menial tasks that are omitted from legends of the West. In contrast, in his memoirs and history of the TL ranch, Bert single-mindedly represents himself as a successful ranch

manager and breeder of fine blooded cattle to create a strongly masculine image of himself as a rugged cowboy. Hopkins allows for contradictions in her literary representation of herself. Self-identifying as an English woman with refined manners, she is, at times, a homemaker who is concerned about the stiffness of her husband's starched collars, and, at others, an adventurous sporting woman learning to ride horses and manage a ranch. Whether presenting fluid, complex personalities or cohesive self-portraits, both Hopkins and Bert create fictional renditions of their past, and sacrifice accuracy to tell interesting and often humorous stories. A consequence of literary embellishment of personal pioneer accounts is the rendering of a skewed cultural and agricultural history, which combine to form often highly politicized settlement myths, such as those that support settlers' sense of entitlement.

Bert's building upon the literal details in his journals, and Hopkins's revision of her journal letters lead to the crafting of literary manuscripts that constitute the second and third stages of writing. Judging the authenticity or accuracy of the narratives by Key, Thomson, and Hopkins is made impossible, because there is only one version of each to examine; nevertheless, readings of their texts focusing on the manner in which they represent themselves are a means to determine their personalities, much like a reading a piece of fiction serves to determine the characteristics of its protagonist. One *can* analyze Gardiner's letters in the same way that one can analyze Bert Sheppard's life writing by comparing their holograph images to the edited and published versions. Dempsey prepared Gardiner's letters for publication in *Letters from an English Rancher* by working

from copies that had been transcribed and edited by Gardiner's daughter, Claudia Whipple (Introduction xi). "Some minor editing was done," Dempsey explains, "to remove extraneous material relating to family matters in the Old Country, to tighten up the text, and to add punctuation, paragraphs, etc." (xi), which suggests the kind of changes that are made to original documents in the revision process. An example of a sentence that was omitted from Gardiner's original letters, either by Dempsey or Whipple—the editor is indeterminable—is found in a letter dated April 1894: "How did Mother get on with the Photos[?] I tried to make her look through that glass at the top but she did not so I rather doubt if she hit the ship at all" (Edwards, Gardiner Family Fonds).

Dempsey implies that the removal of such minutia is expected if the goal is to create a cohesive autobiographical narrative. Like the Sheppard journals, Gardiner's letters confound these expectations. One might argue that the idiosyncrasies of a manuscript are more interesting than a revised edition for they reveal much about the author's idiosyncrasies as well. Gardiner recorded his life by stating plainly what he did on a given day, whom he met, which animals he tended, and what he cooked and ate, drawing attention to things common to the life of a rancher. Gardiner's statement about the photographs makes as little sense within the context of his letter as it does here, for it is dependent for its meaning on the context of the discussion that took place between Gardiner and his parents, seemingly, when they accompanied him to the dock as he was departing. These are the kinds of details that Shumaker advises leaving out in the composing of autobiographies if they are to be interesting to readers (47-50). The process here is

the editing that is done to prepare life writing for publication. While Dempsey edited Whipple's manuscript of Gardiner's letters, and Jameson edited Hopkins's manuscript in preparation for the fourth stage of writing—their publication as *Letters from an English Rancher* and *Letters from a Lady Rancher*, respectively—Bert, seemingly, did his own editing or, perhaps, rewriting of his hand-typed history of the TL Ranch history to prepare it for publication. There are noticeable differences in the writing as information presented in each text goes through stages of revision. The TL manuscript, the second stage, is rife with typographical and grammatical errors. Bert has corrected these in *Just About Nothing*, the fourth stage.

Unlike his father, Bert did not have the benefits of an Oxford education and the literary studies it afforded; yet, his homage to the TL Ranch bears a resemblance to Jonson's praise of Penshurst. Playing on the topic of "unbought provisions" and "*sponte sua* analogies," Jonson writes that the estate's "copse [...] never fails to serve [its lord] seasoned deer," and the "purpled pheasant," and the "painted partridge," that for the lord are "willing to be killed," while fish and "Bright eels, that emulate them, [...] leap on land / Before the fisher, or into his hand" (19-37). Bert writes:

Years ago the creek was full of Cut Throat trout. [...] Sullivan Creek is said to be the best breeding stream of any of the Highwoods' tributaries. [...] There are Big Horn Sheep at the head of the creek. Mule Deer, Elk and Moose can quite often be seen in a days ride. [...] Blue Grouse nest on the high ridges. Spruce Partridge, Ruffled Grouse and Prairie Chicken are here in limited numbers. (27-29)

Following georgic traditions, Bert pays close attention to water sources, and with a naturalist's if not a poet's eye, determines which sections of land were most

suitable for grazing cattle and which sections were better than others for growing crops. Bert claims that the owners of the TL Ranch chose a spot near the Sullivan Creek for their barns and corrals because of the guarantee of water (17). “No story of the ranch would be complete without a description of its watershed,” he continues, to introduce a lengthy description of the course of the various creeks and rivers on the TL (24). Bert revised the passage to introduce a flattering biography of the ranch’s founder, Tom Lynch, for one of his memoirs. His design appears to be to mythologize Lynch and, by his association with him through having acquired the TL Ranch, promote his own reputation as a hallowed pioneer. In the rough manuscript, there is no mention of the ranch’s founding by Tom Lynch when Bert writes:

These tributaries rise in the high hills, east of Pyriform Mountain, which lied near the headwaters of Flat Creek. After the Forks, the stream cuts around the south end of Blue Ridge, and meanders down past the TL buildings, to be joined by little Estcourt Creek. Which rising on the east side of the Ridge, flows south-east till it joins the main stream just opposite the TL corrals.

After leaving the Blue Ridge, the Sullivan Creek Valley widens out considerably. Two or three miles further [u typed over o] down the stream takes a swing to the north through a narrow ravine, where it shortly unites with the Little North-Fork, which comes in from the north-west. After this union the creek flows east, through a deep canyon past Joe Bews’ Y Cross ranch, to flow into the North-Fork of the Highwood River. (TL 25)

Rather, he goes on to describe outstanding features of the region including the mountains, trees, and indigenous animals. He asserts: “I would say that the three most outstanding landmarks of the Upper Sullivan Creek Country are, first the heavily timbered Blue Ridge, which runs north to Sheep Creek, and can be seen far out on the prairie” (TL 26).

Bert's unpublished and published memoirs serve much like maps, which are, Pickles contends, "vehicles for creating and conveying authority about the world" by shaping "what we understand to be factual, real, and normal" (xi). Simon Ryan refers to mapping of colonized land as a "double movement, of erasure and projection, creating a blank, and filling in that blank with a legend (both in the sense of a myth and a cartographical inscription)" (124). "To posit the land as a text," Ryan continues, "is to claim its readability, and thence to arrogate power over it" (126). "The blanks" in maps included in "journals," he asserts, "reveal the constant selection of knowledges considered appropriate for display [...] consistently efface the Aboriginal groups [...] while carefully including locations of any white settlements" (126). In such ways, Bert's creating of images verbally, rather than pictorially, to define the parameters of the TL Ranch, act "as an incitement to the alteration of ownership" (Ryan 126).

In his published memoir, *Just About Nothing*, Bert augments his information about Lynch by adding the date he died, July 31, 1891, at forty-eight years of age (59). He follows with tales of mysterious outlaws, cattle rustlers, unmarked graves, and the "remnants of cowboy life of another day and age" (58-59). An analysis of similar passages in the history of the TL and in *Just About Nothing* reveals how his frontier tales evolved. In the TL history, he writes: "From its lofty summit," called the Camel's Hump, "a wonderful view of the surrounding country can be had. Legend has it that in the dim and distant past, it was used as a lookout post by a gang of cattle rustlers that were operating in the country. [...] In those days there was less poplar in the hills, and every trail leading to the ranch

could be kept under observation from the Hump” (TL 26). At that point, Bert gives literary flair to his narrative by enacting a shift in verb tense, employing what Lejeune describes as an “indirect free style in the present,” in which “some ‘retrospective’ thoughts can be found [as] the protagonist recall[s] and relat[es]” what has happened or what happens to him in the present (62). The shift into present tense, as if the action were happening as Bert is telling it, signals that he is imagining the scene. He recollects:

I have often pictured the play in my mind. The branding crew working in the TL corrals, secure in the thought that no one could approach, without the lookout’s knowledge. The lookout scanning the country, ready to silhouette himself and horse on the skyline, as a warning the moment anyone showed up, when the corral gate would be opened and the cattle high-tailed off into the brush. I have been unable to find out the year that the rustlers were at the TL, but it was between 1891 and 1902. (27)

In the revised version in *Just About Nothing*, he implies certainty by writing in past tense. He maintains that “at the end of the century the buildings were not being used and some cattle rustlers moved in. [...] While skullduggery was taking place with branding irons in the corral, a lookout kept watch from the Camel’s Hump, ready to silhouette himself on the sky line should anyone be seen approaching, when the cattle would be run off up the creek” (59).

Key writes in a similar vein at times. One frontier tale is about the summer the Petters’ foals went missing and she imagines herself reacquiring the horses and capturing “the thieves” or “head[ing] a posse of red coated Royal Mounted Police” (121). She draws details for her fanciful story, no doubt, from popular images of the North West Mounted Police created by their mythologizing in the novels of Ralph Connor. As Thomson indicates, Connor’s novels were among “the best sellers of the day” (86). Such acknowledgement is evidence of the literariness of

the memoirists and of the influences that shaped their writing styles. Connor, perhaps more than any other popular writer of the period, promoted heroic images of Mounted Police and aroused admiration for them, much in the same way the protagonist in *Corporal Cameron* is inspired to join the force after observing the power of a “slim hipped youngster in his scarlet jacket and pill-box cap,” who, merely through the commanding presence of his voice, pre-empts a violent conflict between desperados from south of the border (307). “Irresistible authority seemed to go with the word” of the Mounted Police, Connor writes, “for behind [it] lay the full weight of Great Britain’s mighty empire” (308). Reflecting on the influence of Connor’s novels, O’ram emphasizes the power a “myth has [to] become part of history” (140). “The rapidity with which the Mounted Police took on mythical connotations,” he observes, “indicates the way in which the complex and subtle imagery of the force coincides with the Canadian ideal of North West expansion” (141). Key perpetuates these myths by valorizing the Mounties and implying a sense of “security and justice” in favour of the settler, which O’ram states, was symbolized in the Mounted Police (141).

As Key explains, her father ran his yearlings “with the older horses, on the open range to the south of” Radfords, and when he sent his hired hands out to bring them in when the summer came to a close, “seven fillies and geldings had completely vanished” (117). Thus, Key and her sister, “then about ten or twelve years old, and well used to handling horses, rode out one day” to find them (117). She builds tension in her tale by describing the prairie as “very still, there was no sign of life anywhere” (117). The two girls came upon a “dilapidated [sic] log

building,” she states with foreboding, which looked deserted until two men came out (119). Key then adds further tension by recalling that she eyed them with suspicion. “There was something about them that made me a little uneasy,” she writes; “They seemed old to us, their faces leathery and brown from prairie sun and wind, their shirts, trousers, and wide brimmed hats, all the same sun bleached brown” (119). After quenching their thirst from the settlers’ well, the girls leave. Key relates that on the ride home, “a sudden thought exploded in my head: Horse Rustlers! [...] did those men have our yearlings hidden away in some secret place?” (121). She admits, however, that the men were discovered later to be “a couple of squatters who moved into the old cabin [and...] turned out to be good solid types” (123). Key’s condescension reveals her class bias and sets up a binary distinction between characters that embody admirable qualities and those that lack these qualities, creating a kind of discourse that Bhabha maintains “racial and cultural hierarchization” (“Other” 67). Moreover, by identifying the men as “squatters” and as rough looking, Key construes them as “degenerate types” (Bhabha 67), stressing their poor economic situation and their illegitimacy in comparison to her family’s status as titled land owners. She, thus, relegates them to social positions beneath her and her family. She also implies in this yarn that the Petters’ utopian dreams were thwarted, that they were prevented from earning their just reward in the bounty of a growing herd of horses, if not by the actions of these men, then certainly by those who were true villains.

Like Key, Bert employs his memoirs, at times, to establish his superiority as a land owner over other members of the agrarian community, or to emphasize

the intensity of the labour entailed in ranching in order to justify his success. At other times, he writes to promote the reinstatement of earlier methods of cattle management in the face of technological changes in the ranching industry that threatened to extinguish his way of life. Like other memoirists, he wrote partly from a sense of nostalgia, a sentiment that, Lejeune argues, “compels us to collect all the vestiges of a disappearing civilization” (210). Indeed, it seems to be in that spirit that Bert wrote “Branding on the Bar U Ranch” for the Alberta Rodeo Association, an article published in the *High River Times* in June, 1952 (*Just* 139). He admits to having had to “think back over the years” to recall what he could about “a week’s branding [...] over a quarter of a century ago”; yet, he states, the events “unfolded before my eyes, as if it was yesterday.”

Writing in colloquial syntax and ranching jargon, Bert enacts a literary recreation of the scene. “The time of the branding was about the first of July, the year 1922,” he claims, “and the outfit I was working for was the Bar U” (139). The article, reprinted in his memoir, depicts the work of the “heeler,” the roper who, by throwing a small loop, “pick[s] up both hind feet” of a calf to catch it for branding (144). Bert adds verisimilitude by identifying several of the men who lived and worked on the Bar U at the time, including the cowboss Alec Fleming, who “spent a good deal of his time riding with us probably because he enjoyed the work [...and who] was a fine figure on a horse, riding a full flower stamped centre-fire Visalia saddle, and had the upright seat of the old-time cowboy” (139). In a mixture of the mythic and the mundane, he recalls that the cattle were gathered in a corral, “the wings” of which “had been built by ‘Six-Shooter’ Joe Reynolds and

my brother Jay, ten or twelve years previously” (141). At various points, shifts occur in Bert’s narrative through a change of verb tense. Lejeune describes this narrative technique among the variety used in storytelling. One technique is to tell the story in the narrative present, a manner of speaking in which “everything happens as if the story were becoming contemporaneous with its narration”; another is as a discourse that centres “on the present, where this story will be told in the compound past tense [*passé composé*] and the imperfect”; and another is to relate the story as “history, where it will be told in the (literary) past tense [*passé simple*] and in the imperfect” (58-59). Bert narrativizes the action as history, using simple or literary past tense as if he were watching it unfold.

“As soon as the irons were hot,” he writes, employing simple past tense, “the go ahead was given by the heeler. That year the roping was done by that outstanding and expert Stony Indian cowhand and roper, Jonas Sam Rider,” he interjects (*Just* 141). His elevation of Rider to legendary status places the spotlight on him as the hero of the story and creates the expectation that what is about to be related is spectacular. Depicting the scene as if the events had occurred just prior to his writing and not several decades before, Bert relates that

The calves were fairly thick around the fire and [Rider] just had to swing his horse to get one. Before the first calf was up [after being branded] a second one was down and a third in the hands of the wrestlers. There were three sets of husky Indian wrestlers and one or two younger bucks ready to spell them off. Jonas harangued them constantly in Stony, telling them to fly at it and get the rope off. Each day before we were through I heard them complaining, “Too hard work,” “Too fast”. (*Just* 141)

The narrative serves several purposes. One is to reminisce about the past; another is to portray the men hard at work, as they are in old Western films. Hard work is the ethic of Westerns, Tompkins relates, and while such depictions are short on

dialogue, they “speak volumes” through the actions that unfold, creating “a world of men and things, where male adults in the prime of life find ultimate meaning in doing their best together on the job” (37). The plots of Bert’s tales are consistent with this genre. Another point of Bert’s recollection is to praise Rider, who then becomes a metonym for old-time cowboys like him. By portraying Rider in a favourable light—as an expert horseman and cowboy, and as an individual, whose skills as an equestrian gained him credence among the society of horse enthusiasts in the region—Bert shows respect for him.

Bert had had the opportunity to work closely with Rider and had gotten to know him personally. Work experience offered Bert an impression of Rider that was visceral or empirically-based rather than ideologically determined by the racial prejudices common to his society at the time. The experiences Bert shared with Rider allowed him to form his own estimation of Rider as a man skilled in handling horses and cattle. No doubt, their respect was mutual. Bert’s selective shaping of Rider’s portrait in the branding scene, nonetheless, is a literary embellishment. Significantly, it is different from Bert’s, his father’s, and his brother’s biographical sketches of Rider in their journals. The journal entries invite phenomenological analysis, because when Henry Sr. identified Rider, having written on December 21, 1920, that “Sam Rider came and phoned some of his friends,” Rider is a person possessing agency, not a literary figure or symbol. Nor are the others to whom the author refers: “Swan [who] came after dinner and took some eggs so that Mrs. McMasters could cook some food ready for the bride” and “Another Indian [who] came and asked leave to camp in [section] 24.” They are

people as Henry Sr. rightly recognized when he concluded the entry with “All [of] these people [are] going to Morley for Xmas.” The journals offer evidence of the relationships between people wrought from cohabitation. They also reveal differences in the purposes of diaries and memoirs.

Demonstrating his use of memoirs as a means to articulate his values and ideological assumptions, Bert offers a disparaging comparison between Rider and the other hired hands. His juxtaposition of the faceless “bucks” and “husky Indian wrestlers” with Rider, whom Bert identifies by name as an admirable individual, displays his preference for the company of men who, like Rider, were willing to put their backs into their labour. Bert shows special admiration for cowboys who possessed exceptional skills in equestrianism and in handling cattle. Rider was “right in his prime about then,” Bert proclaims, for it was “shortly after this that he won the Canadian roping at Calgary” (144). In contrast, he disrespected those who, like the two menial workers, failed to meet these standards. Clearly, the “young bucks” had not internalized the ideologies of the frontier, which places a premium on dedication to labour. By employing these men as props in his memoir to demonstrate his advocacy of this work ethic, he displays his racial prejudices as well.

Bert’s affiliation with Rider also seems to indicate a bias toward “Indians” who had acquired Anglo-Canadian and American mannerisms and had internalized the ideologies manifested in the behaviour that, in Bert’s homosocial world, distinguished superior cowhands from the ordinary variety. His mimicry of the phrases expressed by the “two younger bucks,” omitting pronouns, articles, and

verbs, implies that these men lack command of the English language. His memoir constitutes, at these times, a colonial discourse that “construe[s] the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction” (Bhabha, “Other” 70). Bert implies that the behaviour and attitude displayed by the younger Nakoda men needed correction. They are slow and lazy, he suggests, and ought to aspire toward achieving the work ethic modelled in Rider’s stellar performance. In the workplace, ridicule is a strategy employers sometimes use to maintain power over employees for it implies that those low in the social hierarchy are undeserving of the privileges and rewards to which those higher up the scale are entitled. Anecdotes such as Bert’s reveal a work ethic that expects itinerant labourers, in spite of their lack of vested interest in the project, to put extreme effort into doing the jobs for which they were hired. In my fifth chapter, I discuss the treatment of ranch hands and domestic help, who, regardless of their ethnicity, were situated on the lower rungs of a social hierarchy that, Richard Day contends, was officially sanctioned in Canada in the mid-twentieth century.

Enacting a similar kind of revision involving the inclusion and exclusion of certain details, Simon Evans selects parts of Bert’s anecdote to portray the kinds of work performed on the Bar U. Evans omits Bert’s confession that he wrote the piece based on his memory of a day that unfolded decades before, he glosses over Bert’s references to faceless “bucks” and “husky Indian wrestlers,” and he omits Bert’s mimicry of the men’s speech. Inferring Bert’s status as an authority, Evans presents the anecdote as an accurate history of cattle management on the Bar U

Ranch. After giving an account of the history of branding over the centuries, Evans writes: “Bert Sheppard recalled one branding at the Bar U during the 1920s” (97-98). He later discusses the contributions of Indigenous people “to the success” of the Bar U, especially during the 1940s, when “costs were rising rapidly” and “labour was required to expand farm operations” (258-59). In that respect, Evans seems to share Bert’s work ethic for he refers to Rider as a “leader of the Stoneys, [...who] led by example and taught new generations of young Indians” the skills of roping and cattle management (261). Yet, he indicates, too, that Nakoda cowboys like Rider were exploited by the Bar U. The account books show, he claims, that they were paid the same rates as non-Indigenous labourers and through their contribution especially “[d]uring a volatile time of labour shortages and soaring labour costs, when factors of production began to favour smaller family ranching outfits, the Native labour force did much to ensure that the last decade of the Bar U Ranch’s corporate existence was one of triumphant profitability” (267). His purpose seems to be to emphasize that, despite the fact that, like itinerant cowboys, Indigenous hired hands were not paid a great deal, they remained loyal ranch employees.

Based on Bert’s admission, the publication of the original article in the *High River Times* has a different purpose than its reprint in *Just About Nothing*. The former version is a history or reminiscence of early ranching activities created through the inclusion or exclusion of details, which Hayden White maintains, “makes a narrative representation possible,” for narrativity creates the possibility of “conceiving the kinds of tensions, conflicts, struggles, and their various kinds of

resolutions that we are accustomed to find in any representation of reality presenting itself to us as a history” (14, 17). The latter is the kind of historical narrative White describes as being charged “with ethical or moral significance” (15), for Bert employs the reprinted version to lament the replacement of the old-time method of roping calves for branding and castrating by “a chute and metal branding table,” which exposes the animals to discomfort as “flesh and bone are pitted against steel” (*Just* 141). The fine details embedded in his literary descriptions reveal his dislike of mechanical methods and suggests that he sees roping and branding as intrinsic to a way of life. Bert’s reprinting of the article is to express his regret that the cowboy skills necessary to the labour in the early days of cattle ranching are losing the value they once had.

As an apologist for the “old ways,” Bert reveals optimism about the changes that began taking place in the ranching industry in the 1970s. He adds: “It’s about a quarter of a century since this story [in the *High River Times*] was written. Today a large percentage of the calves west of High River are branded the old-time way, and there are quite a few good calf heelers in the country” (145). To “revive” the traditional methods, Bert writes, branding matches “are being held each year at the High River Rodeo” (145). On previous pages of *Just About Nothing*, Bert insinuates his status as one of the best “calf heelers” in the region by identifying himself as a member of a branding team that competed in a “Ranch day branding match” held in High River in 1976, a team that was composed of “Bill Bews and Gary Malmberg wrestling,” “Warren Zimmerman and Dave Diebel branding,” and “Bert Sheppard roping on Jasper” (93). He promotes himself in his

TL Ranch history, as well, stating: “The regular ranch routine was broken in 1948 by the TL outfit winning the branding matches at Nanton and High River. Thereby taking home the Chipman Trophy for the Foothills Range Championship Branding Contest. Warren Zimmerman, Joe Wallace, Henry [Hank] Pallister and myself making up the team” (32). Thus, Bert builds selective portraits of certain members of his ranching community as exemplary cowboys if not cowboy heroes.

In his journals, Bert recorded the details of the workaday world of ranchers and cowboys. For example, in an entry for April 27, 1938, he wrote: “Dick Dayment brought Baby Chicks [so] Fred and Dan [were given the task of] cleaning up around chicken-house,” while he and “Sam” (Jonas Rider) “took 15 head cows and calves to [section] 23.” The entry reveals the types of labour on a cattle ranch, and also the fact that cattle were not the only livestock he and his cohorts raised; they also kept chickens. Elofson draws attention to the illusions of self-identification that some ranchers fashioned about their lives and labour in the “foothills of southern Alberta in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (“Not” 205). Cowboys “who operated either as owners or hired hands [...] felt that a distinction between ranching and farming was important to their self-concept as well as to their public image,” and thus, Elofson claims, they drew a line between the kinds of work they would do and the jobs they saw as belonging to farmers

(205).²⁸ “Far from simply attending grazing livestock from the saddle,” he maintains, the reality for most stockmen was that shortly after settling, “they were toiling in their fields, sowing crops, putting up hay and greenfeed, harvesting, storing and hauling grain and working a good deal on foot caring for animals both within their barnyards and outside” (“Not” 208). The Sheppard journals reveal that, in addition, ranchers dedicated a good part of each week to cooking, baking bread, churning butter, and collecting eggs.

Bert kept notes in his journals of the multitude of chores that were done by him and his cohorts on the Riverbend and TL Ranches, and many of them had nothing to do with cattle or horses. He wrote on June 30, 1939, that he “Pickled beef before dinner.” Depending on the season, he and his partners were also required to dig and manure gardens in order to sow potatoes and other vegetables. Cowboys obviously had to do laundry, as well, for as Bert wrote on May 15, 1939, “Slim, Fred and Jack moved cows and calves west,” while he “Went to H.R. with Patterson” and came home to find “Baker at place. Baker installing new Maytag Washer.” Slim, Fred, and Jack were hired hands at the TL and Riverbend Ranches. The images that memoirists like Bert promoted of the life he and his cohorts lived as ranchers on the frontier clash with the reality of their material necessities. While Bert omits references to the diverse tasks cowboys performed when they were not

²⁸ Quoting NWMP Commissioner L. W. Herchmer,” Elofson states that a cowboy “was supposed to be someone who worked with ‘his horse and lasso and branding iron’ and stayed away from teams of work horses or chickens, hogs and milk cows and from such devices as rakes or pitch forks or ‘ploughs and binders and threshing machines’” (205). Canadian ranchers, writes Elofson, “would not even produce their own vegetables and butter” (“Adapting” 322). ““They all say they have not time,”” writes Herchmer in his 1888 annual report; nor will the cowboys in the region ““work on foot, & Until lately it was supposed that they would not cut hay”” (qtd. in Elofson, “Adapting” 322).

working cattle, especially when writing about cowboys as rugged individuals, he does refer to the labour the hired hands did in his TL Ranch history, for the work constituted progress.

Bert recalls that “it was necessary to build miles of new boundry fence, as well as repair the old line fences that were in disrepair. So the summer of 1939 was largely taken up with that work. Large crews of Indians under the leadership of Jonass Rider and Paul Amos,²⁹ were given contracts by my two partners in crime and myself” (TL 18). Specifically, Bert writes, “Jonass Rider, was given a contract, to move the west side of the old horse-pasture fence, which zig-zaged along the east side of the ridge, to the top of the ridge, on the west slope” (20). Henry Sr. recorded in his journals, in an entry dated December 10, 1918, that he, too, hired Rider to work for him. He wrote, “[Jonas] Sam Rider came and I gave him a contract to cut 200 corral rales.” On December 12, he “Rode with Bert to see where the Indians were cutting my rales,” and the next day, he “rode up to count rales. [...] Paid Sam Rider \$19.00 for 190 rales.” The sense readers get from perusing the long list of chores in the journals is that the actual workaday world of the first ranchers in Alberta was mundane, despite the fact that Bert and other pioneer memoirists imagine it dramatically, at least when writing in the trope of the frontier.

In their journals, the Sheppards documented what Arendt categorizes as *labour*, which is an activity done as a means of “survival in the struggle between

²⁹ Paul Amos is featured in *Buffalo Head* (n.p.), in which he is depicted as the author Raymond Patterson’s lifelong friend as are King Bearspaw and George Pocaterra, to whom Bert Sheppard refers in his journals and memoirs.

man and nature” (Ricoeur 187). In addition, Henry Sr. wrote about achievements that Arendt calls *work*, which is an endeavour that “aims at leaving a mark on the course of things” (Ricoeur 187). He was one of the British immigrants, who “play[ed] a prominent part in the business and professional life of [the] communities” that sprang up in southern Alberta at the end of the nineteenth century (Thomas 76). Henry Sr.’s education provided him with the necessary background to sit on various boards of directors. Indeed, he assumed a good deal of responsibility for shaping the nascent community of High River. He wrote on January 5, 1909, that he found himself appointed to “three committees of Town Council Public Works, Health and Police, and Chairman of Licenses, Assessment, and Salery’s.” He attended meetings to discuss, for example, the prospect of finding natural gas in High River and of establishing a flour and oat mill in town. He wrote on January 13, 1912, “Had a Board of Trade meeting at the [?] [...] representing High River as a suitable place for [?] Flour mills and Quaker oats to locate in.” According to Irene Kerr, curator of the Museum of the Highwood, Henry Sr. even served as mayor of High River and left his mark on the community (Conversation).

Alternatively, Bert describes activities that Arendt labels *action* (Ricoeur 187). In an anecdote about a fire that threatened High River during the summer of 1936, he recalls the efforts of a crew of fire fighters to control a forest fire in the foothills and prevent it from destroying nearby ranches. Comparing the fighting of the fire to World War Two, Bert portrays Harry Wileman, a member of the Forestry Service, as a “Montgomery Type, [...who] never spared himself or his

men”; Fred Nash, “the Ranger at the Station on the Highwood,” as “a Patton, [for] he was the type that would charge a grizzly”; and Jim Elliot, a professional lumberjack, as an “Alexander, quiet and gentlemanly, looking to the welfare of his men [and...] weighing every move against the consequences, before he made it” (113, 127). Bert plays a large part in this tale, as well, for he portrays himself making and enforcing critical decisions, and comforting men who, became “fire shocked, and [had] to be taken out, just as soldiers in the war [became] shell shocked” (116). He uses military metaphors to enhance the drama.

In another narrative, Bert valorizes the “lumberjacks” employed by the Lineham Lumber Company, describing them as “broad shouldered heavy chested men, [who] had no trouble finding summer employment with the hay contractors, as they made excellent loose hay stackers, having worked with their arms most of their lives” (89). He emphasizes the risks the men took when fording swollen rivers with “icy water up to their waists” to clear log jams (86). He praises the “canthook men” for their “agility and timing,” men who, in their “calked boots” move as quickly “as cats, hooking the logs as they came at them, moving their feet like ballet dancers and working in perfect unison with each other” (82). Bert concludes his reminiscence by expressing his regret that these extraordinarily rugged individuals were now gone, that “the ‘old time lumberjack’ along with the ‘old time cowboy’ had drifted over the pass” (94). By demonstrating his affiliations with loggers, fire fighters, ranchers, and cowboys, men whose lives were action-filled, Bert conveys his own sense of exceptionalism.

While Bert's memoirs present heroic figures, the Sheppard journals offer information that contrasts mythical narratives of pioneers. Henry Sr. revealed the ordinariness of Bert's life when he noted on April 23, 1932: "Bert in bed with bad cold." Likewise, Bert referred to unremarkable human habits on November 30, 1939, when he travelled to Chicago for a livestock fair, took "a room. Bought some clothes, [and] had a bath." By recording what Shumaker defines as the minutiae of daily life, the bathing, sleeping, and other details of a "life—the life in which all human beings share," that must be left "beyond the printed words" of proper autobiographies if they are to be interesting to readers (47-50), the journals portray people engaging in mundane activities. In an entry dated March 19, 1938, Bert recorded an unusual cause of illness among the men on the ranch, counteracting myths of the super-human pain thresholds of cowboy heroes that allowed them to tolerate conditions beyond the parameters of normal human endurance: "Everyone sick from drinking poisoned whiskey." Thus, he allows readers to conceive of and comprehend, the everyday world in which pioneers existed.

There are times, however, when the Sheppard journals conceal corporeal experiences of human life. For example, Henry Jr. encodes what appear to be records of his wife Evelyn's and his step-daughter Ruth's menstruation, for he never explicitly refers to these monthly events. Instead, he uses the word "sick" and the phrase "not feeling well," which implies illness rather than healthy bodily functions. One such entry is one for November 20, 1929, in which Henry Jr. stated: "Ruth not feeling well stayed off school." Especially telling is the fact that his wife

entertained guests on a day that Ruth was “sick”. Henry Jr. wrote on January 17, 1929, that “Evelyn had a tea party consisting of M^{rs} Betton M^{rs} Burke & M^{rs} Nelson. They all did justice to the good eats Ruth sick did not go to school.” If Ruth had been genuinely ill, no doubt her mother would not have invited friends to visit. S. Leigh Matthews draws attention to issues of modesty and privacy in Marjorie Campbell’s memoir *The Silent Song*, in which the author “notes that the [occasional] absence of men about the homestead provided her mother with space to attend to certain personal details of female life,” such as washing and drying “the neatly hemmed squares of winceyette on which many women depended before the emergence of commercially available sanitary napkins” (qtd. in Matthews, *Looking* 78). Perhaps modesty kept Key, Thomson, and Hopkins from mentioning menstruation in their memoirs and from referring to their bodies except in the context of farm labour. Eliane Leslau Silverman argues that the “menstrual taboo permeated frontier society” (40). Henry Jr. avoids breaking this taboo not by silence but by writing in euphemisms.

Henry Sr. and Bert appear to be the only life writers in my study, who unhesitatingly and explicitly referred to bodily parts and bodily infections and disease. Such references make clear that journals, unlike the memoirs, were private and meant for the use of the author, not for publication. In an exceptional entry in terms of its length and self-reflective content, Henry Sr. describes the events of January 29, 1908—the day after Dr. Learmonth performed a complicated surgery on the leg of his third son George, removing part of the bone so his prosthetic leg would fit comfortably. Henry strongly articulated his objections, but his concern

was mostly on George who is “suffering from the effects of chloroform,” and Bee who “looks like death and is worrying herself thin.” The entry takes up half a page and is, by far, the longest and most self-reflective entry in all of the twenty-three years covered by Henry Sr.’s journals. It reads:

The operation took about an hour, when it was over Dr. Learmonth told me he had taken off a piece of the shin bone as well as the small bone as it would make another operation later on unnecessary. I was much annoyed as he had told me it would be a simple thing to shorten the small bone, and had said nothing about performing the more serious operation which detaches all the muscles and takes as long to recover from as the original operation. Besides which I don't think it will do away with the necessity of another operation, as the small bone is just as liable to grow longer again as it did before and I consider he did wrong in not letting me know what he was going to do as I should certainly have objected. Bee very much upset, inclined [?], she certainly ought to have gone away somewhere for the [day ?] . Burke came to supper and was a beastly nuisance, but meant kindly.

Henry Sr.’s account for the day after the surgery is significant in that it is not only an entry in which he expressed emotion of an extreme degree, but it is also one of the few in which he was critical of the actions of a neighbour and a friend. For the most part, when he wrote the names of individuals who came to visit, he focused on himself. That is, Henry Sr. used his journals to account for his own behaviour and not for that of the people with whom he shared his life. This tendency reflects the main purposes of the daily entries, which are to record the completion of ranching chores and his church attendance, and to keep notes on his civic duties.

It is puzzling for readers that Henry Sr. did not record the surgery performed to amputate the leg. Readers learn about the accident that necessitated such measures from Bert, who explains that it occurred after his brothers had returned from an outing on which they had been trying to shoot a lynx (*Spitzee* 56).

He vaguely determines the time as the winter of 1906 and 1907. Bert was only five years old at the time his brother was shot, but according to his memoir, written in the 1970s, George “was hit in the leg, below the knee with a forty-four bullet,” which shattered the bone. There is no mention of the near fatal shooting in Henry’s journal in January of 1907, which is the first volume of his collection. It is possible, however, that the accident occurred in November or December 1906. The 1906 volume, in which it, then, might have been recorded, is missing or has been destroyed. Employing phrases that echo those of Louis L’Amour, Bert tells the story as another frontier anecdote, writing that his father “sent a rider on a fast horse to High River a distance of ten miles” to get Dr. Learmonth, who amputated the leg (56). The accident did not deter Henry Sr. from allowing George another rifle, for he wrote in his journal on May 9, 1907, that he “Drove to High River, got a 22 rifle for George.”

George remained an active rider throughout his youth, but he did not become a horse master and cattle expert like his brother Bert. According to Dianne Vallée, he became a car sales person at a local dealership and resided in High River. He left the Riverbend Ranch, seemingly, in 1918, for Henry Sr. recorded on August 10, 1918, that “George came in Ford car and brought beef.” His name is frequently in his father’s journals for George came back regularly to help with chores. His brother, Henry, often noted that George came by to pick up rabbit food, refuse from the family’s huge vegetable garden, for George raised rabbits. Bert also raised rabbits, a large number of them, according to Warren Zimmerman, one of Bert’s lifelong friends. Evidence is also found in Henry Jr.’s entry on

November 12, 1934, which noted that he “Cleaned 12 rabbits that Bert left.” Bert writes little about George and nothing about rabbits except for a brief note that when his brothers were adolescents, they kept rabbits and that “with an eye on [his] piggybank, they persuaded [him] to buy in” on the rabbit raising business (*Spitzee* 54).

Bert respected rugged and skilled men, who had developed expertise as equestrians from their years of ranching on the prairies. Perhaps, that is why Bert does not write about George, yet, he draws attention to Bob Carry, another amputee, whom he saw as extraordinary. Indeed, Bert eulogizes Carry as “a man of sterling qualities, a ‘Cowboy’ in the true sense of the word – a working cowboy, who throughout his life exemplified ‘mind over matter’ to the very highest degree” (45). In the masculine world of frontier ranches, a man’s strength determined his worth, and Carry passed the test, Bert claims, by “lift[ing] a 300-pound barrel of salt into the box of a dead-ax wagon[,] a lift of about 3 feet. Carry [...] seemed to do it with apparent ease” (48). This was remarkable, Bert implies, because Carry had lost a leg in “the battle of the Somme,” when he was seriously wounded “above the knee” (49). On the battlefield, Bert writes, Carry made “a tourniquet [...] then cut off his shattered leg with his knife, [...] and] remained conscious for 25 hours” until he was rescued and moved to a hospital in England (49). The qualities of the man that impressed him the most were not that Carry sustained “17 amputations” to eliminate the gangrene that had set in, nor the fact that he was left “with barely 4 inches of bone from the hip joint,” but that Carry determined to “ride again once he got back to Alberta” and lived out his life as an independent

cowboy “who liked to ride big horses” (*Just* 49, 51). Even when, “[a]fter a day’s ride, his underwear would be soaked with blood where the socket of his artificial leg had gouged into the remnants of his thigh,” Bert claims, “he never complained” (51). Bert concludes Carry’s biography by appraising him as a man who rightfully earned respect as a judge “at the Calgary Stampede” and the gratitude of the community of Turner Valley for he became one of its influential figures when he was “elected Councillor,” a role Carry served “until his retirement due to ill health” (52). Like Bert’s other pioneer figures, portrayed with the drama of the frontier trope, Carry becomes larger-than-life and deserving of his success.

Bert appeared to disdain those who depended on others for help. He especially disliked incompetent and effete Englishmen. Indeed, he rejected everything English, with the exceptions of such culinary delights as rabbit and the plum puddings and mince pies that were served in his family’s home at Christmas. These seasonal dishes are mentioned in December of numerous volumes of his father’s journals and each entry indicates that Bert consumed them along with the rest of the family and their guests. They are mentioned twice in 1920, the first time on January 1, when Henry Sr. recorded that he “Cooked dinner. Chicken. Plumb pudding mince pies. Mr. Brown and the boys enjoyed themselves.” He referred to them again on December 25, having written that while he and his sister Mary “went to church,” his sons, Bert and Henry Jr., to whom he refers again as the “Boys stopped at home and looked after pudding. George came about 5.30.” The discrepancies between Bert’s cultural practices, which are demonstrated in his and his father’s journals, and his cultural beliefs, which are represented in his memoirs,

reveal the differences in the construction of diaries and memoirs, and the variations in their authors' use of them. The records in the journals are based on phenomenological experiences; the anecdotes told in the memoirs are the result of indoctrination. The journals serve private interests, while the memoirs disseminate certain ideologies for political purposes.

One of the reasons for Bert's aversion to his British heritage seems to have been based on rumours or slander that British settlers were not likely to succeed as pioneer ranchers. Bert is careful to associate himself with rugged and knowledgeable ranchers and to denunciate allusions of his association with men in his father's social circle. In an anecdote in *Spitzee Days*, Bert scorns two young English ranchers, Snowden and Overton, who like many "young Englishmen," he maintains, "were no exception to the rule of doing foolish things," like letting their team of horses run away when they went "duck shooting" (117). The story bears much similarity to an entry in his father's journal on August 28, 1907, which noted that a visitor to the ranch, Cyril Nelson set out to go duck hunting, but "returned after his horse run away at last gate." Bert interprets this incident as proof that not only did the men lack equestrian skills, they lacked common sense. Elsewhere, Bert describes Snowden and Overton as novice ranchers who had arrived from England and had attended the "Hanson Agriculture School" to acquire knowledge in animal husbandry. After completing their training, Snowden and Overton bought a ranch; however, lacking in ambition, Bert suggests with unconcealed ridicule, they passed the time pursuing activities like shooting ducks and prairie chicken, playing polo, fishing, and drinking (*Spitzee* 153-54).

Remarking on the sources of anxiety in England that manifested in disparaging images of effete Englishmen, Carter Hanson observes that “[l]ate nineteenth and early twentieth-century Canadian literature, specifically fiction about the Canadian West,” enticed a number of British men to come to Canada as a solution to the limited possibilities of employment at home (“Working” 657). Celebrating “the masculinity of work,” such novels address “concerns and even panic about the health and vitality of British men” in the 1890s, which, Hanson asserts, “arose from a confluence of social forces,” including a lack of employment (660). Thus, they came to Canada, he argues, to exchange sedentary lives for those in which “the performance of manual labor [was] the true mark of manhood and gentility” (660-61). Yet, often, these remittance men failed to acquire the skills necessary to succeed. Thus, these “greenhorns” were presented as caricatures of working class English immigrants, thought of as incompetent and lazy, which prompted potential employers to post signs stating “No Englishmen need apply” (Danysk 79).

Sarah Carter refers to the remittance men who were openly “lampooned in Western Canada’s entertaining and wildly popular paper, Bob Edwards’ *Eye Opener* published in High River and then Calgary” (“Britishness” 49). Bert remarks that *The Eye Opener* ran for “two or three years” and was a means for its author to “stir up a hornet’s nest” in High River, “which may have had something to do with his leaving” and his becoming “the most notorious editor in the west” (27). Bert seems to have shared some of Edwards’s values, including his disdain for English remittance men. Bert’s portrayal of them not only sets up foils for

valorizing the ranchers in the region, it provides a contrast for his self-identity as a skilled, hard-working, and manly individual. He effectively enacts his own self-empowerment by building on the substance of cowboy myths and the defamatory and clichéd images of inept English settlers.

Key speculates that the “English colonists of those days must have provoked many a chuckle from the earlier more hardened pioneers by their attempt, often so inappropriate, to carry on with their traditional way of life” (37). In a moment of self-deprecation, Key writes that many of her memories, or as she calls them, her “*flashbacks* are to do with the precious family jokes” about their lack of practical experience as they endeavoured to establish their farm near Parkland (34; my emphasis). She admits, for example, that because of their naiveté, her parents froze their first crop of potatoes and when the potatoes were boiled, because the starch had turned to sugar, they “turned into a gluey, sticky mess that is quite uneatable” (45). Key shields her father from scorn, however, arguing that he “was not a remittance man, but he did have some of the finer characteristics of those ne’er-do-well younger sons of wealthy families, who were being shipped out to Canada around the turn of the century, in the hope they would make something of themselves” (141). Her father, on the contrary, “received no remittance from home”; rather, Key observes, he was sent “a small, stationary, all-purpose oil engine, for use on the farm,” that had been designed and built by “the family firm of Petter Engines in Yeovil, England” (39). She finds many ways to praise her father for his resourcefulness and work ethic and, at the same time, remind her readers that he came from a industrious if not affluent English family.

Key admits that her father was also, perhaps, generous to a fault for he often refused to demand payment from his neighbours who used his engine to operate their fanning mills, “no matter how many mornings or afternoons he spent grinding and fanning and chopping, or how much oil he used up doing these favours” (40). More often than not, Key’s father was paid by their neighbours for his labour, which he did on a contractual basis to supplement his income until the Petters’ farm was self-sustaining. He discloses his financial situation in an entry in a diary, in which he wrote that in the ““first summer in 1910, due to our many expenses we found our funds running short. I was able to earn over a thousand dollars by putting up seven miles of fencing, cutting 350 acres of wheat for neighbours with our new Massey Harris, and other odd jobs”” (Harry Petter qtd. in Key 183). Despite the fact that Petter was required to take up work to augment his income, his ability to do so lucratively, quickly, and with moderate effort was made possible by the financial support of his family in England, which allowed him to buy the “new Massey Harris” tractor. No doubt, his generosity toward neighbouring farmers promoted his acceptance in the community.

While Key praises her father for practicing the ethos of cooperation by helping his neighbours, she also recollects without shame the help her parents received when they first arrived on the prairies. She relates how an American woman, who “was a born frontiers-woman,” came to Radfords several days in a row to teach “Mother and Boppo how to make bread, how to cure bacon and ham,” and how to use ““cowpats’, the round flat cakes of manure that were thickly scattered everywhere” to burn in their cast iron stove, for it was “a fuel not unlike

peat,” which was used in England (44). She recognizes that people learn from others who have already learned from experience. Bert fails to acknowledge that process when ridiculing naïve or inexperienced remittance men; rather, he preferred to imagine pioneer ranchers as those who were born with the intrinsic qualities necessary to prosper on the frontier.

“Compared to other colonists,” Key concludes, her father did “exceptionally well, but only to the extent that he had made a living for himself and his family, and had been able to keep out of debt” (189). He did so, she suggests, without giving up his ties to Britain and his English traditions. Gardiner was not one to give up his English traditions, either; yet, he was well aware of the ridicule Englishmen suffered for engaging in trivial pursuits. “Nearly all the Englishmen out here go on in the same way, pony racing, etc.,” he observed in a letter dated June 6, 1885, “and are the laughing stock of all the Americans” (41). Referring to an article in “Longmans,” a magazine, in which the author publicizes the failure of some English immigrants to settle successfully, Gardiner wrote: “The man knows what he is writing about but most of it applies more to the states [sic] and farming than it does to the cattle business.” He acknowledged the reason for ridicule: “There is a lot of dancing here. They have a dance every week, also there is tennis playing, etc., but an Englishman that goes in for that sort of thing is considered no good” (41). In my next chapter, I discuss Gardiner’s treatment as a hired hand before he rose to the rank of a respected rancher.

In his memoirs, Bert often portrays himself as the protagonist and, sometimes, the hero of his adventures and he frequently valorizes other men as

strong, autonomous individuals. Contrary to such claims, cooperative spirit among the community of ranchers is found in his journals. He wrote on June 22, 1939: “Fine morning, Jack and I rode down to Bews’ to help Joe brand. Branded 77 calves. After lunch all hands turned out and helped me brand, doubted whether or not we would get through before it rained, but shower passed over, branded 70 head, about 40 bull calves, came down the river with John Bews and Ted Eden. Had supper with them.” A more urgent demand for cooperation is represented in Henry Sr.’s journals on June 18, 1918, when he wrote that, returning home from a neighbouring ranch to which he had taken his mares for stud service, he “saw smoke at Ranch and found stables had [?], impossible to say how fire started [...] All the neighbours turned out to help [...] Rooney & his man. Palton. Brown. Hanson. A H Grant. Johnston & Palton sat up all night.”

Danysk asserts that “[c]o-operation rather than competition was necessary for survival in the early years” (75). Drawing from the personal testimony of Charles Fisher, a hired hand in Saskatchewan in 1907, she remarks, “Fisher was struck by the spirit of co-operation evident at all times, but especially during harvest season” (65). Danysk contends that while a sense of individualism existed among farmers, which resulted from the necessity of farmers on small-scale agricultural operations to “make decisions and [carry] out an endless round of tasks on their own, [...] the extremes of individualism—competitiveness, which is a frequent component of masculine identity—was less important in the bachelor identity [of farm hands], since it did not serve the needs of an agricultural community struggling to establish itself” (75). The complexity of ranching settlers’

personalities as they upheld the ethos of solidarity contrasts their depiction as mythical figures in frontier narratives for community cooperation was essential to the success of the various family farms in the region.

The Sheppards were members of a social group founded on the concern for each other's well-being. Henry Sr. placed great value on community in his note about the turn-out of his friends and neighbours at Bee's funeral. He and Henry Jr. also maintained strong ties to their church. Mutual concern is shown, as well, in theirs and in Bert's journals, in the numerous references to attendees at funerals as community members died, either from old age, illness, or fatal injury. Yet, while they referred to cooperation in their community, it was exclusive to the society of Anglo-Canadian equestrians and cattle ranchers that had formed in southern Alberta. Such evidence suggests that, in the community in which the Sheppards lived, class distinctions were based on economic prosperity, or lack thereof. Referring to Breen's historical analysis, Slatta claims that the "frontier did not alter preexisting class stratification and strong British cultural values" on the prairies (*Comparing* 126). The Sheppard journals betray the authors' sense of themselves as deserving of their social status, because of their ranch management, regardless of the fact that their success depended on the continual efforts of menial labourers. Bert's memoirs, in contrast, promote the notion that pioneers' deserving of success is due to their intrinsic noble qualities of courage and tenacity, which he highlights in his tales of adventure.

This chapter has explored how Bert Sheppard, by crafting selective portraits of himself and his cohorts and friends in his memoirs, crafts skewed

pictures of daily life on prairie ranches. Moreover, by avoiding references to the kinds of domestic chores that ranchers and cowboys commonly did to feed themselves and keep their houses in good order, he creates less than accurate portraits of them. His journals, however, present them as people living in a world that required them to spend their time not just working cattle, but performing other tasks associated with stock management, such as building and mending fences, ploughing soil, seeding crops, and cutting and storing hay and oats. His journals also reveal the household chores that were part of the regular routine on his ranches; thus, they provide evidence that the lives of these men, even champion ropers like Jonas Rider, were as varied and as common as those of farmers.

Jane Tompkins sees the cowboy hero as the embodiment of a rejection of domesticity and “the antithesis of the cult of domesticity that dominated American Victorian culture” (39). As the cowboy rides off into the sunset of the western frontier, metaphorically, he rides beyond the restrictions imposed by the political power of eastern civilization. While Tompkins’s focus is on the symbolic meaning of the cowboy hero in popular culture, her theories on horseback riding as a means of escape serve equally well to an analysis of Bert Sheppard’s life writing and to the writing of Hopkins, Thomson, and Key, whose memoirs indicate that they were just as eager as men to leave domestic chores to others so they could spend at least part of their day in the saddle. A comfortable amount of affluence was necessary to own the horses and the expanses of land on which to keep them; thus, the women’s narratives perpetuate myths of settlement on the prairies, not as a harsh, frontier experience, but as the unfolding of a utopian vision. In my next chapter, I explore

their writing to reveal that their participation in equestrian sports was a means for the women to demonstrate their status and, in turn, the sense of entitlement went along with it.

Chapter Five – Georgic Literature as Narratives of Entitlement in Pioneer Life Writing

“If you don’t want to have to do a thing, it is a good idea not to learn how to do it.”
(Georgina Thomson, *Crocus and Meadowlark Country* 69)

Georgic literature implies nostalgia for a golden past and longing for a utopian future and, in its association with the landed gentry, it portrays plenitude, graciousness, and entitlement. Among the georgic topics discussed in this chapter are “unbought provisions,” “Golden Age and *sponte sua* analogies,” and animal husbandry (Fowler 16-17). Labour is intrinsic to animal husbandry; yet, Fowler suggests that there is something problematic in georgic depictions of labour, for they imply that land owners enjoy the bounty of the land, not because it is the fruit of their labour, but because it is entitled to persons of their rank (17). I explore Key’s, Thomson’s, and Hopkins’s anecdotes about the animals that shared the golden age of their younger years to demonstrate that the authors transform them into what Shukin defines as animal capital. As such, they become symbols of the authors’ social status and sense of entitlement.

In discussing the women’s accounts, I differentiate between their memoirs, which emphasize joyful involvement in agricultural labour, and tales of martyrdom, which convey an author’s reluctant and even forced cooperation. Such tales depict the prairies as a dystopia and settlement as a tribulation that inflicted discomfort upon pioneers, who, regardless of their labour, fail to relieve their poverty. Narratives in which settlers participate voluntarily celebrate pioneering as a successful venture that afforded the authors pleasure, personal growth, and

family prosperity as rewards for the labour it entailed. Writing in georgic literary style, Key, Thomson, and Hopkins convey their sense of deserving of these rewards and, with them, a gracious form of life. The main sources of pleasure for these authors, as I shall reveal, were their equestrian activities.

The women's biographies of the animals in their lives reflect traditional georgic methods of husbandry. Rollin asserts that "traditional agriculture," which has existed since ancient times, is "good husbandry" for it means keeping animals healthy by providing "food, protection, care, or shelter from extremes of climate" (6). The women's writing recaptures traditional agriculture in the face of its disappearance as family farms give way to factory farms, and animals raised for food, philosopher Peter Singer states, are forced "to lead miserable lives from birth to slaughter" ("Down" 20). Their memoirs also uphold the ethos of stewardship. For example, Key recalls a time when her mother "had a sick newborn calf, in a large wooden crate, like a stall, in a corner of the back kitchen. I don't remember what was the matter with it, but Mother fed it with a baby's bottle, and it eventually recovered and was returned to its mother" (161). While georgic themes have value as the foundation of ethical relationships with animals, they appear to emerge in stories written by settlers whose prosperity allowed their families to hire menial labourers. Key's, Thomson's, and Hopkins's narratives emphasize this condition. The authors overshadow the work performed by hired hands, however, thus excluding them from the metaphorical Eden of their memoirs and from the literal agricultural Eden that they, like many other settlers, believed could be found on the prairies.

Agrarian myths in the late nineteenth century, MacPherson and Thompson claim, evoked popular perceptions of farming as a noble way of life (475).³⁰ In more recent versions, that is, when tied to capitalism in the twenty-first century, agrarian myths, Barnetson asserts, shape the labour relationships in agrarian enterprises by privileging farm owners over farm workers (65). For example, the Alberta government, he states, employs the agrarian myth “to justify continued statutory exclusion [from the *Employment Standards Code*] by, for example, substituting the issue of farm solvency for farm safety” (65). In “Harvesting Bread and Roses: Female Farm Workers in Alberta,” Mary Kosta and Darlene Dunlop draw from the testimonies of farm workers to bring to light the dangers inherent in an industry that is exempt from the Labour Code.³¹ Myths that valorize farmers and the institution of the family farm camouflage the labour done by hired help who are yet denied the benefits guaranteed to farm workers in every other Canadian province. In their memoirs, the female authors in my study maintain such myths when they centre on themselves and their families to suggest that their labour was the sole reason for their success.

Thomson reminisces about the labour she, her siblings, and her mother and father performed on their Alberta farm in the early twentieth century. The advice

³⁰ See also, David C. Jones who discusses the promotion of country life by social reformers, including J. S. Woodsworth, as source of moral instruction (462). Rasporich connects the utopian vision of the land with “a moral projection of a new order” in terms of the “social ideals and aspirations” of early prairie settlements (353).

³¹ Amnesty International activist Mary Kosta and farm worker Darlene Dunlop point out that “Alberta is the only province that completely excludes farm workers from labor legislation,” which makes Alberta farm workers the only labourers in Canada that “are exempt from most provisions of the *Employment Standards Code*, such as hours of work, overtime, overtime pay, general holidays and general holiday pay, vacations and vacation pay, restrictions on the employment of children, and minimum wage” (13). Moreover, they have no recourse. “Under the Labor Relations Code” of Alberta, Kosta and Dunlop argue, “no farm workers are allowed to unionize” (13).

she offers in the above epigram is based on her experiences milking cows and refers to her skill and confidence in the completion of that chore. Thomson observes that her brother Jim and older sister, Bee, never learned to milk cows, but that she and her younger sister, Chaddy, became good at it when they were still quite young (69). Consequently, they were the ones who were regularly assigned the task of milking, and with it, the separating of cream and churning of butter. Indeed, it is with pride that she writes about her skills in the dairy for they were developed to such a degree that when she came home from university for summer holidays she was still able to “assemble the separator parts in the summer twilight without bothering with a lamp” (71). Yet, a number of Thomson’s anecdotes emphasize the burden of certain kinds of farm work to convey her sense of deserving. For example, she did not like picking stones off the fields and confesses that she tried to convince her father that it “was not a girl’s work, [but] Father had other ideas and so we all had to rally round” (71). Thus, feeling a sense of pride from having participated in her family’s farming enterprise, Thomson proclaims that she, “too, had a hand in [the first] harvest. Hadn’t I picked stones and poisoned gophers?” (163). Transforming the picking of stones and the poisoning of gophers into metonyms for general farm labour and stating her contribution to their completion is a self-legitimizing act, a proclamation that she possessed the noble qualities of vitality and industry that enabled settlers to make a go of their homesteading ventures.

At times, Thomson attributes suffering to the labour she and her family performed. What is implied in images of labour is entitlement. The work horses

suffered, too, she contends as the “hot sun beat down on them, the wind blew dust in their eyes,” and “flies and mosquitoes” tormented them, so her father had to “protect their noses” with a piece of gunny sacking as they pulled the plough or dragged the harrows (160-61). The measure of adversity equals the amount of praise Thomson offers the men for whom ploughing all day long in the heat, the dust, and the flies “was really a tough job” (61). While Thomson praises the hired hands who worked for her family, most often, the men to whom she refers are faceless individuals. “We had so many hired men over the years,” she writes, “that I cannot remember even the names” (249). In contrast, she identifies her father, brother, sisters, and mother by name in conjunction with the chores they did and, thus, foregrounds her family’s performance of labour. Her mother, Thomson states, preferred farm work to housework, believing that “cooking was an awful waste of time, as you worked so hard only to have everything gobbled up in a hurry, and then you had to start all over again.” Her sister, Bee, in contrast, “was a good cook and housekeeper and so was allowed to stay in and get the meals” (71).

Monica Hopkins also writes about her labour to justify her sense of entitlement. Like Thomson’s mother, she preferred to work outside, to be engaged in “voyage[s] of discovery, never thinking of such mundane things as dirty plates and floors to be swept” (11). To reduce her domestic labour, Hopkins immediately dispensed with fineries like linen tablecloths, napkins, and the napkin rings that had been her and Billie’s wedding presents, and resorted to covering the kitchen table with a “white oilcloth,” the sort used by nearly everybody in her circle of acquaintances (20). In spite of her preference for being outdoors, Hopkins,

nevertheless, reveals enthusiasm for culinary arts. She explains to Gill that the Hopkinses' menu depends on the availability of foodstuffs: vegetables provided seasonally from their garden, beef and pork that they butcher themselves, eggs from their henhouse, and groceries purchased when they manage to make the lengthy trip to Calgary, or the shorter trip to nearby Priddis to buy them. She also describes in detail several of the meals that she has prepared for holiday feasts, special occasions, or merely when the mood strikes her.

For example, in September 1909, her first summer in Alberta, Hopkins is prompted by a desire to prepare a special meal for Billie and his business partner Joe Woolings, who are haying all day in a distant section, and sets to work making "rock buns," bread, a beef entrée, and two pies for dessert (12-13). Before the men return home for dinner, her good intentions are frustrated when the demands of hospitality oblige her to serve the meal to Peter Bearspaw and another visitor, who descend upon her unexpectedly during the afternoon. Bearspaw, after eating all he can in one sitting, takes the leftovers to distribute among his family members, and the Hopkinses and Joe are left to dine on "eggs and cheese again instead of the promised good supper" (13). McPherson calls an anecdote of such an encounter "a 'reverse captivity narrative' or 'domestic intrusion narrative,'" in which pioneer authors create the impression of "being trapped in their own homes by uninvited and usually unwanted Aboriginal guests" ("Home Tales" 224-25). She explores "settler women's encounters with Indigenous women and men to interrogate how white women in the Canadian 'frontier' came to understand their own places in the colonizing process" ("Home Tales" 223). Hopkins conveys a sense of her

experiences with her Nakoda neighbours as a tribulation. Moreover, revising the story for publication forty years later, she implies that her endurance is something for which she deserves praise.

Among the less dire circumstances Hopkins suffers is the occasional annoyance caused by the lack of availability of basic ingredients in local stores, especially, when she wishes to prepare traditional English meals. She complains of having to order currants to make her Christmas puddings and mincemeat (33). There is no shortage of food, though. In the georgic style, which emphasizes plenitude and “unbought provisions,” Hopkins boasts that she and Billie had a plentiful variety of red meat and poultry and “lovely large mountain trout” caught even in winter by fishing through a hole they cut through the foot thick ice (37). When there is neither fish nor fresh meat, they eat salted beef, which is their daily fare, Hopkins writes in a chapter titled “May 29, 1910”. It is the remainder of a steer “Billie had butchered in the fall,” she explains, and while Billie seems to like it, she does not and insists that she “shall subsist on eggs and bacon and bacon and eggs and probably end up cackling” (51). Her preferences are “Shepherd Pie and Rissole—my great standby for the end of the joint” (52). Hopkins also bottled fruit for her culinary enjoyment and writes in “December, 1910,” that she is especially proud of her “Christmas cake iced with angelica and cherries [which] really looked quite professional” (97, 114). She later boasts about the ““little fancy cakes”” for which she wins “first prize at the Priddis Fair” in “October, 1911” (158). While public displays of the delicacies of her English cuisine may have served to elevate Hopkins’s social status in the community by reminding her neighbours of her

previous middle-class standing in England, writing about her domestic economy decades later serves to remind readers.

Likewise, Joan Key tells us that once on the farm, her mother, Edith Petter, endeavoured, at first, to prepare the kinds of elaborate meals the family had eaten in England and to serve them in the same style to which they were accustomed, one in which “Father carved the joint, and Mother served the vegetables” (37). Key relates, however, that although their “meals during the first few months were eaten in the diningroom on white linen tablecloths, smoothly laid on the round oak table, with linen serviettes beside each place, and a bowl of wild flowers in the centre,” when Boppo, the domestic servant and nanny who accompanied them from England, dies suddenly, and they discover that “help [was] more difficult to find” in Alberta than in England, Key’s mother begins serving food “directly out of the saucepans onto the plates, and soon meals in the diningroom were rare” (37). Thus, her mother abandons the habit of setting a well-appointed dining table and, as Hopkins does, she resorts to using an oilcloth cover (37). Explaining the practicality of such changes, Key writes, “Mother came to accept the thick white oilcloth tablecloth which could be left on the big kitchen table day and night, and which could be wiped clean with a sweep of the dishcloth” (37). In referring to the compromises the Petters made as they gave up the polite practices of formal dining, Key emphasizes her parents’ former status as British landed gentry and hers by association.

The domestic details of these three families are not the concerns of settlers who, lacking in basic necessities and nearly bereft of hope, struggled to eke out a

life on the first prairie farms and ranches. Nevertheless, Sheilagh Jameson claims that glimpsing into Hopkins's memoir provides a view of a life that "exemplifies the lives of other women [...] who learned to cope with the hardships and the loneliness" of the "frontier areas" (Introduction xv). I disagree. Hopkins's memoir is too optimistic and too consistently cheerful to be an account of hardship experienced during settlement. Hopkins's complaint about having to eat eggs and cheese for supper again is not designed to convey deprivation; rather, it is to emphasize plenitude through situational irony. Her self-deprecating anecdote both lowers readers' expectations of her current family wealth and emphasizes her expectations of increased comfort once she learns to perform her wifely duties under the rustic conditions of an Alberta horse ranch.

The same scene demonstrates Hopkins's aptitude if not skill for assuming the role of lady of an estate, capable of delivering hospitality on demand not unlike the mistress of Penshurst, whom Jonson praises for "her high housewifery" (85). In a literal (and literary) performance of Jonson's tribute to Penshurst, Hopkins demonstrates that her household's "liberal board doth flow / With all that hospitality doth know! / Where comes no guest but is allowed to eat, / Without his fear, of thy lord's own meat" (59-63) as the two hungry Nakoda men devour the beef entrée Hopkins had prepared for Billie and Joe. In that respect, the anecdote serves to elevate Hopkins's position over her Indigenous neighbours through conspicuous demonstrations of charity and generosity. I elaborate further on the author's relations with and depictions of Indigenous peoples in the next chapter, in which I discuss how the settler memoirs in my study support the authors' claims of

enfranchisement within the agrarian community through the selective representation of indigenous culture.

In the various anecdotes about the often humorous experiences Hopkins and her husband shared during their first two years of married life on the prairies, she refers time and again to the amount of work they completed as proof of and justification for their success. She remarks in one 'letter' that "Billie has been riding now for over a week" gathering horses off the range, which is a substantial task since the range where their herd runs freely most of the year is "many thousands of acres of land" (59). Hopkins also mentions the annual job of haying and details the various tasks involved in gardening to provide the Hopkins household with fresh vegetables. Key's and Thomson's memoirs serve similar purposes. Key writes: "Men, women and horses (and sometimes children) worked long hours to get the precious grain stored before the snow fell," but indicates that her memoir, for the most part, is a joyful reminiscence of her experiences growing up on a prairie farm near Strathmore (n.p.). Her intention is suggested further by an epigram that precedes her narrative, a quote from *Memory Hold-the-Door* by John Buchan: "'Most of us have certain childish memories which we can never repeat, since they represent moments when life was in utter harmony and sense and spirit perfectly tuned'" (qtd. in Key 1). Thus, Key begins the tale of her "memories of [a] happy childhood in England" and on the utopian setting of her family's Alberta farm (n.p.). Similarly, Thomson's purpose in writing about her childhood experiences is to provide evidence that while "there were hardships we wouldn't

want to go back to, and there was hard work for everyone in the family, [...] there was fun and happiness too, even if we had to make our own amusements” (5).

In spite of Thomson’s declaration, Linda Rasmussen and her co-editors include a few lines from her memoir in *A Harvest Yet to Reap*, an eclectic collection of excerpts from settler memoirs and letters, to support their claim that the lives of female settlers were never-endingly burdened by intensive labour. The segment states: “Father would never stick a pig nor even kill a chicken. He always had a neighbour come to kill the pigs, and Mother used to wring the necks of chickens. She didn’t like doing it any better than he did, but she was realistic and if we were going to eat, someone had to do the deed. She did a great many of the unpleasant things that had to be done. I can’t remember Father doing anything he didn’t want to do” (225). The meaning the co-editors promote by placing the excerpt in their text is that Mrs. Thomson³² was not only overworked, but that she was forced by circumstances and, perhaps, by her husband, to do things she disdained while he avoided them by engaging a neighbour to do them for him. They state in the text’s preface that their purpose is not just to rectify the omission of women’s stories from pioneer history, but to resist the oppression of women in today’s world.

Referring to the women who lived and laboured on prairie farms in the early twentieth century, Rasmussen and her co-editors assert that “ours was not the first generation to be humiliated by women’s traditional role; ours was not the first

³² Georgina Thomson makes no mention of her mother’s name, but refers to her only as “my mother” or Mother.

generation of women to dare to question” (9). Feeling compelled to speak out for women in general, they portray life on the prairies during settlement as being unbearably difficult, oppressive, and often life threatening. Overlooking the vast differences in the lives of women settlers and ignoring the many women who found life on the prairies satisfying, they zealously represent pioneer farm women as martyrs engaged in sacrificial acts of suffering. Yet, McPherson maintains that not all women felt oppressed by the labour of farming and the double-duty of completing their domestic chores; rather, some women found empowerment in sharing in and completing the kinds of chores stereotypically thought of as men’s work (“Was the ‘Frontier’” 79). A rereading of Thomson’s anecdote about butchering pigs through a georgic lens challenges this interpretation and discloses its several implicit meanings. Based on its original context in Thomson’s memoir, it is about the pride the Thomsons felt as they made their homestead productive and self-sustaining. It is also a comment on the amount of work that was completed, not just by Thomson’s mother, but by everyone on the farm. It suggests, too, that, due to the cooperative efforts of the family, food was plentiful.

Whether or not butchering is mentioned in settler narratives, one cannot avoid the reality that the lives of pioneer farmers depended on the consumption of animals. Thus, the passage also reveals that the provision of meat demanded killing animals. The annual fall butchering was an aspect of farm life Thomson had to accept, however. She portrays herself as someone who embraced farming as a way of life and adhered to the traditions promoted in the *Georgics*, which recognize that “individual people, plants and animals will get used up” (Landry,

Invention 16). S. Leigh Matthews concurs, drawing attention to Thomson's awareness of "animal sentience, [...and] the subsistence necessity" of butchering pigs (*Looking* 358). Considering the meaning of the farm vernacular in Thomson's writing, one comes to see that it is killing part of the butchering process—the "sticking" of his pigs and the wringing of the chickens' necks—that are the tasks that George Thomson could not stomach, not the entire process of butchering. Thomson does not explain how the pigs were killed, but she admits it was "a sad day" for her and her sister. She writes: "We would go to the farthest corner of the house and plug our ears so we would not hear their despairing shrieks" (225). Hopkins balked at the act, too. Reflecting on its necessity, she admits: "I know we have to kill all fish, flesh and fowl and all that sort of thing and I can enjoy them when they are served up cooked but it's no good pretending that I enjoy killing them or seeing them killed for I don't" (103). Writing about a camping trip to the Rocky Mountains, Hopkins admits that when Joe and Billie "go off with their guns to get some birds I am always so disgustingly pleased if they return empty-handed" (103). Thomson's recollection of her father's disinclination toward killing his pigs is an acknowledgement of this same sentiment; it is not a suggestion that he is lazy, irresponsible, or inconsiderate of his wife.

Thomson's observation that her mother could perform the job of wringing the chickens' necks reveals Mrs. Thomson's "'realistic'" participation "in prairie life" (Matthews, *Looking* 358-59). It was a task she had learned to do; George Thomson had not. The excerpt demonstrates Thomson's admiration of her mother's tenacity and vitality, and serves as an acknowledgement of her mother's

labour and a statement of gratitude to her for providing the family with food at the cost of her labour. Her father, no doubt, did his share of the work of scalding the pigs; cutting the carcasses into sides, quarters, ribs, roasts, and smaller pieces; cleaning the abattoir of blood and entrails; and scouring the scalding trough, the butcher's block and knives, and all the rest of the tools that become contaminated in the process. He is the farmer that Virgil praises, the man who dedicates himself to the yearlong labour of agriculture. Assigning Mrs. Thomson the role of the estate's mistress, Thomson boasts that it was she who did the preserving for "Mother had got a good recipe for 'pickling' ham and bacon from a book put out by the *Family Herald* or the *Farmers' Advocate* and became quite an expert at curing this meat" (225).

A sense of the butchering process can also be garnered from random entries in Henry Jr.'s journals. He noted on December 16, 1931, that he "killed two pigs with Sams help. got done about 4." Like George Thomson, Henry Jr. had help with the killing. He does not specifically indicate why he always has Jonas Rider's help, but perhaps, like Mr. Thomson, he disdained to perform the deed himself. Butchering animals was done to satisfy the Sheppard family's nutritional needs and to increase its income by providing meat for neighbours. Henry Jr. noted on September 24, 1932, that he "Killed pig Ruth worked on calf fence." The next day, he "Cut up pig & salted it. dressed weight 180 lb [...] Ruth went out for a ride." On the days following, he noted that "Ruth took Pork up to the Arnolds" and "Eve made pork pies." Whether or not Henry Jr. carried out the killing, evidence suggests that he is the one who did the cutting. On December 21, he

“Finished cutting Wright's pork & delivered it. also head to Mrs. Leckie & one to Mrs. Bond.” Mrs. Leckie and Mrs. Bond probably purchased the hogs’ heads to make headcheese.

The making of headcheese is a chore that Thomson did not enjoy. It was one, however, that she saw as necessary for the provision of food for her family in winter and necessary to its domestic economy, which demanded that nothing be wasted. She writes:

The heads, after being trimmed and cleaned, were cooked in a big boiler, and then at night we all sat around the table with a plate, knife and fork, and Mother gave us portions of the meat to cut up into little pieces. This was put back into the strained broth and Mother seasoned it with salt and plenty of pepper, after which it was poured into bowls and other containers to set to jell. We thought we would never want to see it again, but when it appeared on the supper table on a cold night, turned out of its mold jelled and shiny, and served with mustard, fried potatoes and perhaps some pickles, it really tasted wonderful. (225)

Another culinary practice Thomson describes is the rendering of the lard, which, she recalls, was her mother’s doing. It was “a greasy, smelly job, but we all enjoyed the pies and other good things made with it afterwards” (225). In the georgic world of the farm, many chores are dirty, smelly, and unpleasant. Hopkins mentions butchering pigs in May, 1911, writing that after “Billie and Joe cut up a pig we had bought, 240 pounds,” she “rendered down all the lard” and now has “tins and crocks full enough to last me for the months to come” (123). She also “made brawn with the head and we ate at it until we were sick of the sight of it. I gave away a lot to Joe and Harry [another hired man]; the liver, kidneys and tender loins I fried” (123). Charity and displays of conspicuous consumption, literal and

literary, Fowler asserts, “were considered a political necessity for the governing ranks” (3).

Linda Rasmussen and her co-editors look at the lives of agrarians in the days of settlement with a disdainful eye. Indeed, they present prairie life as dystopic, having “gleaned” women’s testimonials from “reminiscences, letters and newspapers” to augment what has been already written in prairie history (8-9). They fail to consider that agrarian life was acceptable and even desirable to many settlers. Moreover, they overlook the fact that men, too, milked cows, washed laundry, chopped wood, harvested potatoes, churned butter, cooked and bottled food for winter storage, and cleaned up afterward. For example, on April 23, 1937, after Henry Jr. butchered a heifer in the afternoon, he cut it up and preserved some, getting “47 sealers,” that is, glass jars of bottled beef. Four days later, he “Cut up *balance* of beef a.m. got 85 sealers & stone crock full in pickle P.M.” Butchering and preserving beef and pork, his journal entries indicate, was a labour intensive task that took many hours and even days to complete, yet, Henry Jr. conveyed a sense of satisfaction in noting, as empirical data, the provisions he had managed to store away. Scholarly examinations of settlement narratives that portray farm labour merely as drudgery betray a lack of appreciation for the georgic traditions that were fundamental to utopian visions of agrarian existence, whether these traditions are represented in photographs of farming in the days of settlement or in their literary forms.

The utopian and georgic themes in Key’s and Thomson’s narratives are augmented by the fact that the authors recount the details of their youth with

childlike innocence; that is, they write in what Lejeune describes as the voices of childlike narrators, a *fictionalized* version of their experiences to give the sense of immediacy (53, 66). Lejeune discusses formal autobiographies; however, his theories apply to analyses of Key's and Thomson's memoirs for, while "it is the voice of the adult narrator that dominates and organizes the text[s]," there are moments when, as in autobiographical narratives, their memoirs move into the realm of fiction in which the authors adopt the persona of children, "making up a childlike voice" (53). It is in this manner that Key transforms factual information about farming and animal husbandry into idyllic recreation. She writes:

Some warm sunny days I would pretend I was a cowherd, and would spend hours sitting out on the quiet prairie amongst the browsing cows. After a while I would roll over and lie face down in the scented grass. Presently Bidy would become a little concerned or perhaps just curious [...]. I would hear her drawing slowly nearer, tearing steadily at the tough grass as she approached. Presently she would be standing over me, I would feel her great rubbery nose moving over the back of my neck and head, as she blew her fragrant breath through my hair. Then I would roll over, throw my arms around her great neck, and rub behind her large floppy ears. She would stand quietly, head stretched out and eyes closed, and start slowly chewing her cud. (148-49)

Lejeune describes such narratives as having been written in "the indirect free style," a style in which "the syntax and vocabulary of mimed speech are in general completely respected, but the narrator can also *blend* the characteristic traits of the language of the child" among those that are clearly the adult's (61-62; original emphasis). The result is, Lejeune suggests, that the text provides information "blended into infantile speech [...] that makes sense only within the framework of a communication between a narrator and a reader" (62). Employing the technique of

feigned naiveté when recalling in her later years the enjoyment she experienced as a child, Key implies a sense of wonder at her communion with her family's cows.

In contrast, the child diarist, Julia Short, whose daily accounts of settlement are published in *Leaves from the Medicine Tree*, reveals her age at the time of writing and indicates naiveté that is authentic rather than feigned. Her references to her parents as "Papa" and "Mama" and to childhood activities such as skating and the hilarity of a loose sow that she and her siblings helped to catch, suggests earnestness (*Leaves* 77). Her reference to selling subscriptions to *The Poultry Book* to several neighbours also reveals childhood concerns (78). Interestingly, her customers were the same people whose names are mentioned in the Sheppard journals and in *Leaves from the Medicine Tree*: Mrs. Bedingfeld, Mr. Emerson, Mr. Lynch, Lemuel Sexsmith, Fred Ings, and the Skrines. Taking the same form as the Sheppard journals, Short's entries related the local news of the neighbours and the kind of chores she completed on a given day. She also kept regular count on the number of eggs she collected. She noted on April 14, 1888, that she "Got 15 eggs. Sold five dozen to Mr. LeMogue at thirty-five cents" (qtd. in *Leaves* 87). She was, most likely, referring to Joseph Limoges, the proprietor of a trading post, which was incorporated as "the High River Trading Co." in 1890 (*Leaves* 87-88).

Even Bert Sheppard adopts the voice of a child, at times. In *Spitzee Days*, while reminiscing about his youth, he recalls travelling with his mother in a democrat on their way home from High River one winter's day. His mother, having purchased groceries in town, stowed them between the passengers and on the floor of the buggy. Among the goods was "a wooden pail of raspberry jam, that

had been bought for a treat,” Bert relates, and, “somehow [he] managed to kick the wooden lid off the jam pail” and stick his feet into the jam (54). “Needless to say,” he concludes, “I was not very popular then” (54). Bert’s retains his naïve persona while describing the mischief he and his brothers got into as young boys, including raising rabbits for profit at their father’s expense. He and his brothers “knock[ed] out a knot in the floor” of the granary, he confides, so the “oats poured out, making a perfect self-feeder” for their rabbits, which they “sold for 25¢ a pear” (55-56). Bert’s childlike voice is especially evident in his “first recollections,” which are, he muses, “of a good mother, a stern father, three brothers, the big cottonwood trees, and the old log buildings of the Cottonwood Ranch” (*Spitzee* 53).

Another pioneer memoirist, Leslie Neatby, also uses a childlike voice to accentuate the discomforts of settlement experiences. For example, beginning his memoir by recalling the trans-Atlantic voyage, he emphasizes his fears of the size of the ship and the size of a rope with which the captain was rumoured to have “punished any misconduct by thrashing the offender” (5). He employs the same voice, often, when describing his father’s unwilling participation and when drawing attention to the mistakes his parents made as they embarked on their homesteading venture. Unlike Key and Thomson, Neatby portrays himself as a martyr who forever resents his father’s decisions and his authority as he directs his sons to do the work. Neatby admires his brothers, however, for while they are overburdened by farm labour, their tenacity eventually brings prosperity to the family. Memoirs often take the shape of tales of survival in a cold, unfeeling prairie environment, but unlike frontier narratives, whose characters are heroic, the

figures that people a dystopia are victims who unwillingly participate in the settlement project.

Yet, at times, Neatby reminisces about his life in a positive light. For example, narrating in the georgic style, he recalls hauling stones off the field, which was a “most enjoyable” task among his “various employments” (52). In a description distinguished by its sensory detail, he relates that the physical exertion brought him pleasure in many ways including the way it tested his strength when he lifted large stones into the wagon, “over the rim of the wheel and [they] tumbled [...] into the rack-bottom, where [they] fell with a gritty crunch most satisfying to the ear” (53). One of the most tangible images found in Neatby’s memoir is his recollection that hauling rocks was “a dry and thirsty job,” and that, “when the day’s work was over it was a joyous relaxation to drive to the well, take off the horses’ bridles and watch them sink their muzzles in the brimming trough; and then we would take our turn, haul up a bucketful and sink *our* muzzles in the ice-cold water” (53; original emphasis). The depiction of sweat, fatigue, and thirst caused by a hard day’s work echoes the kind of georgic experiences that the Sheppards document as empirical data, and that the memoirists imaginatively recreate as the visceral experiences of labour to emphasize their personal efforts.

Hiemstra reveals georgic sentiments at the end of her memoir when she admits that, in spite of her initial reluctance, she became a good farmer, and learned to “milk cows, handle the oxen as well as anyone, and plough and plant and stook and stack, and haul the grain to town as well as any boy” (308). She recalls that she helped her father drive the oxen as they ploughed to break new

ground (305). Recreating the scene in a childlike voice, Hiemstra writes that for two days “I felt big and important, and very proud [...], then I became weary of walking up one long furrow and down another, and decided to stop ploughing and go back to playing again” (305). Like Neatby, Hiemstra implies that her participation in farm work was unpleasant and she often complains that she was overworked as a child. In contrast, Thomson refers to the chores she did in the midst of anecdotes about other pleasurable events and activities. Her purpose, she states, is “to show that homesteading was a happy life, not grim at all. It was fun and good times” (277).

The search for financial security may have been the primary goal for impoverished families like Hiemstra’s and Neatby’s, but such was not the case for the Thomsons, Hopkinses, and Petters, Key’s family. They arrived with sufficient capital and material wealth to sustain themselves quite comfortably until their farms became profitable. Financial security (or the lack thereof) appears to be a determining factor in the type of narratives immigrants write. A secure and comfortable way of life enabled the Sheppards to document their labour and activities in their journals. With similar stability, Key, Thomson, and Hopkins write about their memories of settlement in the georgic literary style and pay homage to their prairie estates. Their settler narratives are about entitlement, not about deprivation; yet, in *A Harvest Yet to Reap*, Linda Rasmussen and her co-editors declare that “[d]uring the first perilous years on the land, [women] and everyone else who could work were preoccupied with trying to stay alive long enough to get a farm established” (8). Quite the opposite is conveyed in the

women's memoirs in my study in which the authors recall their pioneer days, generally, as a golden time.

Reflecting on the memoirs of Jessie Umscheid, Barbara Evans maintains that "the popular portrayal of the farm woman at the time as downtrodden, anxious, and unhappy with her lot is by no means universally appropriate" (35).³³ Thomson depicts farming as a desirable way of life. She found a kind of emotional satisfaction in milking with her sister Chaddy. "On the whole, we rather enjoyed it," she writes, for on "a cool fall or winter night it was cozy sitting with your head burrowed into the cow's flank, listening to the sound of the milk streaming into the pail at first with a hard, metallic noise as it hit the empty bottom, then soft and churning, as the depth increased and a soft foam formed over the top" (69). She and her sister, she explains, "often sang together, keeping in time with the milking, songs we had learned at school or from Mother," and the cows seemed to like the sound "and would stand with half-shut eyes chewing their cuds" (69). Thomson worked to become a skilled milker. Her desire in writing her memoir seems to be to bask in the memories of her childhood, but it also serves as a means of self-valorization as she recalls, betraying a sense of pride, having developed a skill that, initially, had been challenging.

Thomson also tells about the day that their cow Roany "opened the gate into the house-yard" and came through with the other cows trailing behind. The

³³ This is not to ignore the many cases and forms of women's oppression, including laws that prevented women from owning homesteads. There were, in the early years of settlement, legal obstructions to women's ownership of the land, Kathryn McPherson maintains; thus, in spite of their labour, women were prevented from getting just reward (78). Ruth Maccoy took over the land that her step-father Henry Jr. farmed until his death. According to Dianne Vallée, Ruth kept horses until she was quite elderly (Conversation).

cows tipped over and emptied the water barrel and, since her mother was busy painting the kitchen floor and her father and brother were harvesting wheat in a distant field, Thomson explains, she and her sister, Chaddy, took the initiative and decided to “hitch old Pig [a horse] to the stone-boat and haul some water from the spring” (125). She implies that their ability to handle horses made this task child’s play. Thomson, like the other memoirists in my study, conveys a sense of nostalgia for a happier past. Thus, by capturing memories of her experiences on the prairies many years later, she revisits her georgic environment and the animals that shared that period of her life.

Matthews dedicates several pages of *Looking Back* to discussing passages of settlers’ memoir with a particular focus on the authors’ relationship with “non-human animals,” which she asserts, were a “vital part of identity-making for prairie children” (365). She contends that Thomson “uses animal images to delineate a sense of personal discontinuity with the family circle” and sees Thomson’s allegiance to the family cow, Roany, as based on a shared “experience of being relative outsiders to the family circle” (366, 368). While her point may be valid, what is even more significant is the fact that Thomson writes about the animals of her childhood memories. Onno Oerlemans asserts that many pioneer memoirist have avoided discussing their animals for fear of “‘casting them as fully developed and seemingly human characters, [and thus] rob[bing] them of their subjectivity and the influence they have on our lives’” (qtd. in Matthews, *Looking* 342). An unsatisfactory alternative, Matthews claims, is “to anthropomorphize them” (342). Sharing a similar view, postcolonial ecocritics Graham Huggan and

Helen Tiffin assert that literature has long depicted animals, but these “have – at least until recently – been highly anthropomorphized, acting more often than not as a staple of fiction for children rather than adult readers” (16). In contrast, the memoirists in my study depict animals as having knowable dispositions.

Matthews concurs, maintaining that Thomson, “exhibit[s] an honest desire to express a subject-subject paradigm of human-animal relationships” that is not anthropomorphic and that eschews sentimentality in “favour of respect” (342).

While Matthews struggles to find “some middle ground” to present animals in a fashion that demonstrates respect, she moves toward, but stops short of engaging in the discourse taking place in the realm of posthumanism. A posthumanist perspective offers ways of thinking about human and non-human animals as companion species in relationships in which, Haraway asserts, “[p]artners do not preexist their relating; the partners are precisely what come out of the inter- and intra-relating of fleshly, significant, semiotic-material being” (*When* 165). Landry gestures toward this conception when she describes the relationships between humans and horses as those in which “[a]ll the participants are remodeled, [...] by ‘the relational practice of training,’ [and] which nurtures an ‘ethic of flourishing’ in which ‘animal happiness’ is at stake” (Haraway qtd. in Landry, *Noble* 12). The Sheppards demonstrate this ethos throughout their journals in the many references to their relationships with horses while training and working with them. Their sub-literary texts offer account of animals as individual domesticated creatures that shared their agrarian lives.

Henry Sr. reveals a companionship between him and his show horse, Lony, as they prepared to compete at the the Calgary Horse Fair; yet, there are also many entries referring to cattle in which he shows a desire for mutual flourishing. On May 4, 1918, he noted, by name, a heifer that was ready to give birth: “Bullet looks like calving. Turned her out of corral.” The next day he observed: “Rain during the night. Bullet very uneasy?” On the third day, he found his concerns were warranted, and wrote that he “Phoned Doc Lee who went to Ranch and took Bullets calf away it being badly twisted. Front leg broken below knee.” Several days later, Henry Sr. revealed compassion not just for the calf, whose leg he set “in [a] splint,” but for the heifer, who was “pretty weak.” The journals, read through a phenomenological lens, indicate that the daily practices of animal husbandry constituted embodied enactions that evoked subtle and sometimes acute emotional responses in their authors. Such responses are the foundation of the ethos of stewardship.

Rollin reveals that for some meat producers today, the reduction and elimination of animal suffering is not a high priority when profit is foremost in mind. In a column he wrote for the *Canadian Veterinary Journal*, he reported on a tour of “a 500-sow farrow-to-finish swine operation,” during which he noticed a sow with a broken leg that was left untreated because, an unnamed worker explained, she was ““due to farrow”” and the farm managers had decided to wait until then to ““shoot her and foster off her pigs”” (qtd. in Rollin 11). In comparison to today’s factory farm operations, which Rollin and Singer imply, function only to increase the wealth of non-agrarian investors, the practices of the Sheppard family

(as recorded in their journals) serve as models of ethical and sustainable animal husbandry. No doubt, other models might be found in pioneer farm logs that have still to enter the public realm. What are now called sustainable farming practices, Gayton asserts, were methods that “[e]arly agriculturalists knew intuitively” (96). Yet, Rollin reminds us that, even today, many ranchers see themselves as stewards and “talk of nursing sick calves in their kitchens in a manner transcending cost-effectiveness” (56). One cannot ignore, however, that the practices of branding and castrating cattle, which cause suffering, have long been part of ranching traditions and history (58).

A phenomenological analysis of the Sheppard journals facilitates discussions of human and non-human animal relationships at a level of detail not typically found in the history of settlement. Accounts that discuss equestrianism and cattle management do so, seemingly, to valorize the cowboys who did their work on horseback and none articulate the experiences of cowboys as embodied or neurophysiological. Nor do such accounts promote the neo-Christian ethic of stewardship (Buell 106). One can imagine the potential value of examining the relationships between horses and riders as companion species as a means of recuperating the ethos of stewardship in agriculture. The Sheppard journals provide accounts of stewardship practices, the kind of animal husbandry Virgil recommends when he advises placing brood mares “In spacious glades [...] or beside a brimming river / Where banks are greenest, lush with moss and herbage” (3.143-45). Henry Jr. and Henry Sr. used their journals to keep track of the transfer of horses and cattle to fresh pastures as Henry Jr. does when he noted on August 2,

1919, “Bert took 30 head of horses up to Forest Reserve.” Moving the herd to the Rocky Mountain foothills appears to have been a welcome change of activity for the Sheppards, for they consistently express cheerful anticipation of trail drives. For the mares and foals, no doubt, the move was a welcomed relief from the heat.

Rollin believes that environmental control is a key factor in making the lives of cattle comfortable on today’s feedlots.³⁴ “Shelter from wind, dust, sun, and snow would benefit animals and producers,” he maintains, because “attention to the health of individual animals would improve both welfare and economic returns” (72). The history of cattle ranching in southern Alberta has been told so often as a story of economic development; yet, it is also a story of ethical and sustainable methods of animal husbandry that were first established ranches on the prairies of southern Alberta, and are still practiced by today’s ranchers. The Chattaway, Macleay, and Blade families are the descendents of pioneers that, Henry Klassen states, collectively own and operate several cattle ranches today, including the TL Ranch (109). Klassen’s description of the operations of these small and medium size ranches pertains to their tending of cattle and horses, including winter feeding with hay grown and baled on the home ranches, and summer pasturing on the forest reserve (101-22). The methods used are much the same as those that Bert Sheppard and his father employed a century ago. In the TL Ranch history, for example, Bert refers to “a range on the Willow Creek, where the steers were summered,” and recalls that the “cow-herd [was] summered at the TL,”

³⁴ Rollin refers to ethical alternatives in Temple Grandin’s innovative “conveyor restraint system,” which reduces injury and stress to cattle as they are transported, but has been left undeveloped due to cost and lack of funding (67).

but that “the cattle were all wintered at the home ranch,” the Riverbend (9). The Sheppards’ trailing of horses and cattle to the foothills to provide shaded summer pasture was motivated by their concerns for the animals’ well-being, no doubt, there were also economic considerations. Henry Sr.’s negotiation with the Department of Forestry for grazing rights was to make alternative pasturage available to allow the home ranchland to recuperate from use. He wrote on July 28, 1919, that he went to Calgary and “Arranged with Clark of Forestry after to put 30 head of horses in forrest reserve.” As my last chapter reveals, Indigenous people’s rights to hunt in the foothills were denied to satisfy the desires of Anglo-Canadian immigrants.

Key, Hopkins, and Thomson write a good deal about stewardship in their memoirs, but they write about animals in figurative terms; specifically, they represent horses, cows, and other animals in georgic literary style. E. B. White’s “Death of a Pig” is an exemplary model of the georgic literary traditions. It is a humanist text in terms of White’s ethos of stewardship; yet, the author’s recognition of animals’ sentience, that is, as having “the capacity to suffer and/or experience enjoyment” (Singer, “All” 42), affords it a proto-posthumanist view of animals. White undercuts the old clichés about pigs’ eating habits, to which human behaviours are often unflatteringly compared, by proclaiming that from “the lustiness of a healthy pig a man derives a feeling of personal lustiness” (89-90). His portrayal of the pig is not anthropomorphic, nor is it entirely personification. White’s depiction of Fred, the arthritic dachshund, *is* personification when he suggests that the dog “would be bedridden if he could find anyone willing to serve

him meals on a tray” (90). In contrast, his characterization of the pig reveals his knowledge of its disposition when he observes that, in sickness, the pig could not even “make a bed for himself [for] he lacked the strength, and when he set his snout into the dust he was unable to plow even the little furrow he needed to lie down in” (93). White differentiates between empathetic and sympathetic reactions to animal suffering. Sympathy, a manifestation of a distant relationship with an animal, is demonstrated in the reaction the character, Miss Owen, the veterinarian’s fiancée, who sees the pig writhe in pain under examination and responds, “Poor piggedly-wiggledy!” (92). In contrast, the narrator shows empathy when he laments that the pig’s “suffering soon became the embodiment of all earthly wretchedness” (90). The ethos of stewardship expressed in the narrative is wrought from White’s personal experiences with pigs and other farm creatures.

Analyzing White’s writing process from a phenomenological perspective, autobiography theorist Robert L. Root Jr. maintains that at the time the acclaimed author wrote “Death of a Pig,” he was living, at least part time, on “a salt water farm” in Maine (132). Root asserts that White draws from his “rural routine” to provide the details of the novel, *One Man’s Meat*, as well, claiming that “the way neighbours note each other’s comings and goings, [...] the complications of raising chickens and looking after newborn lambs, the observation of the weather and the recording of daily events—anchors the entries in an immediate, localized context” (132). Hopkins’s, Key’s, and Thomson’s concerns are the same as White’s when they write about newborn pigs, calves, and colts, and the difficulties of getting chickens to lay eggs in winter. Their memoirs, possessing less literary quality than

White's superlative prose, are, in a broad sense, *apologia* for their agrarian lifestyles.

It is in georgic literary style that Key describes her family's "huge Yorkshire sow," Martha,

which roamed all over the farm, and when Father was ploughing with a team and hand plough, she would follow him up and down the field, plodding along in the furrow until she was tired out, when she would roll over onto the soft fresh soil, and rest until Father came round on the next lap. Then she would heave herself up and drop back into the furrow and follow him again, grunting softly. (155)

Martha, unfortunately, ate a bar of Fels Naptha soap that someone accidentally dropped into the slop pail and, like White's pig, suffered a painful, premature death. These are literary depictions of animals and, thus, are embellished portrayals of the creatures upon which they are based. The deaths of companion animals, sometimes as ill-fated events, are recorded time and again in the Sheppard journals. For example, on May 28, 1922, Henry Sr. observed that his mare, "Kit lost her colt in a coyote den." The journal entries must be read through a phenomenological lens for the animals represented in them are not fictionalized characters, but sentient beings, capable of suffering. This faculty is implied in an entry for June 17, 1925, in which Henry Sr. recorded that "Kit could not foal. I went up for Dayment who came and tried to get the face out but could not so we shot the mare." His decision to end her suffering was an act of compassion.

Compassion is a virtue often attributed to polite society. Landry points to it in Margaret Cavendish's "The Hunting of the Hare," for example, contending that the poet's descriptions of the hounds and the hare were grounded in first person experiences (*Invention* 148). She claims that the poet's awareness of the

“mysteries of scent, the eagerness and music of the hounds whose voices are classified according to their breeding, and the competitive thrusting of the riders, all provide opportunities for [her] to demonstrate her poetic skills grounded in her knowledge of the hunting field” (151). “These poems could only be the product of a close acquaintance with field sports,” Landry observes; however, it was one that Cavendish found vexing, for she criticizes “hunting as an enactment of human tyranny over the animal world” (148). Landry brings to mind, too, the class distinctions implicit in the poetry. Cavendish had to be a member of high society in order to observe and take note of the fine details of the sport, for she was not barred from participating by the Game Act of 1671, which, Landry states, “raised the property qualifications to lords of the manor” (73). The virtue of compassion, which is intrinsic to georgic ideals, is found in literature that celebrates the estates of the noble class. As Fowler proclaims, while “pastoral knows nothing of estates, or gardens, or houses, or seasonal employments, or hunting, [...] estate poems are in precisely the opposite mode: namely, georgic” (16). Compassion was advocated, as well, by many of the new landed gentry in Alberta, who established farms and ranches on the prairies.

Key refers to her mother’s estate when she reveals the source of her compassion for animals. She explains that her mother, while growing up on the family estate in Devonshire, England, had learned “a good deal about the handling of farm animals,” as a result of her and her siblings having had “many pets during their childhood years, [including] ponies, a donkey, cats and dogs, and even a goat, and they [had] all learned to ride and handle horses” (147). Mother was

“convinced that no domestic creature would deliberately harm a child unless it was frightened or attacked,” Key recalls; thus, on their Alberta estate, her mother taught her and her siblings “to be gentle and quiet with all our farm animals” (147). Key and her sister, Betty, learned to ride and handle horses just as their mother had, and like her, drove a governess’s cart, not around England, but over the prairie trails to get to school (photograph caption, centre leaf). Thomson testifies to her mother’s ethos of compassion when she reprimands her son Jim for his cruel mistreatment of one of their work horses. While he was “working with the horses in the field,” Thomson states, “Queenie balked, and Jim got so angry he put some pieces of wire on the end of the whip to try and make her move” (17). When their mother saw this, she demanded that he unhitch “the team and put them in the stable,” and Jim, whose “temper had already cooled anyway,” meekly did as he was told (17). Thomson adds that her mother was glad Jim “became a doctor” and not a farmer for he did not share his parents’ compassion for their horses (17).

Seemingly, the empathy the settlers in my study demonstrate was only for domesticated animals and not for indigenous creatures. For example, Hopkins writes with compassion about her husband Billie’s Border collie, Micky, when it ate poisoned meat put out for coyotes on the “Indian reserve,” where Billie and Joe went riding one day. In a letter dated November 29, 1909, Hopkins tells Gill that had the men “been near anywhere where they could have got some melted lard or butter they might have saved him [...]. The poor old fellow was in agony so Joe shot him. I have not said much; Billie can’t talk about it. He loved the dog so” (34). There is no mention in her memoir about the wolves and coyotes that ate the

bait and must have suffered considerably before succumbing to the poison. Collectively, the community condoned the extermination of coyotes and wolves. Bert Sheppard remarks that one of the reasons for the establishment of the Western Stock Grower Association “was to provide some concerted protection against the wolves, which preyed upon the herds” (159). These immigrant ranchers and farmers had little tolerance for coyotes and wolves, and often kept guard dogs to prevent them from attacking their stock. Key recalls with fondness their Great Dane Brindle that protected the Petters’ farm from coyotes. She remembers feeling fearful one night when she saw a lone coyote slink around the edges of the pig pen and chicken coop, and then stand “wailing at the full moon”; however, when she saw Brindle in the moonlight, alert and ready to chase away the intruder, she felt safe (153).

My subjects’ reminiscence of horses, dogs, pigs, and cows in the georgic literary style reveal their recognition that animals, even chickens, have knowable characters. Key writes about a hen called “Crouchie” that responded to her family’s attention by “crouch[ing] down beside anybody who happened to be sitting out on the front steps, and carry[ing] on a monologue of soft chirrups and gurgles [...]. Mother was fond of the big, handsome Buff Orpington, and when ‘Crouchie’ was sitting beside her, Mother would stroke her neck and back” (38-39). Likewise, Hopkins demonstrates her recognition of the dispositions of her hens in numerous anecdotes in her memoir. She focuses mostly on the trouble she has getting them to lay eggs in the winter, explaining to Gill in “November 29, 1909” – her first winter on the ranch – that she needs to get more eggs to begin

making her Christmas cake. “I have two hoarded up and only want four more,” she writes, but the “brutes are most reluctant to lay as they are going through a period called ‘moulting.’ I never knew they did that, did you? But then I never knew a thing about hens before I came here” (34). She implies that she is learning about them through experience.

Later, Hopkins complains that the hens will not nest, that is, they will not set on their eggs to hatch them. Feeling frustrated over her incompetence, she claims, “I’m no poultry woman. I have no love for the creatures at all” (124). Based on this anecdote, Jameson concludes that Hopkins did not enjoy tending the hens, and that she unwillingly “persisted in their care” (xiv). Jameson misses the irony in Hopkins’s writing, irony that contributes to her humour. Hopkins did not necessarily loath the task of caring for the hens, nor did she loath them. Her claim that she did not like hens can be seen as a hyperbolic and playful representation of the discouragement she felt in the face of her limited skills in poultry management, much like the frustration White expresses in his mock confession of “a man who failed to raise his pig” (94).

Hopkins does succeed in getting her hens to set. The proliferation of her flock is indicated in “January, 1910,” when she boasts that she has ten roosters hanging in the storehouse. Moreover, she demonstrates her success in getting her hens to set and raise broods of chicks the following year, too, when she writes to Gill in “August, 1911,” and remarks that her “chickens are growing into quite big boys and girls. We occasionally have a young rooster for Sunday supper” (144). Indeed, there is no reason to imagine that she did not succeed every year.

Regardless of her moments of self-deprecation, Hopkins portrays herself, for the most part, in a positive light as the kind of person whose family upbringing and education provided her with the capacity to learn and develop skills in whatever chore she decided to take on, and the imagination and desire to write about the happiness she found in a life carved out on a horse ranch. Hopkins's poking fun at herself is an apology for the life she chose when she married a prairie homesteader and moved into a log cabin. It is also a literary strategy designed to emphasize her capabilities.

Personal pioneer histories support their authors' claims of the value in their chosen lifestyles and reveal the ideologies that the authors embody as they transform themselves into characters in their own life stories. The authors achieve a kind of self-generating power, but not the kind of power that some feminist scholars claim pioneer women memoirists sought. The self-images that Key, Thomson, and Hopkins portray are antithetical to the ideals of femininity to which some scholars believe women settlers clung. In "The 'Precarious Perch' of the 'Decent Woman': Spatial (De)Constructions of Gender in Women's Prairie Memoirs," Matthews examines Kathleen Strange's pioneer narrative. Her article discusses issues of self-determination and self-identity for pioneer women whose lives unfolded on farms and ranches, spaces historically considered to be masculine (149). Specifically, she argues that Strange challenges Victorian ideals of femininity by "using the textual space of [her] memoir to map new embodiments of prairie women, to document female transgressions of geographic and corporeal space, both as they occurred within the cultural moment of

settlement and as new and empowering constructions at the moment of writing” (143). Matthews claims that Strange’s memoir “challenges conventional constructions of the female body and the work the female body is able to perform” (143). Key, Thomson, and Hopkins reveal the many ways they exerted themselves physically, but these do not contradict constructions of femininity, because they lived within communities that encouraged women to ride.

Initially, Matthews’s article appears to be a discussion of equestrianism. Her focus proves to be, rather, on the clothes women wore when riding. She contends that Strange rebelled against social restrictions by choosing to wear breeches instead of culottes or a riding skirt. Strange’s choice of attire, she claims, demonstrates a kind of “determination to resist cultural prescriptions” and that such resistance resulted in “the remapping of certain ‘rituals of gender etiquette’ [... which] destabilize[d] the boundaries erected on the female body as culturally defined space” (163-64). Yet, Matthews exaggerates the importance of Strange’s reference to riding breeches; the account of riding is extremely brief and takes up only a few paragraphs of her 300 page memoir. Strange and her husband Harry were not equestrians; rather, they employed horses for travel and farm work, although Strange remarks that “[g]ood saddle horses were available on the farm and [she] wanted to make the most of them” by riding to meet one of their new neighbours (39). Perhaps she had learned to ride in California for it was there that she bought her “smart” new breeches before coming to Alberta (39).

Strange indicates that she was unaware of the conservative views of the community. When she and her mother-in-law, Grandma Strange, “arrived at the

neighbour's house," they "were received with a decidedly frigid reception," which "we could not understand [...] at all" (39-40). When "a deputation of ladies" informed her husband that breeches were immodest, she "went on wearing the offending garments, [...] and in time apparently wore the resistance down" (40). "Later," she recalls, "those same people who had so strongly disapproved of me became my very warm friends" (40). When read to the conclusion, the anecdote emphasizes Strange's eventual acceptance by the community, not only her initial alienation from it as a result of her promotion of the newest fashions in riding attire as Matthews suggests. Like Hopkins and Key, Strange places importance on her social station in the fledgling agricultural communities, and through her endeavour to become a successful farmer, seeks to regain the status that she and her husband enjoyed in England.

The women in my study, similarly, appear to have developed self-confidence and agency from action and not necessarily from writing. Korte notes that for some women "emigration meant a deconstruction and reconstruction of their former self-image and understanding of themselves as women" ("Gentlewomen" 148). Young girls like Thomson and Key did not have to reinvent themselves, for they arrived on their families' Alberta farms during their formative years. The life experiences that shaped their personalities began then. Likewise, having arrived on the ranch in her early twenties, Hopkins found opportunities to develop agency. Indeed, she crafts her self-portrait to reminisce about that development. All three memoirists write joyfully about the experiences they had as youths and young adults engaged in various chores that demanded both physical

strength and mental fortitude, including riding. They do not indicate that they were ridiculed for exerting themselves. Exploring Key's and Thomson's memoirs reveals the authors' depictions of their growth from young girls into confident young women, yet their writing practices, which they describe as having taken up later in their lives, seem to have had little to do with that growth. What is more, not only did the women conform to the gender norms of the social milieu in which they matured, they did so unquestioningly. Writing about their experiences thirty to fifty years after living them, they bring socially prescribed feminine ideals forward to the present time for critical analysis.

Social Elitism, Racism, and the Maintenance of a Labour Force in Settler Life Writing

Thomson, Key, Hopkins, the Sheppard women, and their female friends exerted their agency in their performances as equestrians. Indeed, Bee Sheppard had been well known for her expertise as an equestrian, her independence, and her stamina. Wishing to attend a dance, she rode a Clydesdale horse side-saddle from the Bar U Ranch to Calgary, "a distance of about sixty miles, and then danced all night" (*Leaves* 98). Such portrayals make women's equestrian skills legendary. In a factual account, Henry Sr. recorded on May 18, 1912, that he "Bought Francis's buggy for \$23- for Bee to get about in as her feet have troubled her, Rheumatism." Bee had been a rider all her life, but substituted the activity in her declining years with a milder form of exercise—driving—which allowed her to maintain her mobility and independence. Henry Sr.'s journals offer an appreciation of his wife's serviceable use of horses. Yet, as members of an elite group of equestrians, the women were aware of the prestige their participation in horse sports afforded and

the admiration that demonstrations of their skill could bring. Henry Jr. offered praise in his journal on August 12, 1931, when the “Runcies came down with Mrs. Hanson for gymkhana” and “Ruth won two prizes. 1st & 2nd.” Ruth, in this case, refers not to his step-daughter Ruth Maccoy, but to a family friend: Ruth Runciman, who, according to her son Derek, was trained and “passed a tough course at an English riding academy, so [was] well qualified to begin a career with horses” (Runciman 225). Ruth Runciman and Bee Sheppard were expert riders, as befits the matriarchs of English families of equestrians and cattle ranchers.

Derek and Doreen Runciman and Ruth Maccoy were lifelong friends and, as Henry Jr.’s journals have recorded, they went on frequent pleasure rides together. They were children of British immigrants with financial security and privileges that not all settlers enjoyed. Equestrian training was also a discipline that yielded confidence through the development of skill. Riding was a regular part of life for Maccoy. She had ridden since her childhood and herded cattle with her horse, a gelding called Fly. Countless entries in Henry Jr.’s journals documented her experiences growing up on the Sheppard ranches, revealing that she engaged in whatever tasks she was capable of doing. Henry Jr. noted on October 25, 1939, that “Ruth went for Cattle on wheat field” to move them to another field, which is an aspect of the practice of crop rotation involving alternating the growing of crops with the grazing of animals. Often, when the chores were done, Maccoy and her mother went riding. She rode Fly for transportation as well. Her competency as an equestrian included managing teams of heavy horses. On August 3, 1933, Henry

Jr. noted that they had been harvesting hay, and had stacked “all day got Butt & half up. Ruth drove stacker team for us.”

When examined phenomenologically in the Sheppard journals, horses are seen as literal and practical necessities; in fictionalized depictions of settlement, they are represented in figurative terms or symbols of “the good life” promised by and embodied in the “rural pursuits” British settlers aspired to achieve (Thomas 201). Often, the purpose in Hopkins’s employment of figurative depictions of horses is to portray her life as an adventure. Gaining an acceptable level of equestrian skill allowed Hopkins to accompany her husband on long rides. She admits, however, that she did not know how to ride when she first arrived in Alberta, but that she was determined to develop her skills by “rid[ing] nearly every day” (18). Among the accounts of her riding experiences, she describes the treks on which she and Billie went with friends. The first was taken in October 1910, with Billie, Joe, and Helene, Monica’s friend from Australia. On their first day out, she writes that their ride took them “half way to the Elbow Falls where we intended to make our camp,” which was “about 20 miles” from home (100). The trek led them to ride yet another twenty miles to camp, cross a river, travel a trail with “twists and turns,” sleep on beds of “spruce boughs,” and wake up to an early snowfall (103-04). Their return home was a ride of “40 miles,” Hopkins writes, “so Helene and I are feeling rather pleased with ourselves, especially as the boys said we did ‘nobly’” (104).

Hopkins went on her second trek in July, 1911 with Bob, a friend of Billie, and his wife Tishy for an afternoon picnic. On the way back, Hopkins explains,

they had to ford the Elbow River, which was swollen from a sudden downpour of rain. The water “had risen tremendously” since their crossing on the way out and, having to go back the same way to get home, “we crossed our fingers, held our breath and plunged into the river” (138-39). Consequently, the riders got drenched, but that did not lessen Hopkins’s enthusiasm for the outdoors. Rather, it seems to have increased her zest, for as she relates, the “boys made us lope all the way home and we were almost warm when we reached [Bob and Tishy’s] shack” (140). These treks would not have been feasible had it not been for the women’s confidence, stamina, and equestrian skills.

Jameson writes that Hopkins “did not undertake field work to help at haying or harvest time—undoubtedly Billie would have been aghast at any suggestion that she do so,” but she did work “in the vegetable garden [which] was something she enjoyed and she gave some assistance in the care of sheep and with various other chores” (Introduction xiv). Yet, Hopkins’s memoir implies that Billie encouraged her growth through horseback riding and that Hopkins not only welcomed the opportunities, but took the initiative to learn and finally began to take her skills for granted. In a chapter titled, “October, 1909,” she displays diminishing self-consciousness as a novice in her description of the task of halter-breaking of four horses and her contribution to it, explaining that “Billie and Joe [...] had snubbed the halter shank around the [saddle] horn so the horses had to follow” when they pulled, while she came from behind to “drive the horses up” (27). By juxtaposing anecdotes about riding for pleasure with others detailing the labour of training young horses, Hopkins portrays herself as a woman who not

only adjusted to the life of a horse rancher, but who flourished as a result of her interactions with horses.

A phenomenological reading augments, if not refutes, Jameson's ideological analysis of Hopkins's memoir. Hopkins was a novice rider in comparison to Maccoy. Based on her own admission of her lack of equestrian skill, it appears that the reason Hopkins did not help with the haying was not because Billie would not hear of it, but because she was not yet physically able to drive a team of horses. The decision may not have been based on gender discrimination, for their young hired man, "Crazy Jenks," was not capable either. Hopkins indicates this in a letter dated July 1910, when she speculates that "Billie will have to do all the cutting and raking himself" because Joe is away and "Jenks can't be trusted with a team" (74). The subtle suggestions of meaning in her writing, especially when they pertain to equestrian activities seem to evade Jameson's notice.

The memoirs of Hopkins and Key, the journal letters of Claude Gardiner, and the daily records of the Sheppards suggest that the British equestrian traditions were imported in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and were espoused by many agrarian communities in southern Alberta. In fact, equestrianism for women has been encouraged in England for centuries as a means of increasing women's strength and vitality. In a British horse manual first published in 1875, Samuel Sidney professes: "for women who cherish the [...] desire to enjoy the delicious and healthy excitement of horse exercise, and thus to be able to take part in one of the pleasures of their fathers, brothers, lovers,

husbands, and friends, will do well to master the [...] essentials for safe and elegant equestrianism” (317).³⁵ Gardiner encouraged his sister to learn to ride in preparation for a visit to his ranch in Alberta. In a letter to his parents dated November 25, 1895, he inquired whether Bab had learned to ride yet and assured his mother that he would

get her a nice pony. I shall have no difficulty about that as I know some people called Arnold who raise horses. They have several girls who ride and break horses and they can be trusted to have a good quiet one or two. I asked one of the bo2ys the other day if they had any and showed me on[e] that was as quiet as could possibly imagined, nothing would ever frighten it. Bab must learn to ride if she ever wants to leave the house as one cannot walk any distance, especially a woman, on account of the wild cattle. They do not understand anyone on foot and are apt to be inquisitive, which is not pleasant. (53)

Aware of the demands of the material realities of agrarian existence, Sarah Carter argues in *Capturing Women* that a pioneer woman on a typical homestead was “far removed from the fragile, rarefied, genteel, ‘civilizer’ ideal; otherwise, she would not have survived for long” (9). Thus, women cultivated skills in riding, driving, milking, and many other activities that enabled them to complete their chores. The life writing of the authors in my study suggests that riding constituted a mode of freedom for these women and a means of acquiring agency.

By possessing high degrees of equestrian skill, Key, Thomson, Hopkins, and the Sheppard women were independently able to visit friends, to help complete

³⁵ Riding as a woman’s activity was not permitted in all European countries, however. Such is the theme of Mary Fleming Zirin’s “‘My Childhood Years’: A Memoir by the Czarist Cavalry Officer, Nadzhda Durova.” Women in Ukraine, it seems, were dissuaded from engaging in equestrian pursuits. Thus, Domna C. Stanton asserts, Durova disguised herself as a man and joined the cavalry “to rebel against the prescribed destiny of her sex” (ix). In her memoir, Durova complains that, as a child, she had to ride in secret because equestrian activities were seen by her relations as “‘illicit and, in their opinion, unnatural practices for women, especially for girls!’” (qtd. in Zirin 117).

the ranch chores such as herding cattle if they wished, and to drive democrats, buggies, wagons, and governess's carts to transport children and groceries. Horses were intrinsic to women's mobility and facilitated growth of independence in the years preceding the invention of the car. Indeed, horses were, for decades, the only means of travel for settlers. The memoirs of Hopkins, Key, and Thomson and the daily records of the Sheppards reveal that the women of their social circle were among the many women in the early twentieth century in southern Alberta who were equestrians and were able to help with chores that neither men nor women could have done without horse power. Reflecting on her skills, Thomson describes riding her horse Dixie to get to and from Porcupine Hills School. Dixie was "a sensible little fellow with not a mean streak in him," she writes, but he was also "young and full of life" (216). She remarks that on her way home she allowed him to gallop freely. "I was so glad to get away from the classroom," she confesses, "that I usually let him go as fast as he liked, and we usually made the last half mile in 'nothing flat'" (260-61). She boasts that a "man in Sharman's store, watching me tear through the village, said 'That horse wants to go and that girl just lets him'" (261).

Likewise, Key boasts of the confidence that grew as a result of her equestrian experiences and the development of her skills. An anecdote, told in the voice of a child narrator, emphasizes her fearlessness of horses. Key recalls that her father's Clydesdale stallion, Sonsie, attacked and nearly destroyed her favourite horse, Nick, a tall, handsome gelding "with a sweet disposition [...and] a kindly sense of humour" (149). She blames the near fatal accident on their

stableman, Rawlins, who “absent mindedly turned Nick out into the pasture [with Sonsie], apparently not realizing, that in springtime, another male horse might turn a gentle, peaceful stallion into a raging maniac” (151). She relates that she “ran across the grass shouting” at Sonsie, which got his attention, and then she “caught his halter” and scolded him, giving Nick time to escape out the gate (151-52). Key claims that her retelling of the incident is not to take credit “for any kind of bravery,” but to allow her to expound on her philosophy of animal behaviour and human relationships with animals. Yet, her retelling of the incident suggests that equestrianism was a discipline that facilitated her growth. Thus, she transforms the stallion into a symbol of power over which she had control. She also implies superiority over her family’s hired hand by insinuating that he lacked the courage and intellectual capacity she possessed.

Nancy Young, in a brief, but ground-breaking study, demonstrates an appreciation for the performative aspects of gender in association with equestrian activities. In “The Reins in Their Hands: Ranchwomen and the Horse in Southern Alberta 1880-1914,” she argues that women who acquired equestrian skills possessed the capacity to do the same work as men. While historians such as Catherine Philips “have claimed that ranchwomen did very little outside of the house,” Young states that “there is evidence to prove the contrary” (4). She cites, for example, women like Margaret Edwards, Mary Ella Inderwick, Agnes Young, Millie Blanche, Minnie Gardner, who delivered mail by horseback, and Mrs. Dudley Smith, who is pictured “at the Sanderson farm near Midnapore in the early 1900s” taking part in a coyote hunt (5). These women rode for both work and

pleasure, to visit other ranches and socialize, and to participate in social occasions like polo and horse racing, and the teas and balls “that followed these events” (5). Agnes Skrine states that riding was one of her most pleasurable pastimes (505). “Evelyn Cochrane, wife of prominent rancher Billy Cochrane,” was an exceedingly capable equestrian, who “had ridden to hounds in England with the Quorn pack” (Ings 63). Young imagines that for “those women who were involved in the hunt only as spectators,” the sight of female equestrians “participating as equals with men as they raced across the countryside must have been inspiring” (5).

Susan and Sarah Crease, of Victoria, British Columbia, were avid equestrians. In their diaries—written between 1875 and 1943—they recorded their daily riding activities (Powell 155), demonstrating that equestrianism was an established discipline in the late nineteenth century. Moreover, their diaries prove that other Anglo-Canadian women living elsewhere in the Dominion, that is, in provinces other than Alberta, participated in such activities. Horses played significant roles in the courtship activities of the Crease sisters, for riding excursions afforded the sisters opportunities to spend time with suitors in appropriate and polite circumstances, specifically, in riding parties chaperoned either by their mother or by a married woman of their social circle. In such cases, horses became symbols of their family’s wealth, while the women’s ability to handle them was proof of their accomplishments. Riding appears to have been one of the disciplines the Crease sisters were taught as part of their privileged upbringing in Victoria.

Equestrianism was also learned by female settlers in England before immigrating to Alberta. Cochrane, Young observes, was one of the “more fortunate women [who] arrived in southern Alberta already familiar with horses and clearly experts in horsemanship skills” (3). What Young fails to acknowledge is that these female equestrian were not just fortunate, they were privileged, too, for they had to belong to a wealthy class of settlers in order to possess horses and have expanses of property on which to keep them. Women also had to have the time to go riding for amusement, as did the men who played polo. Thus, their households employed hired hands to help with the ranch work and domestic servants to help with the housework. Skrine writes of the benefits of employing “one servant in the house, an able-bodied cook” to whom she refers as “the Chinaman” (504). She also mentions the hired hands on the ranch, referring to them as “the ‘boys’” (504). Likewise, Inderwick had a Chinese cook, which is why she had time to ride and time to write about it. Riding was her way of dealing with stress and disappointments in her life. “When John, my cook, breaks my best cut glass dish,” she states, “I fly to the stables and have my Joy saddled and ride till I know that cut glass is nothing to make or mar one’s lovely day” (76). Tones of sarcasm, intolerance, and anger toward hired domestic help are evident in various examples of life writing—diaries and memoirs alike—when these individuals fail to do their assigned work for its lack of completion threatened the disruption of the quality of life to which the authors felt they were entitled.

The Crease sisters complained about their family’s numerous household servants who interrupted their leisure by their coming and going ““without giving

warning” (Susan Crease qtd. in Powell 165). The Creases depended on their Chinese cooks to keep the household running in an orderly fashion. Consequently, the family was under duress during the absence of their domestic servants and, as a result, conflicts broke out between family members. Susan identified the reason for the disruption of their household in an entry for September 17, 1878: ““*Strike among the Chinamen* – Yang [the Creases’ cook] told me this morning all chinamen were ordered to leave their employers *today* after cooking breakfast”” (qtd. in Powell 161; original emphasis). September 23, Susan wrote, proved to be ““A hard day for all of us – I did the kitchen work as usual – Mary and Barbara the usual Monday house cleaning Cooked dinner – which fortunately [...] turned out well”” (163). Susan Crease’s discussion of Asian immigrants betrays common prejudices of the time, which saw them as a means of cheap labour that allowed privileged immigrants to live their comfortable lives and enjoy their equestrian activities.

At the same time, non-British immigrants were also seen as a danger to Anglo-Canadian hegemony. “As long as immigration from the Orient was confined to a few odd Chinamen a year, who were quite content to do work distasteful to a white man,” social reformer James S. Woodsworth reasoned, “no particular objections were raised” (142). Rebellion of the Chinese household servants in 1878 reveals that they resented their subjugation and mistreatment by the privileged class of Anglo-Canadians. Woodsworth played a significant role in the proliferation of racial classifications of immigrants with his publication of *Strangers within Our Gates* in 1909. Regardless of his intention, which was to

make the attributes of various immigrants familiar “to other Canadians who were not so well acquainted with them,” editor Marilyn Barber asserts that he “defeated much of his own purpose when he presented the immigrants by nationality divisions” (ix). Because the authors in my study were educated and had been indoctrinated into either Calvinist or Anglican religions, they were perhaps influenced by religious leaders like Woodsworth and accepted the racist attitudes he promoted as correct ways of thinking.³⁶ In any case, his opinions supported ideologies already embraced by those in the authors’ social circles.

The British imagined themselves at the “top of the hierarchy of races,” Sarah Carter asserts, “with other peoples occupying various degrees of inferiority beneath them. This justified British claims to power throughout their empire” (*Aboriginal* 79). “Ideas about ‘race’ were little more than organized rationalizations for prejudice,” she continues. “Ideas about classes were also imported into colonial settings,” so that, at the end of the nineteenth century, “[r]acial stereotyping reached its peak [...] and discrimination, in some places segregation, was common in varying degrees throughout the world of the British Empire” (79). The subjects and signs of racialized others rebound time and again in my subjects’ life writing alongside the notion of Canada as an agrarian utopia, a

³⁶ See also, Elizabeth B. Mitchell, who advised in 1915: “If Canada is to remain predominantly white, either the Orientals admitted must be restricted and hampered and kept down artificially as in South Africa, and the future society of Canada will be based on a subject race, to its own great loss of native vigour [...] or else the numbers of these immigrants must be drastically regulated. To this Canadian opinion seemed to be tending, as I cannot help thinking rightly” (178). In the same year, Nellie McClung reasoned “we” (meaning white Anglo-Saxon Canadians) “naturally look down upon those who happen to be of a different race and tongue than our own” (53). To preserve the noble “race,” she called upon women to join the women’s movement, claiming that it was “a spiritual revival of the best instincts of womanhood—the instinct to serve and save the race” (66).

place where they could enjoy their georgic practices. Their utopian visions included the assumption of British dominance both governmentally and demographically.

Ranching pioneers like Gardiner, Key, Hopkins, and the Sheppards settled at a time when, according to Day, a sense of Canadian identity was in its nascent state, a time when immigration officials sought to create an ideal citizenry “in keeping with the ideology of ‘Anglo-conformity [...] to an English-Canadian model” (8). This model called for the assimilation of indigenous peoples and the “*rejection* of [certain] Immigrants based on racial criteria” (146; original emphasis). Woodsworth advocated the use of two powerful agents as catalysts for assimilation: the national school system and the church, which, he imagined, would bring about social reform and retain Anglo-Canadian hegemony (Day 234, 240). The judicial system of the early agrarian communities also served as measures to control immigrant *others*.

Henry Sr.’s performance of his duties as a magistrate made him an instrument of governmental power, for he assisted to bring British colonial ideals to positions of dominance in Canada. Moreover, he promoted the establishment and maintenance of the social mores and legal rights of High River as he performed functions and made declarations, both verbally and in documents, that were legally binding. Proof of his authority is found in many entries of his journal. For example, on April 29, 1909, he “Tried J Lee for burying a horse in his cellar and fined him \$500 [?] Also a chinaman [?] for selling liquor. case dismissed Chamberlain License Inspector very much annoyed.” On January 11,

1912, he wrote that he had “James Port up for being drunk fine \$3- costs \$2 window \$3=\$8 pd. Charles Starkey and George Marcus (colours) up for fighting – fined \$5 costs \$2.” Evidence of social distinctions is found frequently in the colonial discourse that comprises Henry Sr.’s journals. Indeed, they are evident in each of the settler accounts, for the authors arrived in Alberta at the end of the nineteenth or beginning of the twentieth centuries when common attitudes about race were already established.

Bert reveals the racist attitudes of the High River community in an excerpt from the *High River Times*, dated May 1911, and brings those same attitudes forward to the present day by recontextualizing them in an anecdote in *Spitzee Days* called “An Impudent Jap.” The title alone reveals the notion of superiority of Anglo-Canadian members of the community over immigrant others. The *High River Times* article reported: ““Our good and esteemed citizen, Mr. J.C. Brazier came near departing this happy land of wonderful prospects last Friday as a result”” of his argument with ““the Jap head waiter of the St. George Hotel”” (qtd. in Sheppard, *Spitzee* 149). The conflict resulted in Mr. Brazier physically assaulting the waiter for the ““indiscrete [...] handling of the dishes and viands spread before”” him and his guests, and retaliation by the Japanese man in the form of threatening Mr. Brazier with a knife (149). The waiter was remanded into custody, but no mention is made of any punishment for Mr. Brazier’s conduct.

Bert also relates that a “Chinaman” named Jim Ting, a cook at the Alberta Hotel in 1908, had his queue forcefully severed for allegedly having angrily “poured some hot grease” on one of the waitresses (152). Likewise, for “prod[ing]

one of the girls with the point of a butcher knife” in a “fit of temper,” Long Tom Key, a cook at the Oxford Hotel, was taken outside by three cowpunchers, and, in “about the same length of time and in about the same manner that a calf is wrestled down and marked, he was stretched out over the chopping block and trimmed up with the woodpile axe” (152). By recounting the actions of these cowboys like a scene in Western pulp fiction in which vigilantes enact their own brand of justice, Bert implies that racial violence was an acceptable and necessary aspect of frontier society.

There may have been several Asian immigrants living in the High River community; however, the only references in Henry Sr.’s and Henry Jr.’s journals are to a man they called “Chink,” who resided on the outskirts of the Sheppard ranch. While racist ideologies are made explicit in Bert’s memoirs, they are subtly embedded in his brother’s and father’s journals; that is, Bert boldly promotes them as political rhetoric, while the presence of racism in his father’s and his brother’s daily entries suggests the authors lacked consciousness of it, which indicates that racialization was normalized in their society. Other than identifying their Chinese neighbour as “Chink,” they did not make deprecating comments about him. Indeed, he seems to be one of the neighbours with whom they regularly conducted business. For example, they rented thirty acres to him for growing potatoes and sold old laying hens to him to use for soup. Henry Jr. wrote on January 24, 1938, that “Chink came bought 10 old hens @ 10 5.10.” At times, he helped Chink with certain chores. On June 23, 1943, he noted that he “thinned turnips & *Sugar Beets* a.m. [...] went over to Chinks to alter pigs.”

Hopkins indicates the common frequency of the term “Chinaman” by using it to refer to the man her neighbours, the De Muldie family, employed to do “all the cooking and kitchen work” (27). Likewise, Key refers to Mr. Chow, the proprietor of the Chinese Café in Strathmore, as a friendly “Chinaman,” who wore a “stiffly starched apron [which] covered him from his chin to his feet” and who smiled as he served her and her sister, Betty, “fried eggs sandwiches and hashed brown potatoes” (109). Having lunch one day in the café, Key relates, she and her sister, Betty, tell Mr. Chow they had seen ““something very funny while [they] were coming into town.”” Betty explains that it was ““a picture in the sky”” of Strathmore, and ““it was upside down.”” Mr. Chow replies, ““MI-aaage, that light picture. You ask your Fa-aader—he tell you how it happen”” (109). In what appears to be an innocent anecdote told in a childlike voice, Key augments the literary value of her story by determining Mr. Chow’s manner of speaking; she mimics the sound of his accent by writing it phonetically and omitting parts of speech.³⁷

An analysis of dialogue employing Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of heteroglossia discloses the political effect when an author creates an imbalance of power between the characters. Bakhtin describes heteroglossia as “an understanding of the dialogue of languages as it exists in a given era” (417).

Elucidating on Bakhtin’s theories, literary critic Robert Holton explains that “at

³⁷ Ralph Connor uses the same technique when writing dialogue in his novels. In *Corporal Cameron*, he depicts the camp cook, John, another “Chinaman” saying ““all lite”” instead of all right (429), and he portrays the “Indians,” when they speak at all, as lacking a sense of English syntax. Mostly, Connor refers to their vocalization as yelling and gesticulations that grow louder and wilder “as the savages worked themselves up into a fury” (393).

any given historical moment, languages of various periods and social conditions coexist [...] in complex relations to each other, relations at times both complementary and contradictory; in Bakhtin's phrase, they are interrelated dialogically" (48). "This is not to say, however, that all languages find equal and adequate representation in narrative," Holton continues; rather, for political purposes, "the prose writer imposes his or her own intentionality (consciously or unconsciously) on the heteroglossia" (48). By mimicking his poor English, Key places Mr. Chow into a class of uneducated menial workers while, in contrast, through a demonstration of her and her sister's command and graceful articulation of the hegemonic language, she places them into a higher class.

Viewed from a post-colonial perspective, a reading of the memoirs and diaries of my subjects alongside Woodsworth's advice on ways to exclude Asian immigrants reveals that the social hierarchy created by Anglo-Canadian settlers, and the economic system that supported that hierarchy, depended on the availability of cheap labour, whether provided by Asians, Indians, Eastern Europeans, Indigenous peoples, or working class Anglo-Canadian immigrants. Hopkins benefitted a great deal from the hired hands on the Enmore to complete jobs, such as weeding the garden, for their labour allowed her the time to take part in horse roundups on her foothills ranch. "My housekeeping is running fairly smoothly," she boasts, "and I try to be systematic but what can you do when a husband dashes into the house as he did yesterday, and says, 'Hurry up and get into your riding things, we are going to gather some horses and you had better come

along too” (25). In order to maintain her rank and control over her hired hands, she portrays them in unfavourable light.

For example, she complains about the one she calls “Crazy Jenks,” implying that he is a buffoon, because when he is given the task of hoeing the weeds, she later discovers that he has “dug up all the mint [she] had so carefully planted in a corner of the garden” (61-62). “Darn the idiot!” she exclaims; “we have a lamb [...] and I had been so looking forward to lamb and mint sauce” (62). Her complaint in this passage is that his incompetence has prevented her culinary enjoyment. Her portrayal of Jenks as a ne’er-do-well also serves to emphasize her entitlement to a high quality of life, regardless of its dependence on the work that hired hands like Jenks performed. Hopkins’s anecdotes repeat and reinforce stereotypes of incompetent English immigrants as she transforms “Crazy Jenks” into a metonym for the many young Englishmen she claims were sent out by their parents to seek their fortunes in the so-called colonies. “To my mind,” she states, “it is criminal to send these young lads to the colonies in the hopes of reforming them. It is ridiculous to expect that a boy who is inclined to go wrong in England to turn over a new leaf as soon as he comes to Canada” (62). Hopkins’s class discrimination enacts the same process in which derogatory figures are used as substitutes for the colonized.

Hopkins is equally irate when, in September 1910, she discovers that Jenks has raided her pantry cupboard while she was away, and has sampled *her* jars of bottled peaches. When “I found three of my precious jars of peaches had been opened and most of the contents removed,” she relates, “I was hopping mad! I

hurried out in search of Jenks and found him at the woodpile. I showed him the half empty jars and asked him what he meant by touching them. Jenks vowed he had not touched them [...but] I told him not to tell me such rubbish” (95). She then ordered him to tell her whether he had taken the fruit out of the jar with his fingers ““or did you use a spoon?”” and instructed him to dump the remainder into the “slop pail” (95). By implying that Jenks has no right to enjoy the peaches, she not only claims authority over the provisions of her household but also insinuates that he lacks appreciation for the luxuries of her kitchen. Thus, his low social order precludes him from sharing in the georgic utopia she and her husband endeavoured to create for themselves on their ranch.

Hopkins refers to only a couple of their hired hands by name despite the fact that a large number of workers came to live on the ranch to help Billie keep up with the chores. “Many lads, fresh from England, got their start there,” Park reveals, and “put in the winter, well fed with lots of reading material for the long evenings” (*Our* 304). Hopkins had her share of domestic help as well. Park observes that in the “thirties Mrs. Hopkins had several English girls to help her” (304). Hopkins does not mention these girls, however, perhaps for the reason that they arrived after the period she chose to write about in her memoir. Park identifies them by full name as “Denise Sampson, Kathleen McConnell (Mulder) and Memmie Scott, who stayed the longest before returning to England” (304). Pioneer writing is, typically, an enactment of self-aggrandizement. Thus, Hopkins does not address the possibility that she and Billie may not have been the model settlers. In *Our Foothills*, Park portrays them in a realistic and critical light, remarking that

“Mr. Hopkins [was] never too robust, [so he] usually had a young chore boy to help him” (304). Yet, Elofson cites the Hopkinses as English settlers whose tenacity ensured their success, for he maintains, the Hopkinses “became proficient at all aspects of ranching and stuck with it until they retired” (*Cowboys* 37). He seems to overlook or, perhaps, Hopkins successfully conceals the fact that when the demand for horses diminished, she and Billie had to resort to breeding sheep and “fitch,” which is a kind of polecat that is raised for its hair (Park 304). The image conjured up by this kind of ‘ranching’ contradicts the glorious life Hopkins covets.

The Hopkinses were also sustained, partly, through the royalties they earned for over thirty years from a coal mine that Billie discovered by accident (Park 304). Hopkins writes about the discovery of the coal mine in her memoir, in a letter dated May 29, 1910, indicating that they had “two miners” working with Joe, living in “a shack down at the mine” (49). She does not refer to them by name, but only to their dirtiness and the dirtiness of the work. When the Hopkinses prepare for a trip to England in November 1911, Hopkins complains of the need to secure a place for Jenks. “We are hoping Joe will take him on at the mine,” she states; there are “a number of odd jobs that Jenks can do around there and he will thoroughly enjoy being able to be as black as he likes, and not being told to wash his hands several times a day” (169). Her jibbing may appear, initially, as humour in her life story, yet, its presence discloses the power of language to harm others by “mirror[ring] back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves” (Taylor, “Politics” 25). “Nonrecognition or misrecognition” of a

person or a group of people, Charles Taylor claims, “can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” (25). Taylor argues that the result is the internalization by the abused of “a picture of their own inferiority,” by which they “are condemned to suffer the pain of low self-esteem” (26). Thus, he concludes, they may not be able to take advantage of opportunities for increasing the quality of their lives even when they present themselves (26). The image Hopkins creates of Jenks serves as foil for her self-portrait. By disempowering him, it appears, Jenks’s sense of powerlessness resulted in his inability to imagine himself as anything but dependent on the good will of others to provide him with work, food, and shelter.

Key and Thomson wrote sparingly—and sometimes disparagingly—about the menial labourers employed on their farms and ranches, omitting the fact that they were able to take rides on the prairies because, at home, the work was left in the hands of the hired workers. Key refers to a “reliable farm hand” who worked for her family and “would look after the milking and feeding of the animals” while Key, her sisters, and their parents left the farm in their democrat for a day’s outing, a picnic on the prairie (73). While the authors indicate that their hired hands were part of the household, they refer to them in ways that suggest relationships of inequality. For example, Harry Wakeman, a man employed by the Thomsons, “lived as one of the family” and slept in a “small bedroom partitioned off at the end of the back kitchen” until a “bunk-house” was built for hired hands (247). Thomson remembers that he was a drinker, although “he was very good with horses” (246). She also refers to an unnamed worker whom her father fired one

day for making “what was politely referred to then as ‘an improper suggestion’” to her as a “Scottish lad who worked for us during World War I” (249-50). Such characterizations serve to reflect the authors’ moral values.

Key’s recollection of their hired hands also reflects her disdain for them. She negatively portrays a man called “Lane,” a carpenter who was hired by her father to build their new house and do other odd jobs, but who stumbled out of his tent in a drunken state when her family arrived on the farm and did not help them unload the wagon (28). Key explains that her father was observably dismayed by such behaviour and reprimanded him (29). No doubt, Lane left the farm shortly after, for his name does not appear in the rest of Key’s memoir. Thomson recalls that Wakeman left the Thomsons’ employ when he “took up land of his own and we never saw him again,” but she remembers that “we girls always remembered him for his kindness to the horses” (247). Wakeman was one of the fortunate hired workers who fulfilled his goal of becoming a land owner and working for his benefit, not to profit someone else.

Danysk asserts that the nature of employer/employee relationships in the early days of settlement was one of equality based on the understanding that the hired hands would eventually establish their own farms and become neighbours with the ranchers who employed them (14-15). These men were part of the various households. They ate with the families, worked with them, took part in family life, and learned skills in preparation for establishing their own farms or ranches. Danysk observes that escalating land prices in the 1920s prevented hired hands from establishing themselves in the community as invested citizens and,

subsequently, subjected them to lives of endless menial labour without the pending reward of ranch ownership (173). Such were not the circumstances that transpired in Gardiner's settlement experiences. Gardiner's letters reveal that not all hired men enjoyed the benefits afforded by a relationship based on mutual respect. Indeed, at times, Gardiner presents himself as an exploited worker, which is how Allmendinger defines the real working cowboys of the late nineteenth century—as menial labourers—uneducated, nearly impoverished, living on the periphery of society, and subordinate to their employers, the cattle barons (3). Yet, Gardiner's case was different from theirs; he was educated, literary, and able to voice his grievances. Moreover, he was critically aware of the political purpose of frontier myths.

Gardiner debunks the aggrandizement of the lives of cowboys in a letter to his mother, dated October 13, 1895, in which he related his experiences riding night herd: "People write all sorts of rot about it but I fail to see the beauty of riding round and round a herd of cattle in the moonlight with the thermometer nearly at zero" (48). Instead of contributing to that "rot," he depicts with resentment the conditions in which he and his cohorts were forced to live when Bell, his employer, subjected them to the discomforts of inadequate accommodations and scanty food rations. In an undated letter to his mother, written in the fall of 1894, Gardiner openly condemned Bell as "being very mean with his food" and described the "grub" provided by his employer as hardly edible: "All we have to eat now is potatoes, some green bacon and stewed dried apples. The apples are the best thing but we can hardly eat the bacon" (17). He related that

Larkin, his cabin mate, often says that “we have to rough it out here” (18). For example, in a letter dated September 2, 1894, Gardiner complained to his mother: “We have had a lot of rain this week and this old roof leaks like anything. The water poured into our hut and wetted everything, including our bed, so we had to sleep in wet things for 2 days before we could dry” (18).³⁸ “We have hardly any food up here and if I could not shoot some ducks and prairie chickens we should be without anything,” he continued. Wishing that “old Bell was experiencing the same,” Gardiner seemed to imply that if Bell experienced the same discomfort to which he was subjecting them, he might show them some consideration (18-19).

In a subsequent section of the same letter, Gardiner explained that Bell had finally arrived and, discovering how badly accommodated they were, “seemed rather repentant” (19). On September 9, 1894, Gardiner told his parents about Bell’s plans to take him to “the mountains fishing and shooting,” and explained that while he “shall have some fun,” he will have to do “the dirty work” of fetching wood and water (19). In spite of Gardiner’s dissatisfaction with his food, accommodations, and treatment by Bell, he could not leave. In a letter dated October 5, 1894, Gardiner told his parents that he expected to stay for the winter, for his “chances of getting another job are very small as there is nothing doing in the winter in this country. The cold is so intense that work out of doors (except feeding cattle) is impossible and as that only requires a few men, one is lucky to

³⁸ English immigrant Ted Hills tells a similar story in a letter home to his parents on September 1, 1885, in which he complained about being forced to sleep in a tent that was “wretchedly leaky overhead and had no fourth side to it at all and as I had no second waterproof sheet to throw over my blankets, they used to get wet of a bad night” (qtd. in Evans 117-18). When Hills wrote the letter, he was under the employ of George Lane and had developed animosity toward him. Evans speculates that class distinction was the source of this conflict (118).

get a job” (25). “In summer,” Elofson states, a few men were employed to round up the cattle and treat them for diseases, but in the “winter when the animals were expected to survive on their own and unattended, a number of the ranch hands were laid off and the manager, one or two foremen, and a few others looked after the entire operation” (*Cowboys* 6). Such were the conditions Gardiner discovered on the Belleview Ranch.

Contrary to the myths of cowboys tenaciously bearing the discomforts of their jobs, Gardiner complained about being ill-treated, at least in his letters, if not face to face with Bell. Gardiner’s primary goal, he stated, was to become his own boss and obtain better food and more comfortable living space. “You cannot wonder at my wanting to start in business for myself,” he wrote in another undated letter, “as there is no necessity to live like a pig or to work on Sunday” (16). He admitted that he had, in his despair, imagined himself at home with his family, “in Church” with his mother and sister Bab (16). Gardiner’s derision was unguarded and revealed a sense of class superiority over his employer. He wrote: “I should like to have someone decent to talk to sometimes; it would do me good. Bell hardly ever says anything. I have found out what he was before he joined the Police. He was a plumber and gas fitter” (16). His exposure of Bell’s former history contradicts the portrayals of cowboys as frontier heroes. His letters offer proof of the less than romantic aspects of a working cowboy’s life and the reality of the economic system in place in the early days of the cattle industry in southern Alberta. Moreover, Gardiner reveals the way some pioneer ranchers treated their hired hands.

His relief from less than pleasant working conditions finally came in March 1895, in the form of financial help from his family. He wrote in a letter, dated March 4, 1895: "My dear Father, I have just got your letter telling me about Grandfather giving me a £1000 for a start" (34). Coming from a family of some means, Gardiner was provided with capital to invest. He was not a remittance man, however; he was what Thomas describes as a 'privileged' settler, that is, he had "access to financial resources" to enable him to establish himself as a land owner (177). At that point in Gardiner's cowboy career, he seemed to have earned Bell's respect, either by demonstrating his labour skills or by tempting Bell with the potential economic benefits of a partnership. He wrote to his mother that he had given some thought to "buying a half share in Bell's cattle," despite the fact that he had not been getting on with him, but "since last October we have got on very well together" and Bell has a good reputation for "deal[ing] fairly with a man" (36). He explained that he would have a half share in the horses Bell was planning to buy, "a half share [in] wagons, mowers, rakes, harness, etc., [...and] a half share in all the crops that [they would] raise," but not a half share in the ranch, for that was beyond his means (36-37). Gardiner changed his mind about the partnership, however. Hired hands like him, were ambitious "to move quickly beyond the stage of waged labour," Danysk contends, for they "sought to establish links with the class to which they belonged, and they subscribed to an ideology and culture that represented their aspirations rather than their realities" (67).

Gardiner rose to his desired place of privilege as a land owner when he purchased the Wineglass Ranch. In a letter to his mother, dated June 6, 1895, he

wrote: "I have been to look at a ranch in the Porcupine Hills that is for sale. [...] It is very good land and grows a good crop so that one has something to help besides the cattle" (40). "There is a house of several rooms, stables, corral, etc.," he assured her, and "a good spring which runs winter and summer and does not freeze up" (40). In a letter, dated June 19, 1885, he announced that he had "bought a ranch" and was "now the owner of 160 acres of land, 80 acres of which is under crop. The rest is good grass ground" (41). These images emulate the georgic tradition, an ideal that is foundational to both utopian visions and romantic notions of the prairie as a frontier. With his hopes seemingly founded on a synthesis of these myths, Gardiner realized his goal of becoming a gentleman rancher. The banter in his letters in June and July, about the material goods he had purchased, about his crop that "stands nearly 3 foot 6 inches high," and about his plans to bring his cattle to the ranch, suggests that Gardiner was pleased and optimistic about his future.

In subsequent letters, forgetting perhaps the sense of injustice he felt when his own rights had been ignored, Gardiner disregarded the rights of his hired hands. Such evidence is offered in the imbalance in power between him and his hired hands in his letters in the fall of 1895, when he hired seasonal workers to bring in the harvest. In a letter dated October 13, 1895, he wrote: "I am getting my potatoes in now. I have a lot of Indians working on the job. They take their wages out in potatoes. I had one lot come and after a day's work they wanted cash but did not get it. I paid them in potatoes for what they did and they left. Then this lot came on and agreed to dig them out for potatoes. I cannot afford to pay cash as one

gets so little for the potatoes” (50). Whether he could not afford to pay his hired hands or whether he merely felt their work was worth very little is a matter of conjecture.

Significantly, his reference to his Indigenous hired hands as faceless men suggests a racial bias against them. He referred to other hired hands by their Christian names, such as Jim Ferguson, “a young fellow” who came to rope for him, but not to the “Indians,” not even the man who herded his cattle and dug fence post holes in spite of the fact Gardiner wrote favourably about his abilities (50-51). Perhaps Gardiner had been seduced by frontier myths, which occluded the realities of the people who established the ranches in the early twentieth century. Myths present inaccurate narratives of settlement by leaving out the contributions of the many hired hands. Gardiner referred to these menial workers merely as “Indians”.³⁹ Generally, he refers to his employees in terms of how they served to increase the convenience of his living conditions on the ranch and his prospects of success. He wrote to his mother in a letter dated September 2, 1895, that he had a man, McClintock, working for him and that he had allowed McClintock to bring his wife and family to live on the Wineglass Ranch. “Mrs. McClintock does the cooking for me, that is why I let McClintock bring her out” (46). By focusing on

³⁹ There are no references in Gardiner’s letters to his marriage to Alice Edwards; yet, one might speculate that, as a result of his relationship with his wife and her mother, Henrietta Muir Edwards, his attitudes toward Indigenous peoples might have changed. During the settlement era, the Edwards family had close contact and developed “cross-cultural friendships [...] with the Cree, Assiniboine, Blackfoot, Blood, and Peigan,” and, as a result, Henrietta Edwards challenged social norms by becoming an unspoken advocate for Indigenous peoples (Roome 48). Sharing her husband Dr. Oliver Edwards’s empathy for the Assiniboine, who lived in conditions of “destitution and starvation,” she supported him in his campaign to address these injustices through his professional role as a physician, by informing “the Indian Affairs Department” (57-58).

their own labour in their life writing, settlers tend to underplay and even ignore the contributions of hired hands; rather, they suggest that their success is due to their own hard work and initiative.

The Sheppards do little more than mention the names of the many farm workers, seasonally hired hands, and cowboys upon whose help they depended on a regular basis. Henry Sr. and Henry Jr. merely link the names of hired hands to empirical records of the daily work completed on their properties. For example, Henry Jr. wrote on April 17, 1929, that he “Went to Montcrieffs for wheat. 40 bushels @ 1.50 cold winds. Jack plowed all day.” Like Gardiner, many of the workers to whom Bert refers are identified not by their names, but as “the Indians” who take the “grub” he brings as they build fences for him on the TL Ranch. Thus, they remain invisible while doing the labour Bert deemed necessary to make improvements to the ranch, establish a viable ranching operation, and realize his vision of success. The obscuring in pioneer memoirs of men and women who had been hired to perform menial labour serves to maintain the focus on the land owners and highlight the labour they performed so that their accounts of settlement support visions of their deserving of success.

In this chapter, I have explored pioneer life writing composed in georgic literary style, focusing especially on the memoirs of Georgina Thomson, Monica Hopkins, and Joan Key. Each of the three authors dedicates significant time to writing about the animals, especially, the horses that inhabit the utopian landscapes of her memories. Being members of an elite group of British equestrians afforded them considerable prestige, yet, they only vaguely acknowledge that their

participation in equestrian activities was made possible by the labour provided by farm workers. At times, they depict these men in unflattering terms. Likewise, even though the Sheppard ranches would not have been profitable without the efforts of itinerant workers, the diarists recorded the names of their hired hands by first name only in connection to the jobs they did on a given day. Gardiner does, as well, in many cases, in spite of the fact that his letters offer testimony of his ill feelings when he was made to feel insignificant as a hired hand and forced to suffer inadequate living conditions.

The hiring of labourers to plough, plant, haul manure, and complete the many other tedious chores on farms enabled settlers like the authors in my study to be selective in their choice of labour, to take time out for leisure activities, and, yet, create profitable enterprises. They appear to have reserved these benefits for themselves. Jonathan Brown states that the ““frontier did not create a social democracy in which all residents enjoyed equal chances to get ahead”” (qtd. in Slatta, *Comparing* 196). The same kinds of attitudes that shaped the authors’ relationships with their workers appear to have shaped their interactions with their Siksika and Nakoda neighbours, as well. Marvin Mikesell asserts that “British settlers in North America created frontiers of exclusion that sharply divided whites from native peoples” (qtd. in Slatta, *Comparing* 125). My last chapter reveals that the pioneer writers in my study support notions of their entitlement to homesteaded land by excluding Indigenous people from settlement history.

Chapter Six – “Imaginary Indians”: Mythical Representations in Settlement Narratives

Pioneer memoirs, like certain early twentieth century Canadian novels, invite readers to embrace colonialist ideologies by portraying admirable characters that embody them. My seven authors represent flattering portraits themselves and their families. Bert Sheppard’s courageous cattle ranchers resemble L’Amour’s cowboy heroes, while Key’s and Thomson’s industrious and hard working fathers resemble Frederick Philip Grove’s Abe Spalding in *Fruits of the Earth*. Hopkins also portrays herself an admirable character, whose intellect, modesty, dignity, and fair complexion, like Lind Archer in Martha Ostenso’s heroine in *Wild Geese*, exemplify the traits of an ideal female Canadian. Other than an obscure “halfbreed” in *Wild Geese*, Indigenous peoples are absent in these novels and conspicuously sparse in the memoirs. Pioneer memoirs offer parochial visions of the human condition; yet, like fine literature, they possess the power to influence readers. The anecdotes about Indigenous people in these texts may appear innocent, but like maps, they have a power to “create and manipulate reality as much as they record it” (Ryan 115-16). In my final chapter, I intend to demonstrate that the life writing in my study is a “more subtle means (in contrast to the earlier forms of missionary and militaristic colonial enterprises) of accomplishing [colonial] objectives” (Alfred and Corntassel 597-98).

Pioneer memoirs take a literary and artistic position that promulgates “ethical [and] aesthetic values” to their audiences (Bourdieu 30). While the amateurish quality of these memoirs marks their low aesthetic value, especially in

comparison to finely crafted narratives like Stegner's *Wolf Willow*, they appear in the broader literary field through the "production of discourse (critical, historical, etc.) about" them (H. S. Becker qtd. in Bourdieu 35). Academe and the public realms of tourism and entertainment contribute to the construction of the contemporary power of pioneer memoirs to promote Anglo-Canadian cultural hegemony in Canadian history. Bourdieu shows how books generate meaning through "professional readers" (32), such as Helen Buss, who claims that pioneer women's life writing empowered them, without noting that the material success of the authors depended upon the Canadian government's disenfranchisement and displacement of the land's Indigenous inhabitants.

A postcolonial rereading of settler life writing "changes automatically" the reader's understanding of power relationships "with each change in the field within which it is situated for the spectator or reader" (Bourdieu 30-31). Jameson's reading of Hopkins's memoir and Dempsey's of Gardiner's letters can be deconstructed with insights from indigenous studies that engender respect for Indigenous peoples and their worldviews. Reading through a postcolonial lens, I, nonetheless, consider the dominant ideologies of the time my primary texts were written. "Ignorance of everything which goes to make up the 'mood of the age' produces a derealization of the works," Bourdieu asserts; thus, "stripped of everything which attached them to the most concrete debates of their time, [...] they are impoverished and transformed in the direction of intellectualism or an empty humanism" (32). By foregrounding the injustices imposed on Indigenous peoples, a postcolonial lens brings settler narratives into a realm of scholarship that

is important to political debates in Canada today. Such a lens reveals that the settler memoirs in my study, written by men and women, prioritize the personal concerns of colonists over the general concerns of the colonized.

When the authors do mention the Siksika and Nakoda, their writing conveys a sense of superiority over them. One might argue that in recalling their settlement experiences in the mid-twentieth century, around the time of Canada's Centennial celebrations, they employ their writing to re-assert that social position. Their narratives are "indicators of an on-going assault" on Indigenous peoples, and "signs of the fact that they remain, as in earlier colonial eras, occupied peoples who have been dispossessed and disempowered in their own homelands" (Alfred and Cornassel 598). In the late nineteenth century, J. R. Miller observes, Canada attempted, through "legislat[ion] to control and assimilate Indians" (387), and continued to do so throughout the twentieth century through the actions of government representatives and by disseminating negative views. For example, Clifford Sifton claimed that the Indian had "'not the physical, mental or moral get-up to enable him to compete'" with "'the white man'" (qtd. in D. Francis 215). Subsequently, to speed up the process of eradicating the culture of these so-called primitive beings, Sifton supported a program designed to assimilate Indigenous children, one that involved forcefully removing them from their families' homes and placing them in industrial and residential schools so that "they could be acculturated more easily" (D. Francis 205).

In 1909, the poet Duncan Campbell Scott took up the newly created post of "superintendent of education" and became "the principal architect of Indian

policy” (Titley 22). “Scott firmly believed in the great civilizing mission of the British Empire,” E. Brian Titley asserts (25). Scott published his views in *The Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada*, a paper he prepared for the Canadian Institute of International Affairs in 1931. They reflect popular notions in the first decade of the twentieth century, which regarded Indigenous peoples as a problem and, Daniel Francis asserts, saw assimilation as a final solution (199). To Scott, the residential school system was undoubtedly necessary to the assimilation of Indigenous peoples, for, he maintained, “the best results came from residential schools” (*Administration* 14). Scott called the process of education and assimilation “weaning the Indian from his primitive state” (25). An accounts clerk by profession, he assumed the duties of “deputy superintendent general in 1913,” and held that position until 1932, “while retaining his accountant’s responsibilities” (Titley 22, 75). Bert Sheppard, Key, and Thomson would have been children at the time administrators like Scott and Sifton shaped the Canadian government’s perception and treatment of Indigenous peoples. No doubt, they were indoctrinated by public school curricula into believing in the superiority of Anglo-Canadians, for, as I will demonstrate, they reflect this ideology in their memoirs. Such beliefs are also demonstrated in the Sheppard journals, especially in those of Henry Sr.

Education in the Victorian era was marked, Rothblatt observes, by “concepts of duty and social responsibility,” and by “ideas of national – at times racial – superiority” (135). These ideas were promoted not only through education, but also through religion. Henry Sr. subtly reveals a sense of superiority in the

entries that recorded his civic duties and a kind of self-righteousness in those that recorded his attendance at St. Benedict's Anglican Church. He attended church twice and, often, three times on a Sunday, and extended his services beyond his the parish. On August 4, 1908, he "Left by morning train for Calgary to represent Big Hill district at Synod." The next day, he remained in Calgary for the "Service with Bishops address [...] Left for home by evening train, Howcroft spoke well and to the point on religious education in schools." In 1906, the Anglican Mission Board in the Diocese of Calgary promoted the goals of residential schools (Miller 397). "Lay and ecclesiastical authorities tended to agree that the residential experience accelerated the process of becoming 'civilized'" (Titley 76). As Miller notes, residential schools, "a joint enterprise of the federal government and major Christian denominations," including the Methodist Church and the Anglican Diocese of Calgary, sought to remove Indigenous children from "the demoralizing and degrading influences of the tepees' and surround them with an environment of bourgeois Christian values" (Anon. qtd. in Miller 396).⁴⁰ Henry Sr. appears to have supported this enterprise.

Francis maintains that school textbooks have played significant roles in the proliferation of misperceptions about Indians (161-65). Thomson, Key, and the Sheppard sons would have been made familiar with high school history textbooks like W. H. P. Clement's *The History of the Dominion of Canada*, published in 1897, which described the "Indian" in general as "at his best when hunting" (13). "Upon the war-path he was cruel, tomahawking, scalping and torturing with

⁴⁰ Miller quotes an article published in the *Calgary Herald*, on 10 February 1892 (397).

fiendish ingenuity,” Clement continues; his “only heroic quality” was his “stoic fortitude” when he was tortured (13). Prejudiced beliefs were no less damning in the 1930s, when George F. G. Stanley, in *The Birth of Western Canada*, failed to acknowledge the complexity of Indigenous peoples’ culture and political structure, arguing that “simplicity was the central feature of their organization” (196). His view of Indigenous peoples, once their “savage self-reliance [gave] way to a childlike dependence,” was that they would be “overwhelmed with a feeling of helplessness” (217). He placed the onus on settlers to assist them to adapt, describing that “responsibility [as] ‘the white man’s burden’” (194). Both textbooks, Francis states, portray Indigenous peoples as fierce warriors and savages, and indoctrinated Canadian youth into the realm of a racially biased political ideology by giving them the impression that “Indians” engaged in war because of an appetite for it and not as expressions of their demands for fair treatment from Ottawa (65). Scott was “a strong advocate of the teaching of Canadian history in school” (Titley 25). History textbooks, which served that purpose, have presented Indigenous peoples, not as human beings who existed during the time of settlement and still exist today, but as *imaginary Indians*.

Like Bert Sheppard, who attributed great events in history to the actions of extraordinary individuals, Scott was, seemingly, a hero worshipper. He believed that students should be taught about the “‘heroic sufferings’ of those who had founded the nation so that [they] would be inspired to emulate them” (Titley 25). An examination of Scott’s letters to colleagues and friends attests to his admiration for great men. In them, he mentions Group of Seven member Lawren Harris as a

friend whom he “admire[s] hugely” (*Some* 37), photographer Edmund Morris, whom he calls “Eddie” (*More* 46), and Ralph Waldo Emerson, who “will emerge as years go by as one of the World’s Characters” (*More* 41). His views were common to the populace of the day and to early Canadian historians, who, Ted Regehr asserts, interpreted settlement “as the struggle of human beings against nature, and as the advancement of ‘civilization,’ [or as] ‘chronicles of heroic men subduing and civilizing the western wilderness’” (qtd. in Friesen 1). The memoirists in my study advocate and reiterate the ideologies promoted by powerful figures, ideologies that support their sense of entitlement.

One of Georgina Thomson’s idols was United States President Theodore Roosevelt, whose popularity is demonstrated by Thomson’s reference to him as a household icon. In a recollection of her brother Jim’s teasing her for lacking in self-discipline, she relates that, one morning when she refused to get out of bed and was late for breakfast, he asked: “‘What did Teddy Roosevelt say?’” (109). Thomson explains that in her youth, “President Teddy Roosevelt was expounding on the gospel of ‘the strenuous life,’ and one of the magazines we took, published an article by him in which he criticized the way people wasted time by dawdling” (108). Roosevelt also promoted racist suppositions that supported settlers’ claims of entitlement to homesteaded land. “The white settler has merely moved into an uninhabited waste,” he reasoned, and thus, “he does not feel that he is committing a wrong, for he knows perfectly well that the land is really owned by no one” (n.p.) “The truth is, the Indians never had any real title to the soil,” he continues, claiming that had European settlers not taken over North America, “this great

continent could not have been kept as nothing but a game preserve for squalid savages” (n.p.). Given Thomson’s obvious admiration for and emulation of the iconic figure, it is not surprising that she would fail to question Roosevelt’s assumptions about who were and were not entitled to the land. Rather, her memoirs suggest that the process of development of land appropriated from Indigenous peoples into agricultural operations was in keeping with right modes of thinking.

Government officials “believed firmly in progress,” Francis asserts, adding with a degree of sarcasm that “progress demanded that the inferior civilization of the Indian had to give way to superior, White civilization” (59). He identifies some of the popular notions that resulted in situating Indigenous peoples in a distant and imagined history. He describes these displaced and distorted figures as “imaginary Indians,” characters that stand in for complex and respectful representations of Indigenous peoples: the savage warrior, the wise elder, and the 1960’s version of the wise elder, the environmental guru (52). Francis also examines the various myths about Indigenous peoples created and perpetuated by the media. One myth, he observes, promotes the “belief in the inevitable disappearance of the Indian” (58). This “piece of conventional wisdom,” he remarks sarcastically, was not questioned, nor was anything done to halt the Indian’s “seemingly inexorable plunge toward extinction” (58). Catharine Parr Traill’s memoir contributed to the building of this myth for, she observes, assuming a voice of authority or objectivity that “their numbers are diminishing, and some tribes have become nearly if not totally extinct [...]. The race is slowly passing away from the face of the earth, or

mingling by degrees with the colonists, till, a few centuries hence, even the names of their tribes will scarcely remain to tell that they once existed” (220). The settler memoirs in my study continue to promote the false notion of the gradual disappearance of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

In *Spitzee Days*, Bert voices his regret at the loss of what had once been a “proud people that named the area Spitzee,” who nourished themselves “on pemmican from fat buffalo and ripe Saskatoons which grew along the river in abundance, while a thousand ponies grazed about” (170). Bert writes that, in the leaner days that followed their fall from grace, they became “by necessity not too fussy about what they ate” (170). He recalls that, occasionally, “Indians” would travel to High River, set up camp nearby, and live there for a few days. They would rise quite late in the day and, Bert implies, would go hunting and gathering: the “squaws” would go to the “nuisance ground” (the garbage dump) to search for and salvage carcasses of dead animals hauled there by the townsfolk, while the “bucks” went into town to “get what spoiled fruit and vegetables they could find” (170-71). Significantly, Bert indicates a reversal of gender roles, perhaps to effeminate and to disempower the men, who, traditionally, were the hunters. Of the various authors whose life writing I examine, Bert is the only one who reveals any awareness of the suffering of the Siksika and Nakoda people, yet, while he suggests he had sympathy for them, he implies that, somehow, they had brought their poverty on themselves through sloth or stupidity.

Bert’s prejudice toward the Siksika and Nakoda who live in the region reflects a common misperception that many of the settlers had of Indigenous

peoples during the early twentieth century, which was that they were lazy, incompetent, and satisfied to live off scavenging and charity. What little was done by egalitarian politicians and writers to counteract the effects of such misinformation was resisted. The “myths of colonialism” or “lies [have] become accepted and normal,” Alfred and Cornstassel argue (601). Endeavouring to counteract myths, Isenberg asserts that among the strategies the Canadian government used in the late nineteenth century to assimilate Indigenous peoples was to prevent them from hunting; thus, the government sanctioned the purposeful destruction of the bison as a means “to pacify the plains nomad” (198). Scott masks the design in this strategy by employing a passive voice. He claims that after “aboriginal title to the vast areas east of the Rocky Mountains was extinguished” and “the Buffalo failed in 1878, the Indians were left destitute and they had to be rationed” (10). Yet, he assures readers that the “sacredness of treaties and agreements with Indians have been respected” in Canada (1). The settlers in my study would, no doubt, have trusted such authoritative reports like those Scott, especially since he represented the Canadian government.

Sarah Carter refutes their validity, however, arguing that little was done to alleviate the suffering of Indigenous peoples inflicted by the loss of the bison, which meant that not only did their main source of food disappear, “their main source for all their apparel also vanished” (*Lost* 99). This was brought to the attention of the Canadian government in 1886, she asserts, when Member of Parliament Malcolm Cameron “launched a stinging indictment of Indian administration in the House of Commons” (130). “As proof that the treaties had

been violated and promises broken,” Carter continues, “Cameron cited evidence from the department’s own annual reports that certain bands had not received their oxen, implements, seeds, and other items” (130). After weighing the evidence, Cameron accused “the department [of] deliberately pursu[ing] a policy of starvation to force the Indians into submission, a policy that he described as cruel and atrocious and one that ought not to prevail in any civilized country” (131). In spite of Cameron’s claims “that gross injustice had been done to the Indians,” Carter notes that political officials in the Macdonald administration refuted the “reports of Indian misery, disease, and starvation” and claimed that they were “fabricated by people without the remotest acquaintance with Indians” (131). Carter implies that despite the insistence by some representatives, government officials chose to ignore the empirical evidence of the poverty and anguish of Indigenous peoples.

It appears that government officials both held back information from the general public so that few people knew much about the conditions in which Indigenous peoples lived and published information that served a political agenda. The memoirs in my study support that agenda. Key, Thomson, Gardiner, Hopkins, and the Sheppards had opportunities to interact with Siksika and Nakoda men, women, and children; yet, for the most part, they ignore their personal experiences and give rein, instead, to their imaginations or to the shaping of their narratives by popular beliefs at their time of writing. In an anecdote in *Spitzee Days*, Bert maintains that the Siksika and Nakoda surrendered the land to the British government. Reiterating governmental discourse, he commends “Chiniquai, head

chief of the Stony Tribe of Indians,” for deciding to situate his “Reservation along the Bow River at Morley” when he and his tribe turned over their country “to the Great White Mother” during the signing of Treaty 7 in 1877, for had he chosen the “upper reaches of the Spitzee country,” it would not have been “possible for many fine ranches to be established in the upper High River country” (12). Claims that the land was surrendered are now being challenged by a Treaty 7 Tribal Council, which “represents the First Nations of Treaty 7: the Bloods [Kainai], the Peigan [Piikani], the Siksika (Blackfoot), the Stoney [Nakoda], and the Tsuu T’ina (Sarcee),” who were affected by Treaty 7 (Whitney qtd. in *Treaty 7 Elders et al.* ix). Chief Roy Whitney states that in a “treaty review process,” which began in 1991, participants gathered testimonials from the elders of Treaty 7 in order to inform “subsequent generations of our own people” so that they will “have a better understanding of the actual event that took place at Blackfoot Crossing in 1877” (qtd. in *Treaty 7 Elders et al.* viii, ix). “What is clear from the elders’ testimony,” Whitney proclaims “is that our people would allow newcomers to farm and to use the topsoil of the land”; they are “adamant that there was no discussion of surrendering the land” (ix).

Hopkins, the Sheppards, Key, Thomson, and Gardiner would have had vested interests in supporting the version of history that government officials constructed around the signing of Treaty 7, for, being among the first farmers and ranchers in southern Alberta, they benefitted by the availability of land that was acquired through so-called treaty negotiations. The imperial act of land appropriation imposed poverty on the people of Nakoda and Siksika nations, yet,

that fact is ignored by settlers like my subjects. In their memoirs, if Gardiner, Key, Thomson, Hopkins, and Bert represent Indigenous peoples at all, they base them on models offered by government officials. Indigenous peoples, “occupied land of value to farmers,” Francis observes; thus, it “was convenient that they should simply disappear” (59). “Encouraged by their image-makers,” such as American Wild West show producers and Canadian painters and writers, “to believe that this was the direction in which events were unfolding naturally,” Francis continues, “Whites had little reason to question the process” (59). “White society was allowed to change, to evolve, without losing its defining cultural, ethnic and racial characteristics,” Francis asserts, “but Indian society was not. Indians were [...] fixed in a traditional mode” and were seen as being unable to “change without becoming something else, something not Indian. The Imaginary Indian, therefore, could never become modern” (59). What is more, Stanley implies that Indigenous peoples were incapable of changing. He proclaims that “the savage, centuries behind in mental and economic development, cannot readily adapt himself to meet the new conditions” brought about by settler society (194). Hopkins betrays this sentiment in an anecdote about a Nakoda elder, “Ben Big Woman,” who is left by Peter Bearspaw to cut brush on the Hopkinses’ ranch in August, 1911 (142).

Hopkins describes him as “a decrepit old gentleman” with a “toothless grin” and an English vocabulary of three words: “‘hungry,’ ‘tobac,’ and ‘squaw,’” stating that “he uses the last most of all” when he is hungry and calls to her from the back door (142). When the elder, while cutting brush one day, is stung by a wasp on his face, and comes to Billie for relief, Billie offered him a bag of blueing

that Hopkins used for whitening her laundry, explaining “by pantomime how to rub it on the sting.” Later, when she asked the old man what he had done with the bag, “Ben opened his mouth wide. He had *eaten* it” (142; original emphasis). In this story, Hopkins counteracts the mythical image of the wise elder. While she ridicules the elder, she admits that she is content to have him puttering around the place, cutting the brush, for when he incinerates it, the “delightful smell of burning willow is wafted into our bedroom” (143). Hopkins concludes her tale with the hope that “Peter Bearspaw won’t forget him” or she and Billie “will have to adopt Ben for good” (144), implying a reluctance to provide employment.

Figures of “imaginary Indians” and misinformation about Indigenous peoples continue to proliferate within the realm of visual arts. Francis notes that renowned artists Paul Kane and Edmund Morris travelled the prairie region painting highly romanticized depictions of Indian life (16-30). Referring to I. S. MacLaren’s research on Paul Kane, Sarah Carter maintains that the artist’s written recollections of “the Aboriginal people he encountered and described” in the 1840s were altered by his publishers so that people seemed savage: “their violent capabilities were dramatized, likely to guarantee brisk sales” (*Aboriginal* 45-46). Such images still permeate the imaginations of the general public. Less well-known are sources of popular entertainment specific to southern Alberta, which were also responsible for the creation of stereotypical images of “Indians”. These images began to take shape in 1894 when, Francis observes, the Canadian Pacific Railway employed “Stoney Indians” or Nakoda, dressed in traditional regalia to entertain travellers who were marooned due to a washed-out track (179-80). The

show proved to be so successful a tourist attraction that it spawned Banff Indian Days (180).

The elite society to which the Sheppards belonged—the educated, Protestant group who prided themselves on their gentility and generosity, and yet lived in towns conspicuously absent of Indigenous peoples—spent the summer enjoying the hot springs and the natural beauty of Banff National Park. Bert went with his parents and brothers to Banff in July 1912. According to Henry Sr.’s diary entries, they took the train from Calgary on July 3, 1912, on a day that was “Fine and bright boarded train at 8.30 got to Banff 11.30 Bee very tired and had to rest walking up from station Found cottage OK and owners living in hut alongside, Bee quite pleased, had lunch at resteraunt got settled into house during afternoon.” The next day, Henry Sr. noted that the “Boys went to Indian races,” and the day after, he “Took boys up river and walked on to Sun dance.” The “Indians” the Sheppards and their friends observed formally attired were renditions of Noble Savages and the “Sun Dance” was merely a performance designed for their amusement. Performances for tourists masked the suffering of the Nakoda, many of whom lived in perpetual impoverishment on nearby reserves.

The transformation of the Sun Dance into a masquerade is sacrilegious for the Indigenous peoples who practice it, Cree poet Louise Halfe contends, because it is “*isistāwina*,” a religious ritual (129). In “My Ledders” she expresses resentment toward “whitemen” who appropriated “our *isistāwina*” to turn into a profitable form of entertainment, and proclaims that she is “dired of all dis *kimoti*,” this stealing (104, 130). The worldview represented in her poems and manifested

in Cree language, Halfe explains, promotes reverence for the land, wind, water, and trees, that is, for all aspects of the environment, because they are sacred (Conversation). Likewise, Native American educator Gregory Cajete conceives of the relationships between Indigenous people and “all entities of nature – plants, animals, stones, trees, mountains, rivers, lakes and a host of other living entities – [as] embodied relationships that must be honored” (qtd. in Alfred and Corntassel 609). Alfred and Corntassel assert that an Indigenous worldview builds on a “notion of a dynamic and interconnected concept of Indigenous identity constituted in history, ceremony, language and land” (609). Cajete “contrasts this Indigenous sense of kinship and ‘ensoulment of nature’ with the (relatively) one-dimensional Newtonian-Cartesian perspectives characteristic of European and colonial worldviews” (qtd. in Alfred and Corntassel 609). My exploration of settler life writing through a lens shaped by posthumanism is an attempt to intervene into and disrupt the outmoded Cartesian worldview model that has long been reiterated in narratives of human experience. Cajete’s and Alfred and Corntassel’s articulation of human relationships with a more-than-human world bears a likeness to a posthuman conception of interacting *autopoietic life-forms*, that is, living beings including nonhumans, which “‘bring forth a world’ in what Maturana and Varela call their ‘embodied enactions’” (Wolfe xxiii).

The spirituality embedded in Indigenous worldview echoes the pantheism that serves as a framework for the teachings of ethical animal husbandry and sustainability in Virgil’s *Georgics*. Revisiting the *Georgics* thus offers a means of initiating an exploration of potential commensurability between the spiritual or

philosophical foundation of Anglo-Canadian settlers' ethos of stewardship and Indigenous people's reverence for all living things. My goal in hearkening back to georgic traditions is, in Becker's words, to bring greater public awareness the value "of living harmoniously with animals and plants by practicing good stewardship." Virgil advises readers to "Above all else / Be sure to pay due reverence to the gods" (qtd. in Becker). "Happy is he," Virgil proclaims, "who knows, [too,] the gods of the countryside," Pan, the god of shepherds and flocks; Silvanus, the Roman god of forests and fields (2.492-3); and Ceres, the goddess of agriculture and the harvest – from whose name the word cereal is derived. Models of sustainability based on theological or spiritual relationships with the environment are found in the growing body of literary ecocriticism. Buell directs readers' attention to Thomas Berry's *The Dream of the Earth* as an ecotheological text (106). The spirituality of an Indigenous worldview is reflected in "a document titled 'Solemn Declaration,'" which proclaims: "We glory in our proud past: / when the earth was our nurturing mother, [... and] when Sun and Moon were our parents" (S. Miller 21-22). One of the similarities in georgic and Indigenous worldviews is the cyclical pattern. In the *Georgics*, the cycle is the agrarian year. Likewise, the pattern of Indigenous history, according to Métis Christine Welsh, is "cyclical and ultimately timeless," rather than "linear, progressive, date- and event-oriented" (qtd. in Carter, *Aboriginal* 8).

Awareness of the spiritual aspects of Indigenous culture was, seemingly, beyond the comprehension of the pious Anglican settlers in my study. Nor could they entertain notions of the complexity of the cultural practices of Indigenous

peoples. Anglo-Canadian colonizers, Daniel Francis maintains, saw Indigenous peoples as “fixed in a traditional mode” out of which they could not advance “without becoming something else, something not Indian” (59). A phenomenological investigation of settler life writing offers historical accounts that undermine naïve versions of settlement history. Such a mode of analysis serves to deconstruct a prevalent myth of Plains Indians embodied in the image of “a male warrior or hunter on horseback” (S. Carter, *Aboriginal* 25). Sarah Carter implies that this image, one of the most popular among colonizers, contributes toward a false history of Indigenous peoples. The “phase of equestrian culture on the Great Plains was brief,” she explains. “Horses, introduced through the Spanish to the south, [...] did not begin to transform North American Plains culture until the early years of the eighteenth century” (25).

Carter’s research, nonetheless, confirms that an equestrian culture existed on the prairies prior to the mid-nineteenth century, when colonists imported British horses and introduced new forms of animal husbandry. Equestrian interests, Bert Sheppard reveals, provided opportunities for contact between Anglo-Canadian settlers of High River and the Siksika people who lived in the area. His memoirs, for example, offer evidence of horse trade between these groups. Bert observes that his Siksika neighbours valued horses, for an “Indian’s wealth was measured by the number of ponies he possessed” (*Spitzee* 171). As well, he praises the quality of their “cayuses,” noting that they were “thouger than whalebone.” Referring to his possession of one of these sturdy animals, he remarks that he rode “a Blackfoot pony with a big Crowfoot brand” for several years. He recalls that

Phil Weinard also had “two Indian ponies, Buller and Gladstone” that he “had bought from the Blackfoot” and used to haul logs when he “built the log house on the Riverbend [Ranch] in 1894.” Attesting to their longevity, Bert claims that twenty years later, Weinard’s sons still used the ponies to pull their “buckboard” when they went “up the river fishing.” Bert attributes the reliability of the horses to their training by gentling, for they were “raised around camp, [and] the Indian kids were always crawling around them when they were colts” (171). His observations reveal both the value of horses as companion animals and the similarities in the horse training methods practiced by the Siksika and by his family.

In this rare passage, in which Bert appears to be an apologist for Indigenous people, he voices his opinion that the actions of the “Department of Indian Affairs” were misguided when they placed “draft stallions on the Indian Reservations [sic] trying to upgrade the Indian horses” for, he reasons, today, “we are importing pony breeds from other countries, when our home product would probably have been superior, or at least just as good, and a living link with the past” (171). A plausible explanation for the juxtaposition of both positive and negative portrayals of Indigenous peoples in Bert’s memoirs might be found by distinguishing between portrayals with ideological foundations and portraits based on Bert’s direct personal experiences with actual people. Bert’s estimation of the quality of the horses described in the previous passage, whether they belonged to Siksika or Nakoda horse breeders and trainers or to the immigrant ranchers who purchased them, is based on direct empirical observation. Exploring settler accounts of interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous prairie

inhabitants unearths evidence of the shared values and interrelations between them that exceed the limits of constructions infused with colonial ideologies, which stress the disparities between their practices and beliefs.

Horses played significant parts in the lives of settlers like the Sheppards. As Henry Jr. recorded on July 12, 1931, his wife and step-daughter saw equestrian sports as a form of entertainment. He wrote: "Eve & Ruth went out to help tea at Polo. Kenneth [Runciman] came down for Polo with Dover." Several days later, "Bert came down [to High River] in cart with Sam [Rider] & his colt," which was, seemingly, a social visit and an opportunity to train the young horse. Likewise, a friend, "Smith came with new horse." Later that summer, on August 5, "Eve & Ruth went out to polo with Sue [George's wife] on their poneys. Strathcona won." Significantly, the Sheppard journals refer to actual horses, not literary depictions or mythical figures which, in settlement narratives, often serve political purposes. Indeed, threatening images of "Indians" on horseback and masculine figures of heroic cowboys have long shared the stage in dramas spawned by romantic visions of existence on a rugged frontier.

McPherson indicates the potential of a phenomenological mode of analysis to explore settlers' encounters with Indigenous peoples during commercial transactions ("Home Tales" 223). Yet, in spite of direct personal contact, she suggests that settler authors downplayed the roles of their Indigenous neighbours and emphasized their "contributions to building settler society" (236). In contrast, Bert portrays economic interactions between settlers and Indigenous peoples as contributing to the creation of mutually beneficial relationships as well as to the

equestrian culture of the ranching society in the region in which his family settled. Postcolonial analysis of examples of settler life writing like the Sheppard journals and Bert's memoirs, which reveal interactions between the colonized and the colonizers, has the potential, in the words of Robin Brownlie and Mary-Ellen Kelm, of making a "positive contribution not only to historical understanding but also to the process of redressing past injuries" (556). Disclosing the ideologies embedded in myths that form the thematic designs of settler narratives has similar value in spite of the fact that, rather than create narratives that explore complex Indigenous identities and model respect for the cultures of the various Indigenous peoples, the authors in my study, for the most part, have created documents that support "[s]tate-imposed conceptions of supposedly Indigenous identity" (Alfred and Cornassel 598).

Considering that Hopkins and the Sheppards placed such a high degree of importance on ranch or farm houses and their refinements, no doubt they would have accepted the opinion of government representatives like Mabel B. Williams when she reflected on the remnants of the Secwepemc kikulies in Banff National Park. Williams, a park employee, wrote that the Secwepemc "'built their half-buried dwellings at the base of Mount Rundle where now the tourist plays golf, but the Indians left few more marks of their habitations than the wild animals'" (qtd. in Wangler 70). Matthew Wangler asserts that Williams had tremendous power to shape public perception, for she was "the author of Rocky Mountain guide books" in which, paradoxically, she portrays "pre-contact Native life as uniquely wedded to both nature and a heroic ethic" and the "Indian" as possessing "an almost sub-

human incapacity to master, scientifically and technologically, the nature that surrounded them” (67, 69-70). For park visitors like the Sheppard family and the Hopkinses, who vacationed in Banff in “August, 1910,” learning about the way Secwepemc people lived—in kikulies or log-roofed pithouses—especially when they were compared to animals living in burrows, no doubt added to their impressions of the savagery of Indigenous peoples.⁴¹

Advertising, tourism, and entertainment filled Bert’s imagination with these negative images of Indigenous peoples, and while not all of Bert’s comments about them are derogatory, his anecdotes make them seem primitive and two-dimensional, much like the caricatures presented in Western films and tourist entertainment. Bert writes that the “squaws wore calico dresses” and some “had coloured blankets thrown over their shoulders, that often covered a baby that was strapped to the squaw’s back, and they all wore moccasins made of buckskin” (*Spitzee* 13). “The bucks that were not out hunting,” Bert observes, “lounged around the camp” (13). While the men are seemingly idle in the scene he fashions, Bert notes that they occasionally “took contracts from the ranchers cutting corral rails, fence posts, and building fences, and were pretty handy at branding time, as some of the bucks were good cowhands in those days,” which he clarifies as being

⁴¹ Ironically, the use of local building materials and the value of reducing one’s impact on the environment are now seen as intrinsic to an ethos of sustainability. Secwepemc engineering student Ska-hiish Manuel, recipient of the University of British Columbia’s Outstanding Future Alumnus Award at the Engineering Excellence Celebration in 2010, plans to “apply technology within Aboriginal values to encourage economic, social, and cultural development in Aboriginal communities. ‘The major thing right now is research in housing on the reserve,’” Manuel asserts; his goal is to “use sustainable building materials to build high quality housing and improve technology in households” (qtd. in “Shuswap Nation”). Manuel envisions a kikuli with advanced technology as a design for sustainability (Conversation).

“about the time World War One ended” (13). Oddly, he does not mention that he was one of the ranchers and that Jonas Rider was one of the cowhands. He does not even mention Rider by name, despite the fact that the man was a lifelong friend.

In a study of the ways that cowboys and “Indians” interacted in the realm of the cattle ranching industry, Mary-ellen Kelm refers to the “complex set of social relations between First Nations and settlers that emerged in Western Canada as a particular kind of contact zone” (“Riding” 108).⁴² She cites, for example, rodeo “in Western Canada [which], by virtue of its roots, its participants, and its structure, was an on-going contact zone wherein Native and non-Native people interacted” (109). “Aboriginal people, like other disenfranchised or marginalized people,” Kelm maintains, “used such events to claim a public presence, to intervene in dialogue about nation-building, and to put forward their own interests upon a highly visible stage” (110). While some historians see rodeos as “a continuation of Plains equestrian culture in a new context, one that expresses a unique relationship to animals, [and] that demonstrates the value of family and community through performance and competition,” others see “the structures of a racially-segmented society” offered by the rodeo arena as permitting “only limited Aboriginal engagement in public performances,” and as points of contact that have allowed “Indian cowboys” to emphasize “their Indianness [primarily] in ways that

support rather than subvert contemporary racialization” (111-12).⁴³ Henry Sr.’s remark about watching “Indian races” in an entry for July 4, 1912, appears to support the latter view but, due to his terse style of notation, he offers nothing in the way of details or reflections on the day’s entertainment. Gardiner, in an undated letter to his mother, embellished the scene of “an Indian race” with vivid impressions. He related that the moment was one of hilarity when a cowboy rode a bucking horse among the “Indians [who] were drawn up in line waiting” and caused chaos at the start of the race (21). “You should have seen them go!” he exclaimed; “they went for their lives with the cowboy after them” (21). He not only discriminates between cowboys and the “Indian” contestants, he also describes a scene that, for contemporary readers at least, brings to mind an iconic image in Western films of cowboys chasing “Indians” on horseback.

Kelm argues that, regardless of Guy Weadick’s rhetoric, when he claimed that rodeo competitions offered: ““A square deal to all, no color, residence or nationality barred”” (qtd. in Kelm, “Riding” 114), rodeos “did not evade the segregating tendencies of settler society” (112). In spite of what scholars maintain about the “open participation and the presence of Native, non-Native, and mixed-heritage people, rodeos, particularly in the era before professionalization in the

⁴² Kelm borrows the terms Mary Louise Pratt employs to ““foreground the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters so easily ignored or suppressed by diffusionist accounts of conquest and domination. A ‘contact’ perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other. It treats the relations among colonizers and colonized ... not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power”” (qtd. in Kelm, “Riding” 109).

⁴³ Kelm cites Lynda Mannik as a member of the former group, and Daniel Francis, R. Douglas Francis, Elizabeth Furniss, and Jan Penrose as situated in the latter (“Riding” 111-12).

1940s,” Kelm asserts, “were visibly structured along gendered and racialized lines” (117). The “Pincher Creek Natal Day celebration in 1921, for example, included along with a bucking contest and a 1/2 mile dash, a squaw race, a ladies saddle race, and an Indian race” (“Riding” 117). Nonetheless, she maintains that rodeos, especially the Calgary Stampede, “[o]ver the course of the 1920s and 1930s,” provided opportunities for “Aboriginal men [to work] alongside settler men to increase the status and respectability of the sport and its contestants” (“Manly” 715). From such contests, “a new kind of man materialized,” Kelm observes, one that embodied “masculinities both rough and respectable” (715). “Deprived of bison hunting and horse raids, confined on plots of land and forced first to raise cattle, then to farm,” Indigenous men, Kelm claims, sought new ways to earn “the rights of manhood” through rodeo (“Manly” 740). “For First Nations,” she asserts, “this new masculinity combined the much-revered skills and values of traditional horse culture with a rebelliousness and violence that could both attract and repel” (715).⁴⁴ Jonas Rider embodied this hybrid kind of cowboy, a personality born of what Kelm describes as an adaptation to a new reality (715).

One might also see Indigenous men’s participation in rodeo and ranching as mimicking “the practices of dominant non-Indigenous [...] institutions and

⁴⁴ While rodeos afforded opportunities for competition (albeit, in segregated ways), there was no guarantee of fairness in the sponsors’ awarding of prize money. Kelm cites the case of the Kainai cowboy Tom Three Persons, who “won the Canadian bucking championship at the first Calgary Stampede in 1912,” but was denied the prize money (“Riding” 126). While “many non-Native people celebrated along with him, [including the] Governor General and the Prime Minister [who] sent telegrams of congratulations and the town of Macleod, adjacent to the Blood reserve, [which] minted a medal of honour,” Kelm observes that “Pat Burns, who had put up extra money for the bucking championship if a Canadian won it, [allegedly] withdrew his offer in the face of Three Persons’ victory” (126).

[adhering] to state-sanctioned definitions of Indigenous identity” (Alfred and Corntassel 600). Whichever line of reasoning is most appropriate in analyzing Rider’s social status, one must acknowledge that he achieved a reputation as a superlative cowboy when he won the Canadian championship for roping in the 1920s (Sheppard, *Just* 139). Rider was not only respected for his expert roping skills when branding calves, he was appreciated for his continuous support on the Sheppards’ ranches. Henry Sr.’s journal entry for April 2, 1934, noted that “Sam Rider came to supper” at the Riverbend Ranch. Likewise, Henry Jr. noted on July 13, 1940, that “Leo Rider got his horse had supper Sam Rider & squaws landed up about 9.30 to stay the night & have supper.” Bert identifies Rider by name numerous times in his journals and his memoirs; nonetheless, when he refers to Nakoda people in general, he calls them “bucks” and “squaws” to stress the distinction between the colonizers and the colonized. Bert appears to use the terms derogatorily in numerous anecdotes to imply his superiority over them. The term “squaw” was used commonly by all of the Sheppards; they called one of their horses Squaw and Henry Jr. referred to a geographical location as “Squaw Coulee.” The lack of self-reflection in the journals, however, precludes establishing certainty about the authors’ implied meaning in their use of the term.

In *Spitzee Days*, Bert’s description of Indigenous peoples in a condescending manner makes his meaning explicit. While Bert’s indoctrination by the public school system may have led him to see himself as superior to his Siksika and Nakoda neighbours, he may have been influenced by his parents, as well, for he appears to be retelling anecdotes passed on to him by his mother. In one of

these anecdotes, a hapless “Indian,” that is, a member of the Siksika or Nakoda nation—he does not specify which one—is the focus of Bert’s humour. He recalls that this “buck” came to see his mother for help, wanting “medicine for a sore throat” (16). His mother “mixed up a strong mustard plaster, out of flour, mustard and water,” Bert explains, and “on returning to camp, instead of applying it to his chest, [the man] ate it. The next morning he was back looking for more hot medicine which needless to say he did not get” (16). Clearly, his impressions of the “Indians” of his imagination were not positive.

To set the scene for another anecdote, Bert uses the convention of unspecified time, a temporal reference to a kind of non-linear, public, mythic, or vaguely defined past (Ricoeur 175). “One time some Stonies were camped near by,” Bert begins, and one of the “squaws came over to see my mother,” her fingers wrapped in “a blood stained rag” (*Spitzee* 16). Apparently, she “had amputated them at the second joint that day with her knife, in mourning for two of her relatives that had died” (16). Thus, he insinuates, his mother was forced to nurse the woman’s self-inflicted injuries. The grotesque in Bert’s anecdotes demarcates the differences between Indigenous peoples and Anglo-Canadians, to imply that the settlers had superior intelligence and skills in reasoning in comparison to “Indians,” who were ignorant and superstitious. Indeed, he conveys the impression that Indigenous peoples are savage. He also implies a social structure based on charity; his mother assumed the role of benefactor from whom the Stoney woman sought help in her time of need.

At times, Bert adopts the voice of a narrator who presumes to present Indigenous peoples in a favourable light. For example, he praises the “Stoney Tribe” for their moral fortitude, piety, and sobriety. “During the time that the Plains Indians were being debauched by the American whisky traders,” Bert observes, “the Stonies had remained aloof in their mountains. They were Christianised by the McDougall Missionaries at Morely and quite a few of them were named after the Apostles. They were a fine tribe and none of them were addicted to liquor” (*Spitzee* 13). He draws from Weinard’s oral history of the whisky trade to discuss the role the trade forts played in the debauchery of other nations, in the formation of High River before Confederation, and in the installation of the North West Mounted Police as law enforcers in the district.

Weinard participated in the trade of wolf pelts prior to his establishment of the Riverbend Ranch. In his semi-fictional depiction of whisky forts and trading, Weinard refers to the conflicts that resulted between the traders and the “Injuns” (“Whiskey” 171). Bert identifies one trader as John Evans, who “staged the Cypress Hills Massacre in 1873,” which was one of several conflicts (171). “‘Liver-Eating’ Johnson,” a trader, participated in another conflict and boasts that he and fourteen other wolfers and traders fought “‘Injuns’” and “‘killed thirty-six and wounded sixty’” (qtd. in Sheppard 170). “Johnson received his nick-name by killing an Indian and supposedly eating his liver,” Bert states (170). He goes on to relate the Indian fighter’s yarn in detail, supposedly quoting Johnson, “a big, burly individual, with a bushy beard and a heavy mat of hair on his chest” (170). Johnson provides a visceral image of himself “‘dancing around’” on the “‘Injun’s

body” before “scalp[ing] him” (qtd. in Sheppard, “Whiskey” 170). Bert’s retelling of the story with embellishment, including his use of the grotesque, appears to be meant to evoke laughter, for he implies a kind of irony as the tables are turned and Johnson triumphs.

Key also learned stories about “Indians” from her mother, who, Key recalls, compared them to the gypsies that roamed the country lanes in England “thieving and begging” (79). Relating her encounters as childhood experiences, Key disseminates negative views of Indigenous peoples as being fearsome. Moreover, employing the voice of a child narrator, Key leaves her prejudice unexamined and unquestioned as an adult. “Mother was afraid of the Indians,” Key observes (79). “Shortly after we had arrived at Strathmore,” she relates, her mother and Boppo, their domestic servant, were startled by “two tall Indian men” who came into the kitchen where they were working and stood close behind them “without making a sound,” then “calmly turned round and walked out” (79). This anecdote is another example of what McPherson calls “domestic intrusion narrative” in which the authors are, supposedly, “trapped in their own homes by uninvited and usually unwanted Aboriginal guests” (“Home Tales” 224-25). Key identifies the people who camped nearby as “Crees and Stonies, Blackfeet and Bloods, the true Red Indians of the Western Plains,” and describes the men as “tall and proud with aquiline features, and the women good looking, at least in their younger years, but they were aloof and had little to do with white settlers” (79). Key’s stories, like Bert’s Indian tales, are founded on and promote racist ideologies.

Key writes yet again in her childlike persona about being frightened by a mysterious “tall Indian,” whom she and her sister perchanced to meet on the prairie one day while they were on a picnic outing with their parents (75). As she and her sister explored a graveyard, which, her father reasons, must have been on a reserve, they turned to find a horse standing motionless “with a tall Indian sitting on it, bareback.” She embellishes her story by emphasizing the stealth of the horse and rider, which “were not more than a couple of yards from us but we had not heard a sound.” Key adds suspense to the scene by interjecting that the man’s “face [was] quite expressionless” and his “straight mouth so motionless he might have been a carved statue” (75). Such description brings to mind the image of the *cigar store Indian*. “It would have been hard to tell whether he was laughing at us, or preparing to scalp us,” Key maintains (75). Later, Key recalls, her father found out from an undisclosed source that the cemetery into which they had intruded while on their picnic had been part of “a Roman Catholic mission” (77). Thus, she concludes her anecdote by tempering it with a bit of history learned, perhaps, in her adulthood. Throughout the chapter, however, she indulges in a fanciful recreation of the scene in which she emphasizes her fears of Indigenous people from a naïve childlike perspective.

Like the pioneer memoirists in my study, Hiemstra employs a childlike voice when recalling her fear of being scalped by the local “Indians” (20-21). She identifies the source of her fears as the children’s stories she had read or heard when she was a little girl in England. As an adult, she did not question this fear. Nor did she temper her story with anthropological or historical information about

the region's indigenous inhabitants, perhaps because little material was available at the time she wrote. Rather, texts about Indigenous peoples published in the late twentieth century continued to promote mythical representations. For example, in 1975, shortly after Canada's Centennial and around the time prairie pioneers were writing their accounts of homesteading, Colin Taylor produced *The Warriors of the Plains*, which presents caricature-like figures of Indigenous peoples.

Like other memoirists, Hopkins, too, attests to fearing that "Indians" might scalp her. In an anecdote about her first encounter with her Nakoda neighbours, she relates that, one day, while she was alone while the men were haying miles away, she received an unexpected visit from Peter Bearspaw and one of his friends (12). "Visions of all the stories I had read of Red Indians, war whoops and scalping, rushed through my mind," she writes, when she found these two strangers at her door (12). Hopkins's personal interactions with her Nakoda neighbours and the meaningful relationships she developed with them dispelled the unrealistic views spawned by literary depictions of caricatures. When Bearspaw brings his wife Peggy, his children, and various members of his extended family to stay and work on the Enmore Ranch, Hopkins becomes cognizant of the discrepancy between what she had been told about "Indians" in books and what she comes to learn about them based on her actual experiences. Yet, her memoir reflects a common lack of understanding and appreciation for Indigenous culture. For example, she cannot understand why Peggy must set up the tepee (69). Mary C. Wright reveals in a study of gender roles among the women of "the Nez Perce in Idaho state, the Yakama of Washington state, and the Thompson, Lillooet, and

the Okanagan in Canada,” that control over the lodge was a source of power among women (1-2). In spite of the differences in geographic focus, Wright’s examination reveals that cultural patterns regarding gender roles have long existed among Indigenous peoples.

Hopkins’s most puzzling conundrum, perhaps, pertains to Bearspaw’s arrival at the ranch, having left Peggy alone in the bush to give birth to his next child. “But isn’t that the best way to have a baby?” Hopkins retorts; “No fuss, no doctors, or hospital, and certainly no expense. Just the bare ground, a tree for a roof, and a fire to make some tea! But for all that,” she concludes, “I think I would prefer a little more comfort” (113). In “Woman’s Lodge,” Wright emphasizes the importance of seclusion for Indigenous women during menstruation, during puberty training, and birthing, when “certain behaviors were proscribed, [including] exercise and healthful living” (1-11). Likewise, Patricia Jasen notes that traditional “pre-natal care included frequent monitoring and counseling by older women and midwives, an appropriate diet, and the insistence that women remain active” (398). Such were the means by which Indigenous women prepared themselves for childbirth prior to colonization⁴⁵ and medical intervention (398). No doubt, Hopkins had internalized both the notion of “the more passive role of many European women in childbirth” and its accompanied pain, and the myth of the “self-reliance of the aboriginal woman” and painless childbirth (Jasen 385). Selective accounts of Indigenous women’s practices during childbirth were

⁴⁵ Jasen employs the term “colonization” to mean “control extended by the Canadian government over aboriginal lands in the north and west after Confederation” (f.n. 389).

disseminated, Jasen continues, by travellers in the eighteenth century, who imagined an Indigenous woman as a “natural woman, governed by instinct, like the animals with whom she shared the wilderness” (389). While “missionaries seldom portrayed such people as truly wild or animal-like, as proselytization could only take place among beings who were clearly human and had souls to save,” explorers described Indigenous peoples as savages, which, she asserts, “accentuate[d] the division between the worlds of the colonizer and the colonized” (385). This division is made clear in Hopkins’s text.

Jasen points out that the robustness of Indigenous women as a result of regular rigorous activity may have been the reason they frequently did not require medical assistance during parturition. “Although women [in the 1990s] have acknowledged the benefits of hospital delivery in difficult cases,” she observes, the general feeling is that “problems in childbirth are often [due] to a loss of bodily strength resulting from the decline of traditional occupations, a reliance on ‘white’ food, and a general lack of pre-natal care” (398-99). She stresses that maternal roles among Indigenous women have been shaped by centuries of family practices and that a “culture of childbirth” included the assistance of trained midwives; yet, in the accounts of explorer Samuel Hearne, for example, “the record is largely silent” (389). “Strength was associated with savagery, natural or animal instincts were emphasized, and the possibility that childbirth had a culture and a history,” Jasen remarks, was “not considered” (389). At that time, the late eighteenth century, “Europeans were still toying with images of wild women and the myth of

painless childbirth” (389).⁴⁶ Jasen’s research was conducted in the 1990s; in Hopkins’s lifetime, Indigenous studies were unavailable, even if she had chosen to learn about the cultural practices of her Indigenous neighbours. Hopkins does not appear to be so inclination.

McPherson refers to the “possibility that ‘woman to woman’ contact might have reconfigured the nature of relations between European/Indigenous peoples” in ways that differ from literary depictions of women’s experiences (223). Yet, she discovered that, in spite of their moments of direct personal contact, pioneer women did not openly write about the realities of such encounters. Rather, writing for pioneer women “produced a space of ‘woman to woman’ contact that named and celebrated pioneer women’s contributions to building settler society, while dismissing the complex economic and cultural strategies that brought First Nations neighbours to settler women’s doors” (236). Hopkins’s writing supports McPherson’s assertions. Rather than examine her prejudices toward the *Bearspaws*, she insinuates that the death of their newborn within a few weeks of its birth supports her judgment of the inadequacy of Peggy *Bearspaw*’s birthing place. Moreover, in spite of the fact that *Bearspaw* often remarks on his family’s lack of food and his children’s hunger, she fails to consider that the reason the newborn failed to survive might have been due to its mother’s malnourishment.

⁴⁶ While Jasen’s interrogation of the term *animal* seeks to disassociate it from Indigenous women who took active roles in preparing for and during childbirth, a posthumanist perspective seeks to recuperate the term unburdened by negative connotations by promoting the acceptance of the fact that humans are one species of animal.

Sarah Carter maintains that as late as the 1970s, the history texts “available provided very little insight into Canada’s First Nations” and there were no history courses offered at Canadian universities on Canadian Indigenous history (*Aboriginal* 4). The little knowledge Hopkins possessed shaped her perceptions so that her depictions of the Bearspaw family are devoid of even the thinnest veil over her disapproval of the cultural practices of its members. Rather, she openly mocks them, referring to the children sometimes as “kiddies” and sometimes as “beggars” who wait at the door for bread and honey in the same way that her dogs wait for scraps (68). Hopkins wonders whether “there will be much honey left when these little beggars are gone” (68). Responding to the family’s poverty with derision, she reacts to Bearspaw’s requests for food by ridiculing his broken English, mimicking his speech in much the same way that Key mimicks that of the Chinese cook in Strathmore. Hopkins states that he “always starts every preamble with ‘Peggy him say’” that they have no tea, sugar, and so on (68). Hopkins explains that she “had been warned not to be too generous for they are as incorrigible beggars” (68). One risked scorn for becoming an Indian apologist. Thus, Hopkins remains aloof in her memoir and holds strongly to her British sense of superiority rather than suffering the penalty of losing the esteem of her Anglo-Canadian community were she to show affection for the Bearspaws.

Carter observes that censorship of accounts thought to be sympathetic to Indigenous peoples was not uncommon in the settlement period. She cites the case of Theresa Delaney and Theresa Gowanlock, whose stories of interactions with Indigenous peoples were “carefully constructed to serve certain interests while

condemning others” (*Capturing* 49). The women, having been taken and held captive in Big Bear’s camp for two months, had made initial statements about “their relatively good treatment,” Carter asserts, but their stories were later revised to represent “their captivity as a tale of barbaric savages and helpless white women” (86). She demonstrates that pioneer life writing can be put into the service of upholding hegemony when it has been edited to conform to colonial ideologies in its preparation for publication.⁴⁷ As Antonio Gramsci reminds us, hegemony is a variable mixture of coercion and consent (673). A predominant collective strategy in Canada, Carter’s interpretation suggests, was coercion through censure to silence settler community members who recognized and attempted to publish testimonies of the injustices the government inflicted on Indigenous peoples.

In a moment of self-reflection in which Hopkins drops her colonial pretensions, she admits that, in spite of the extra labour and cost of feeding the Bearspaw clan, she was both glad for their company and for their help with brush cutting (79). When they leave, she remarks that she “quite miss[es] the children hanging around the back door seeing what they could devour. I sent the last of the honey down to the camp for them” (79). No doubt, when Hopkins revised her letters in the mid-twentieth century, for people in Hopkins’s social circle, a stigma attached to friendships with Indigenous peoples still existed. Perhaps, social stigma

⁴⁷ Social discrimination based on a settler’s empathy for the colonized is demonstrated in *Out of Africa*, Isak Dinesen’s semi-autobiographical account of her life in Kenya. In an account of a Kikuyu woman experiencing complications during child birth, Dinesen recalls that she sought help from a local doctor. When he comes to the aid of the woman and saves her life and the life of the newborn, he tells Dinesen afterward “not to let that sort of thing occur again,” that is, not to call him to treat a Kikuyu woman because, after all, “he had before now practised to the Elite of Bournemouth” (269).

is the reason that, despite the fact that the Sheppards welcomed Rider into their family activities and appreciated his help with the chores, Bert still refers to “Indians” in general as nameless and faceless squaws and bucks. There is no definitive proof of this being the case; one can only speculate. Yet, there is an observable growth of respect for Indigenous peoples demonstrated in the language of those who conduct research on indigenous history and culture (which perhaps presages an increase of respect among the populace). For example, in her 1980’s research on indigenous social structure, subsistence practices, and land usage, Elizabeth Furniss refers to the “Shuswap”; however, in an article published a decade later, she refers to the Secwepmc, employing the term this First Nation uses to describe itself. I discuss Furniss’s observations in the following section. To Hopkins and Bert Sheppard, the idea of referring to their Indigenous neighbours in any way other than with condescension appears incredible.

This attitude is predominant in Bert’s anecdote in *Spitzee Days* about a family named “Bearpaw” which is, undoubtedly, the same family to which Hopkins refers. Weinard knew the Bearspaws well and possessed a great deal of knowledge about indigenous culture, for, according to *Leaves from the Medicine Tree*, he grew up “visiting and playing” with the “Indians from up country” who “camped near the Weinard home,” and learned “the Sioux language” (44). Weinard’s wife reportedly breast-fed two Bearspaw infants when their own mothers had no milk (46). Mrs. Weinard nursed one “puny little fellow” named “KING” Bearspaw, who eventually grew into a tall and robust adult (*Leaves* 46). King Bearspaw and his car serve as a vehicle for Bert’s anecdotes. He begins by

describing the Nakoda transporting their belongings “when they were moving to a new location” (15). He writes: “It was a sight” to see the “squaws with papooses on their backs, jogging along on old cayuses, whipping away with wooden handled quirts, loaded democrats, kids on ponies, some driving loose horses, all strung out for half a mile” (15-16). Later, the Stonies traded their horses for “old cars” that were mere junk, Bert continues, and then they “were just about afoot” (16). King Bearspaw was persuaded by a less than reputable car dealer (Bert’s brother, George, perhaps) to trade fine horses for an old and unreliable automobile. Relating the scene as King engages several “bucks” to pull his jalopy with ropes and horses to get it started, Bert implies that the foolish man ought to have known better than to trade horses for cars. The lesson to be learned from this is, Bert states, mimicking a Confucian proverb: ““man that buys old car, finds it hard to drive bargain”” (16). His anecdote is, of course, racist on many levels, for he ridicules the Nakoda for their supposed stupidity and the Chinese for their broken English.

A comparison between Bert’s tales about mythical or imaginary “Indians” and references to Rider in the Sheppard journals reveals a significant difference. The imaginary Indians that populate Bert’s imagination are concepts spawned from racist ideologies, while Rider was someone, a living human being, who existed in and shared the worldly space of Bert’s life experiences. The Sheppard journals reveal Rider not as a static figure, but as a man who changed and aged over the many decades the authors knew him. There is no sense of movement toward death in Bert’s and Hopkins’s anecdotes. Even when the authors convey a

sense of endearment toward Indigenous peoples, they portray them as buffoons. Their stories, whether consciously designed or not, serve to establish the authors' sense of superiority over them.

Sponte Sua Analogies and the Exclusion of Indigenous Peoples

Another way that pioneers establish superiority over their Indigenous neighbours is to write about their settlement experiences in georgic literary style, emphasizing the themes of georgic poetry: "Golden Age [...] analogies," "the happiness of country life," and "hunting" (Fowler 16-17). In georgic literature, hunting is depicted as a gentleman's sport. As Ben Jonson writes in his praise of Penshurst, the estate "never fails to serve [its owner] seasoned deer," while its river banks "yield [him] conies," "The purpled pheasant, with the speckled side;" and "The painted partridge" (20-29). Hunting and fishing were sports that the Sheppard men and people of their social circle seem to have enjoyed a great deal. Joseph Limoges, for example, was a "keen sportsman and enjoyed duck-shooting" (*Leaves* 88). He established "a small lodge at Big Lake, east of High River," where he "entertained many distinguished [sic] guests during the shooting season," including "Lord Lascelles, aide-de-camp to Earl Grey, then Governor-General of Canada" (88). Historian Tina Loo observes that, at the turn of the twentieth century, the Canadian west became a popular site for hunting among middle-class sportsmen. These elite members of European and American society sought to assuage their "modern malaise" in places like Banff National Park by embracing "the primitive and the outdoors" (304, 306).

The Sheppards identify by name many sportsmen who visited the Riverbend Ranch and ventured out on daily excursions to hunt and fish in the foothills and Rocky Mountains. Henry Sr.'s journals indicate that Bert hunted with them, mostly for venison. Bert was the only active hunter in the family, although there is mention of his brother, George, hunting occasionally for deer and moose. Bert took up hunting when he was in his teenage years. On September 5, 1919, his father noted that "Bert went shooting with Justin Freeman and shot two ducks," and on September 14, he went "duck shooting with Damont and got four nice ducks." Bert's journals reveal that he continued the practice in the 1930s. He wrote on November 9, 1938: "Fred Crawford and myself went to cabin. Fred shot a deer in the afternoon, started snowing 9 P.M." The next day he wrote: "Foot of snow in the morning. Helped Fred pack out deer. Afternoon left for Pattersons, snowing and blowing." For Bert, the recreational sport allowed him to socialize with other men who "defined themselves as a skilled, self-reliant, self-controlled, chivalrous risk-takers" (Loo 305), much like the cowboys, firefighters, and loggers with whom Bert found amity and self-identified. The hunters to whom Loo refers also sought to form alliances. Unlike Bert's companions, they were members of an "intellectual elite" (300). They were men who believed their "'over-civilization' had resulted in a loss of the very feelings that made a man a man: courage, aggression, mastery" (300). Thus, they set out on month-long forays into the wild, hoping to revitalize themselves, Loo argues, by experiencing the "many trials and tribulations" of hunting (305).

Hunting was a “bourgeois recreation” that came to “symbolize Europe’s imperial power and its racial superiority” (299). It was, for the middle-class man, an activity designed for “spiritual and corporeal regeneration” (299). Sportsmen hunted not to procure fresh meat; they went after grizzly bears, moose, mule deer, and caribou for their heads, horns, and hides, and disdained the “lowly ‘pothunter’ who killed for his own subsistence” (307). Contrary to these views, Bert and Henry Sr. reveal that game meat supplemented their family’s regular diet. Henry Sr. had no aversion to hunting, and saw it also as a good form of entertainment. Moreover, he enjoyed receiving venison from friends who hunted. On November 1, 1933, he acknowledged that “Leo Rider came with some deer meat.” For his own amusement, however, he seemed to prefer fishing and frequently wrote about catching fish in his leisure time. In an entry for August 26, 1907, he recorded that in the “Afternoon [he] went to catch sourfish,” while two visitors to the Cottonwood Ranch, “Nelson and Cyril went shooting Cyril got 5 ducks.” Likewise, he wrote on July 15, 1908, that he “Drove Bee George Bertie and W Morley to Burkes for picknick, a pleasant time was had! cought 10 fish.”

Siksika and Nakoda people living in the region of southern Alberta were not imagined as participating in hunting for sport; rather, their form of hunting was deemed a subsistence practice made redundant by the allotment of governmental provisions. Wangler observes that Nakoda hunters were legally barred access to traditional hunting territory with the establishment of Banff National Park in 1885

(63).⁴⁸ In fact, park officials like George A. Stewart and civil servant W. F. Whitcher actively sought to remove the Nakoda people from the park and prevent their further use of the land as a resource (62). Regardless, even after “having entered into a treaty in 1877 and being granted a reserve around Morleyville mission,” Wangler observes, “the Stoneys continued to travel to the mountains to hunt and pray” (62). Whitcher branded these Nakoda hunters ““stragglers and deserters from their own reserves,”” where, he claimed, ““they are well cared for in food and clothing at the public expense”” (qtd. in Wangler 62). Whitcher seems to willfully obfuscate the injustices done to Indigenous peoples when they were placed on reserves and were prevented from continuing their traditional practices of hunting game. Moreover, he ignored the intrinsic value and satisfaction that hunting provides for both Indigenous and Euroamerican inhabitants of the region. Yet, he recognized the value of hunting for sport, at least when it was the sport of gentlemen. Wangler argues that government officials chose “to restrict tribal access to their traditional hunting grounds in the park” because they “fear[ed] that the Stoneys would [...] deplete game stocks that would attract hunters from around the world,” (62).⁴⁹

Loo maintains that, to the bourgeois hunters who took guided trips into the mountains in search of trophy specimens, “killing for food was not only a marker

⁴⁸ Common labourers, like loggers, prospectors, and the men who worked on the railway, who hunted to feed themselves, Loo observes, were also branded as poachers (308).

of class, but something ‘savages’ did to feed” themselves (309). Ironically, the killing of game animals for their heads and horns “was considered provident” consumption by non-Native hunters, “while productive consumption was deemed decadent” (309). Loo exposes a practice of conspicuous consumption advocated by early twentieth century sportsmen that echoes and, perhaps, has similar foundations to themes of conspicuous consumption found in georgic verse. Hunting is a georgic theme, for it was one of the pastimes in which gentlemen engaged on English estates.

It is unsurprising, then, that attitudes pioneers convey toward their Siksika and Nakoda neighbours in their memoirs are negative, for government policies at the time of settlement formalized the oppression and legalized the restrictions of Indigenous peoples. The Canadian legal system denied their intrinsic rights to seek and obtain the same enjoyment from life that was guaranteed to eastern-Canadian and European settlers in the region. Exposing his prejudice against Indigenous people in *Spitzee Days*, Bert Sheppard presents hunting and gathering as primitive subsistence practices when done by Indians. His racially biased and stereotypical images of Indigenous people betray either a lack of knowledge of their living conditions, or, perhaps, a kind of ambivalence, which was a prevalent attitude among members of his community. His choice of words in a commentary on the Nakoda and Siksika, whose reserves he visited on occasion, has racist overtones

⁴⁹ The decision bears some similarity to British laws that have, since the the Game Act of 1671, determined who had the right to hunt and who did not (Landry, *Invention* 73). The act “raised the property qualifications to lords of the manor and those who had a substantial income from landed property” (73). Subsequent bills modified restrictions, but they still resulted in the criminalization of those “who went after [certain game] without the permission of the landowner on whose land they were found” (74).

especially when he implies that their method of gathering and preserving food is a primitive behaviour motivated by appetite. This attitude is exemplified in his anecdote about the Stoney “squaws” who scavenged carcasses from the High River town dump.

When the practices of hunting and gathering are recorded in the Sheppard journals, they appear not as base subsistence practices, but as recreational activities that added luxuries to the family’s domestic economy. The Sheppards’ supply of berries was the result of their horticultural practices, for they annually grew raspberries and strawberries; yet, they also went out on the prairie to pick wild fruit. On July 20, 1937, Henry Jr. indicated that Ruth went “for a ride in evening,” while her mother “bottled 14 quarts *Saskatoons*.” On August 22, 1937, he wrote: “Ruth & I went up the brush road P.M. for Choke Cherries.” Thomson, Key, and Hopkins also exhibit georgic traditions when they write about the leisurely pastimes of berry picking and preserving of jams. In their narratives, the gathering the natural bounty of the land are *sponte sua analogies*. Berries are delicacies that augment their regular daily fare of meat and garden-grown vegetables. In their descriptions of the prairie yielding this luxury, it becomes a theme, such as those of estate poems, which, in the traditions of georgic literature, amplify “the estate’s plenitude of self-sufficient resources” and “unbought provisions” (Fowler 3). Typically, the memoirists and diarists exclude their Indigenous neighbours literally and metaphorically from such recreation, for berry picking is not a means of acquiring mere basic necessities; it is one of the ‘refined’ aspects of their domestic economy, that is, if it is prepared in proper English style.

Hopkins observes that there are many saskatoon berries on the ranch and in the region, but she does not appreciate them, nor does she count herself among the “great number of woman folk around here [who] can them by the gallon, with lemon or rhubarb” (82). With “sugar and cream eaten fresh from the bushes they are not too bad,” she notes with feint praise, “if you have nothing else.” She thinks even less of them when they are preserved by the “Stoneys.” She explains to Gill that “Peter told me that the Stoneys dry them [...] and lay them out on blankets in the sun; after days they are shriveled up” (82). In a subsequent letter, in which she discusses the success of the baked goods she entered at the Priddis Fair, she genuinely praises the fruit and jam entries in the preserving classes, stating that “the exhibits were most professional looking, [with] the most delicious peaches, apricots and plums, deep purple grape jam and jelly, wild fruits, strawberries, raspberries and saskatoons” (91). The fair was “quite a social event so we dressed in our best ‘bib and tucker,’” she states, adding: “I think I will try my luck with something” the next year (91). There is a distinct difference between the positive tone Hopkins uses when she discusses the domestic economy of settler society and the subsistence practices of her Nakoda neighbours.

When Key writes about berry picking, it is to emphasize the plenitude of her family’s domestic fare. She depicts her family picking wild strawberries, which grew in “the little hollows where the prairie soil was thick and rich and moist,” and eating them with Devonshire cream that her mother made by setting “pans of milk on which the cream had risen, on the back of the stove to scald” (52). “No dessert could be finer than a bowl of wild strawberries with a dollop of Devonshire cream

on top,” she boasts. Key continues in this vein, when she recalls that there had been a huge crop of mushrooms that same “warm, wet June [...a] year or so after we arrived.” She and her family picked these mushrooms, and then ate them “fried in butter, and served with bacon or sausages, for breakfasts and suppers. Great pots of creamy mushroom soup bubbled on the cookstove, and Mother made quarts of mushroom ketchup, which was stored in crocks. This surprising bonus, ‘Manna from Heaven!’ said Father, only lasted a couple of days. Then the mushrooms dried up and disappeared” (52). Key’s anecdotes about picking fruit and vegetables growing wild on the prairies are typical of settlers’ memoirs. Employing her childlike voice, she portrays food gathering as the realization of a utopian world in which the land yields its bounty.

Thomson recalls the task of gathering food on the prairies as being tedious, especially when done under less than ideal conditions such as hot and dusty summer days. Her recollections still retain their georgic qualities, but they emphasize more the labour of a farmer than the leisure of the estate owner, who strolls about watching while the vines drop fruit into the baskets of the gatherers. Thomson admits that “saskatoon” berry picking was a chore that she found arduous, for the heat was uncomfortable, and “the bank was steep where the bushes grew and the footing uncertain,” so that she and her sisters “had to reach up and hold the branches down as we picked and our arms got scratched” (151). She recalls becoming ill from heat stroke and walking home by herself; however, she admits that she recuperated and later, along with her family members, “enjoyed the saskatoons” (155). She concludes her discussion of berry picking with practical

information: a summary of the recipes and ways of canning the berries for use “in the middle of winter” (155). “Nearly every canning booklet issued by the government for Western Canada still includes directions on how to can saskatoons,” Thomson states (155).

Thomson’s narrative voice changes when comparing the farming community’s methods of preparing saskatoon berries to Indigenous people’s methods. Her narrative loses its georgic tone, for berry picking is no longer an activity in which she participated; rather, she looks on as an observer and assumes an objective stance. She writes that the “Indians” preserved saskatoons by drying “them, and pound[ing] them with dry meat to make a berry pemmican. They also had a way of cooking them in layers between hot stones” (155). She adds authority to her historical overview by stating that “David Thompson, the great western explorer, gives an honored place to the saskatoon in his 1887-88 journal. He calls it ‘misaskutum’ berry and says among other things ‘It is very sweet and nourishing, the favorite fruit of small birds and bears’” (qtd. in Thomson 151). Thomson’s description of “Indians” drying saskatoons to make pemmican reflects the manner in which anthropological studies in school textbooks presented information in the latter half of the twentieth century.

An example is Taylor’s *The Warriors of the Plains*, a resource that was found until recently on library shelves in British Columbia high schools. In this text, Taylor discusses the methods of preserving food used by “Plains Indians,” such as the process of making pemmican. Taylor explains that meat was cut into strips that were then “flattened and placed into raw-hide containers” (30). “The

dried meat” was later pounded and mixed, often, “with pounded [choke] cherries or grapes. [...] The squaws were by no means careful about sanitation in the preparation and preservation of this pemmican,” he contends; thus, it was a great misfortune that a party of non-Indigenous travellers, who ran out of their own supplies while journeying to “Nez Percé country in 1836 [...] were forced to subsist on the same substance dried by the Indians” (30). Taylor’s contention that the travellers “were forced to subsist on the same substance,” has strong political implications, for his words present the traditional methods the Nez Percé as primitive, reflecting a common belief that arose with the industrialization of food production in the mid-twentieth century that commercially preserved and packaged meat, fruit, and vegetables were more sterile than homemade foodstuffs. Moreover, Taylor fails to acknowledge that techniques the Nez Percé employed were the result of a centuries-long history of cultural development. It is not surprising that Thomson disseminates such perspectives in her memoir for her writing and the writing of the other memoirists typically reflect ideologies of their period.

In a more respectful and nuanced discussion than Taylor’s account of Indigenous cultural practices, Furniss offers an anthropological study of gathering practices among the clans of the Secwepemc, the Tsilhqot’in, and Carrier in the 1700s and 1800s. She draws from the work of James Teit, who reports that “each Secwepemc band had its own commonly used hunting, trapping, and fishing areas, [...] and] these resources, plus berry-picking and root-digging grounds, were generally considered tribal rather than band property” (144). Teit maintains that

the ““hunting-territory, root-digging grounds, berrying-resorts, and camping-places in the mountains of each band belonged to the nobility of the band in common, but the trapping-grounds and fishing places were divided among the crest groups [clans] of the nobility of each band”” (qtd. in Furniss 145-46). Furniss asserts that evidence of the Secwepemc’s adoption of clans and ranked classes reveals “key cultural traditions” that were disrupted when “colonial administrators and officials who sought to implement government policy and legislation” to appropriate Secwepemc land, precisely to profit from the rich mining resources, forced “the sudden and unprecedented loss of Secwepemc control over their territories” (147-48). Thus, she reveals the stability of long-established social structures and discloses the motive behind the misrepresentation of Indigenous culture. Furniss’s study brings to the forefront the dynamic and ongoing socio-political structure of the Secwepemc nation today and debunks the notion that colonial contact resulted in the permanent collapse of such structures. “Today,” she observes, Indigenous peoples “across Canada are actively seeking ways to restore viable, responsible forms of government within reserve communities, forms of government that will enable them to escape the constraints of the Indian Act and the Indian Affairs bureaucracy and to become self-regulating and self-sufficient” (164). Her study demonstrates that there is a long history of cultural practices among bands and clans and that these practices are connected to and shape contemporary self-identities among Indigenous peoples.

Dave Cunningham’s memoir *Making Do* is a self-portrait reflecting “cultural traits [that are not] set in the fixed tablet of tradition” (Bhabha,

Introduction 2). His text, rather, is an “articulation of difference, from [a] minority perspective” that “seeks to authorize *cultural hybridities* that emerge at moments of historical transformation” (2). Inadvertently, perhaps, Cunningham enacts what Slemon describes as “colonialist resistance” (23-24). Moreover, he endeavours to “recuperate those ‘authentic’ subaltern voices that colonialism has silenced” (Slemon 28). Presenting his life history as a book of recipes, Cunningham gives faces and names to Indigenous people, specifically, Cree, whose culinary arts are part of his upbringing and memories. Unlike the memoirs of Hopkins, Key, and Thomson, *Making Do* does not reflect georgic themes. Nor does it imply a sense of entitlement; rather, Cunningham admits to the necessity of picking and preserving fruit. Likewise, Leonard Senft explains that his mother “canned huge quantities of vegetables and berries for the winters—at least 120 to 150 quarts of blueberries alone!” (40). “If mom hadn’t canned,” he states, “we wouldn’t have had fruit in the winter” (40). He lists the many kinds of berries and other fruit that were free for the picking and that were staples in his household: apples, which were sliced and dried “in the sun,” raspberries, saskatoons, cranberries, crabapples ... and rhubarb. Rhubarb with cherries, rhubarb with carrots ... rhubarb with anything” (38-39). Senft’s employment of humour rescues his memoir from becoming a tale of woe. Like Senft, Cunningham presents his family’s domestic practices as common to prairie inhabitants who “made do” with the food that was available. There is value in reading pioneer accounts written by such authors, for a perspective of the grass roots of society brings an additional layer of analysis to studies of settlement.

Cunningham's memoir is unique in its references to the "potions" his grandmother made "from everyday things from the house or farm" to cure dry skin and coughs, to kill lice, and to soothe bee stings (53). Manuel and Posluns claim that, prior to colonization, Indigenous peoples "had developed a highly sophisticated use of medicinal herbs. In the four hundred years since Europeans came to this continent, there has not been a single medicinal plant discovered that was not known to the Indian people of the region in which that plant grows" (14-15). Alex Johnston catalogues the many indigenous species that had medicinal and nutritional properties in *Plants and the Blackfoot*, published in 1982. In contrast, in *Farm Weeds of Canada*, published by the Canadian Department of Agriculture in 1909, George H. Clark and James Fletcher identify indigenous herbs referring to the "injury" they cause in terms of their detriment to the growing of crops, and prescribing the "remedy" as the techniques suitable to suppress their growth (57). Indigenous plants do not fit into the vision of prairie shaped by georgic traditions. Viewed by farmers as contaminants in fields of grain, they were poisoned or cut down. Henry Jr. documented his continual efforts to combat weeds. On July 14, 1938, he wrote: "Ruth & I pulled stink [weed] East by Chinks P.M. Ruth pulled more stink. I hilled spuds." On August 1, 1939, Henry Jr. "pulled sow Thistle in alfalfa field seems to be all over it." He practiced summer fallowing and crop rotation to control weeds—practices advocated in the *Georgics*. Significantly, these methods are now thought to be sustainable.

In spite of the fact that Henry Jr. did not recognize the medicinal or nutritional qualities of indigenous prairie plants, his journals reflect practices that

are valued today. Gardiner's letters and the Sheppards' journals exemplify the georgic traditions in their accounts of husbandry and agricultural practices. Regardless of this value, they represent a prairie environment from which Indigenous peoples were excluded as do Key's, Thomson's, Hopkins's, and Bert's memoirs, for they could not conceive of Indigenous peoples as possessing a wealth of knowledge about the prairie flora and fauna that was useful. Nor could they imagine "Indians" as farmers. Sarah Carter contends that Indigenous peoples "were not even recognized as having the capability to farm" (*Lost* 3). They were thought to be migratory hunters, a belief that was foundational to the prejudiced view of government officials like Hayter Reed (15). Reed, "an appointed Indian agent at Battleford in May 1881," claimed that the Indians' poverty came from their lack of desire to engage in farm labour (102).⁵⁰ There is evidence to the contrary, however. Carter identifies "the Plains Indians [as] among the earliest and largest groups to attempt farming west of the Red River Settlement" (3).

Manuel and Posluns offer an extensive list of vegetables that were integrated into the diets of North American colonizers. At the time of first contact, they state, "North American Indians were cultivating six hundred different types of corn; all the different kinds of beans known today [...]; potatoes; peanuts; and a host of other foodstuffs on which our present civilization is far more dependent than it is on whatever Europeans were eating before they got here. Nothing on this

⁵⁰ Daniel Francis implies that reducing Indigenous peoples to levels of impoverishment has long been a strategy Canada has employed to control, assimilate, and annihilate the indigenous population. He cites Hayter Reed, who was known as "Iron Heart because for economic reasons he stopped rations to starving people," as a perpetrator of acts of injustice and outright cruelty, tactics he employed to disempower Indigenous peoples (214).

list was then on their diets” (14). Moreover, they continue, the “preparation of ‘Boston-baked beans’ was taught by the Wampanoag Indians to the Pilgrims. Other east coast Indians taught Europeans to enjoy such dishes as clam chowder, oyster stew, baked pumpkin, cranberry sauce, and popcorn, and introduced them to squash, celery, buckwheat, maple sugar, pepper, chocolate, and tapioca. The list is virtually endless” (14). Anglo-Canadian immigrants enacted a seamless integration of indigenous fruit and vegetables into their diets and, rather than recognize their debt to Indigenous peoples for sharing knowledge of horticulture accrued over centuries and before first contact, settlers maintained myths of Indigenous peoples’ disinterest in farming, inability to make good use of the land and unworthiness of its possession.⁵¹

As I have discussed in this chapter, the Sheppard journals suggest that, while the authors flourished through their ranching operations and were able to enjoy their active, sporting lives, and even their physical labour, they disregarded the welfare of the Siksika and Nakoda living nearby in hardship. The Sheppards brought with them a kind of gentility in their manners and georgic traditions, which they practiced among members of their own social circle. Likewise, the memoirists, with visions of homesteading shaped by the georgic traditions, create life narratives that offer selective versions of themselves engaged in ‘civilized’

⁵¹ Landry describes a similar process of appropriation, which occurred in sixteenth century England when horse breeders blended Arabian and Turkish horses with British stock to produce the Thoroughbred, as “another chapter in the Orientalist romance, the English imperial appropriation of exotic ‘Oriental’ goods” (*Invention* 9). Her reference is, of course, to Edward Said’s postcolonial theories in *Orientalism* (n.60, 250-51). “One of the reasons that the assimilation of Eastern bloodstock appeared so seamless and aroused so little curiosity,” Landry argues, “was that Britons believed they had a right to the finest horseflesh, dating from time immemorial” (*Noble* 18).

domestic practices while Indigenous peoples engage in primitive subsistence practices. Designed to valorize their authors, these examples of pioneer life writing marginalize Indigenous peoples and exclude them from settlement history except as shadows or ignoble figures. We “live in an era of postmodern imperialism and manipulations by shape-shifting colonial powers,” Alfred and Cornthassel assert; “the instruments of domination are evolving and inventing new methods to erase Indigenous histories and senses of place” (601). The settler narratives in my study are several of these instruments.

Conclusion

I conclude my study of the pioneer experiences of Claude Gardiner, the Sheppards, Joan Key, Monica Hopkins, and Georgina Thomson by reflecting on the function and forms of their respective manuscripts and the worldview they represent. My chosen primary texts – one set of journal letters, three sets of journals or diaries, five memoirs, and an amateur history – are distinguished by their fragmentation and discontinuity. As examples of the life writing of four male and three female prairie settlers, they challenge the notion that men’s life writing is necessarily cohesive and orderly and that women’s is innately formless. The numerous topics discussed in them—agriculture, travel, weather, domestic economy, community, education, church, and so on—have required their exploration through multiple lenses, including those afforded by Marxist and postcolonial theories and, especially, by phenomenology, which aids in examining the mundane details of the authors’ daily lives in the letters and journals. These lenses offer contrasting analyses of aspects of the texts that pertain to animal husbandry, environmental conditions, and the authors’ class and racial biases.

The pioneer accounts that have been examined here are chronicles, confessions, and *apologia* – personal histories that seek to demonstrate or realize the integrity of the authors. Such functions overlap, Hart states, and in practice, “they complement or succeed or conflict with each other” (491-92). Gardiner, a refined Englishman and skilled equestrian, employed his letters to complain about his mistreatment as a hired hand when he first arrived in Alberta and to assert his self-identification as his employer’s equal. He also outlined his plans to purchase a

ranch of his own and improve it to realize his dream of becoming a gentleman rancher. His acquisition of the Wineglass Ranch brought him a quality of life and equality in his social relationships that his class and British public school education assured him he deserved.

As Gardiner did, Thomson utilized her life writing to compensate for what she believes to be a lack of respect shown to her by those in her social sphere. “Like many adolescents,” she relates, “I used to feel sorry for myself, and think that my family and others lacked sympathy and understanding” (108). She confesses that she had been quite “fat after [her family] came out west,” but when she took on the role of schoolteacher at sixteen years of age, and rode her horse to and from school, she transformed her self-image, and boasted: “I lost twelve pounds in weight which pleased me very much” (108, 259). Focusing on the positive and joyful aspects of growing up on a prairie farm, Thomson describes how she grew into a robust, capable, and self-assured youth and young woman, not through her life writing, as Buss suggests was the case for pioneer women, but as a result of her experiences, her labour, and her leisure activities, especially, her equestrian pastimes.

Key’s memoir also exemplifies *apologia*. As a means for her to reclaim her family’s former social status (and hers by association) as members of the British landed gentry, Key foregrounds her parents’ British heritage and the customs and manners they tried to maintain on the prairies. She emphasizes her family’s comfort, as well, and the happy times with the many animals that shared the golden years of her childhood and youth. Similarly, Hopkins crafts a flattering

self-portrait as an Englishwoman who retains her dignity and refined social practices in spite of her relocation to an Alberta horse ranch. She demonstrates her independence by riding horses and her sense of high social status by writing about it. Equestrian interests are one of the significant commonalities shared by my subjects. A second commonality is that they were life writers, and a third is that they lived agrarian lives shaped and guided by the georgic traditions. Georgic themes are predominant in all of my primary texts, whether they surface in the Sheppard journals as accounts of labour and empirical data; whether they serve as an ethical foundation for the management of horses and cattle as they do in Bert Sheppard's memoirs and Gardiner's letters; or whether they are embodied in a literary form as they are in Thomson's, Key's, and Hopkins's memoirs.

Georgic themes are also evident in the manner in which the authors categorized their agricultural activities. Hopkins, Gardiner, and Henry Sr. referred to their agricultural procedures as ranching; Key's family viewed Radfords as a kind of well-rounded estate; and the members of Thomson's family imagined Parkland as a farm. Henry Jr. would probably have called himself a farmer, earning his income more from his dairy cows than from beef, but Bert's definitive self-identification was a rancher. Nonetheless, all of my subjects raised cattle. All of them raised pigs and poultry, too. Bert was the only one who raised rabbits. By Elofson's definition, all of the subjects in my study ran mixed-farming operations ("Not" 207-09). Bert would have balked at the idea, for a farmer, he claims, wore "striped bib overalls" or "Teddy Bear suits," while cowboys wore boots and Stetsons (*Spitzee* 47). Bert had, no doubt, internalized the ideal that Elofson

identifies as ““pure ranching, ”” because this practice and the myths that went along with it, “deeply, and, perhaps permanently, affected the culture of the west” (“Not” 213).

Bert used his journals to record his daily ranching activities, but he also charted a kind of progress in them as he developed his skills and became a successful cattleman. Thus, he recreates himself as a figure of *prosopopeia*, an autobiographical trope (de Man 926). Bert’s memoirs are far from formal autobiographies, however, for they lack unity; yet, Bert does attempt to craft a cohesive portrayal of his life. Linda Anderson is critical of men’s employment of forms of life writing like autobiography, which, she asserts, has been “implicitly bound up with gender,” underpinning “the centrality of masculine [...] modes of subjectivity” (3). Smith and Watson claim that one use of autobiography “has been as a master narrative of Western rationality, progress, and superiority” (113). Moreover, they contend, autobiography has been employed to celebrate “the autonomous individual” (3). It is often for this purpose that Bert employs his memoirs and, to some extent, his TL Ranch history. Explored through a lens shaped by phenomenology, the Sheppard journals reveal the need for cooperation during times of illness or accident, at least among those within their elite sphere of British expatriates and equestrians.

Exploring enactments of self-identity creation in Bert’s life writing brings to mind several questions when considering the discrepancies that exist between his self-portrait in his memoirs and the terse, empirical representations of his behaviour, daily activities, and mannerisms documented in his and his father’s

journals. Two of them are: Do a writer's memories about his or her life change when they are shaped into narratives as Dillard suggests? Did Bert come to see himself as the actor in his life dramas or did he look at his anecdotes merely as stories told about a long ago past? One thing is certain: Bert indelibly concretized his self-identity as a ranch owner by writing his unpublished manuscript, "TL Ranch 1887"—a combined autobiography and ranch history—and by carving the cover out of wood. Other important questions that arise from my study are: What effect does an institution like the Bert Sheppard Stockman's Foundation Library and Archives have upon the public's perception of settlers when it supports and propagates aggrandized portraits of such individuals? And what effect does a scholar like me have upon myths of settlement when I deconstruct settlers' larger-than-life literary self-portraits?

My experiences while researching the Sheppard journals and Bert's unpublished history offer impressions that begin to answer some of these questions. The TL Ranch 1887 manuscript is stored in the Stockmen's Foundation Library and Archives on a library shelf, catalogued, and in order according to the call numbers of the collection. Indeed, the entire library and archive is organized to create certain impressions. It is no coincidence that the personal remains of its benefactor dominate the large single room. The facility emanates a distinctly masculine, even patriarchal, air, as does Bert's memoir; the bronze sculptures, paintings, sketches, saddles, and bridles housed in it are venerated. According to a staff member, some patrons see Bert as a legendary figure to whom they come to pay homage (Wilson, Conversation). Hence, my research on Bert's unpublished

memoir constitutes an unwelcome intervention into the stories told by the text, for my analysis seeks to deconstruct the symbols of a way of life believed to be sacrosanct by the community of patrons whose support keeps the facility in operation. In spite of “the value of Western disciplinary formations and methods of archival research and material culture study,” which, Ruth B. Phillips maintains, should foster progressive views of artifacts, “Western ways of knowing have become inextricably interwoven” with those in the Stockman’s Foundation Library and Archives, resulting in the continued presentation of them through lenses shaped by “several centuries of [...] colonialism” (14).⁵² Moreover, there is resistance among the people responsible for maintaining the facility toward “rethinking definitions of authority, ‘expertise,’ and, consequently, the contributions that could be made by academically-trained specialists” (14). My goals in the work of interpreting Bert’s self-representation in the TL Ranch manuscript are contrary to those of the institution.

In contrast, my research on the Sheppard journals is condoned by the curators and staff of the Museum of the Highwood, where they are housed, and I have been able to carry out my work in the kind of professional atmosphere that I expect to find at regional libraries and archives. The museum associates afford me unfettered access to the materials and freedom to analyze them without coercion. The lack of organization in the housing of the Sheppard journals, moreover, precludes shaping my interpretation. Much like the journal contents, which are an

⁵² Ruth B. Phillips refers to Western ways of looking at Indigenous archival materials, which she contends, have been shaped by colonial attitudes and are not interpreted by knowledge drawing from “traditional Indigenous perspectives” (14).

eclectic gathering of details, the manuscripts are deposited in no particular order in the museum's vault. There, they are preserved in cool dry air, but there has been no attempt by the museum operators to display them. Rather, the vault's dimness obscures them. The difficulty in reaching the books, piled high on dark and musty shelves, is surpassed only by the challenge of reading their often illegible pages. Yet, perusing the vast records of the Sheppard diarists has been, for the most part, an enjoyable experience, much like pleasure afforded by excursions into amateurish antique shops in which the items, displayed in disarray, preclude influencing the viewer's sense of their significance. In any case, my perseverance has been rewarded amply by the interesting discoveries I have made with each foray into these previously ignored manuscripts.

Among the important features that I have disclosed in my study of the Sheppard journals and, indeed, all of my primary documents, is the pride the authors took in their well-bred horses. The journals portray horses, not as beasts of burden, like the draft animals used by farmers who sought to increase their wealth by growing wheat, but as partners in work and companions in equestrian sports. The Sheppards, especially, spent a good deal of their leisure time riding horses for pleasure. They depict horses as individual animals. They portray cattle, too, as distinct creatures. In his journals, Bert documented the grooming and training of his prize-winning cattle, such as the show calf he took to the Calgary Exhibition on March 26, 1938, and recorded their success. He also noted his purchase of bulls at livestock shows, such as the "Colbert Bull" he bought that year "for seven hundred dollars. Good bulls selling high" (4.1.1938). Bert and other members of the

ranching community appear to have based their pride and reputations on the fact that their selective breeding techniques yielded exceptional bovine and equine specimens. Such were their utopian aspirations. The utilization of language related to selective breeding surfaces in the rhetoric of social reformers like Nellie McClung, who promoted the eugenics plan in her endeavour to achieve another utopian dream: the creation of a population of ideal Canadian citizens. It was an agenda veiled under the guise of the first wave of feminism (Devereux 44).⁵³ Studies of the lives of pioneer ranchers and farmers have yet to give due attention to the significance of selective breeding or to the importance of the relationships that Anglo-Canadian settlers had with farm animals. Fine blooded livestock, especially horses, were and still are symbols of wealth and social status. The horse, like the Canadian beaver, is an ideological manifestation, a “natural, self-evident sign of the nation” (Shukin 3), or cultural capital in Bourdieu’s words (71). Yet, when viewed phenomenologically, horses are literal animals that, for the Sheppards, Gardiner, Key’s family, the Thomsons, and the Hopkinses, were vital to their georgic lifestyles.

Another intrinsic component was property ownership, which elevated the status of these settlers from landless immigrants to a new kind of landed gentry. In the same manner in which country estates and houses were identified in England, the authors referred to their farms and ranches by name. This practice, imported to

⁵³ The Gardiner and Edwards family fonds note that Claude Gardiner’s mother-in-law, “Henrietta Muir Edwards [...] was convenor of laws of the National Council of Women for 38 years [...] and] was one of Alberta’s ‘Famous Five’ who fought to have Canadian women recognized as ‘persons.’” The “Famous Five” included Nellie McClung.

Canada, became a colonial strategy that served to promote settlers' self-identities as landowners' owners of prairie land. Pioneer accounts serve in similar ways; thus, they constitute colonial discourses. Functioning like a homestead surveyor's or colonist's map, which Ryan argues, "actively erases (and legitimizes the erasure of) existing social and geo-cultural formations," the verbal definitions of the authors' descriptions of their farms and ranches "consistently efface the Aboriginal groups [...] while carefully including locations of any white settlements" (116, 126). Ranch and farm houses, like the country house, are symbols, not only of entitlement and social status, but also of utopian desires. Utopian sentiments yield notions of exclusivity, Mumford cautions, for estates and country houses are "concerned not with the happiness of the whole community but with the felicity of the governors" (202). Their possession "is based upon privilege and not upon work" (202). Mumford points out that running a well organized country house requires hired help. He reasons that if luxurious living is the goal, "then there is really no limit to the business of getting and spending, and our lives become the mean handiwork of coachman, cook, and groom" (209-10). Some of the titles of these menial labourers changed when estate living was adapted to the prairie environment, yet, the roles they filled were similar and they were performed invisibly.

Georgic country house poems mystify and mask labour by "a simple extraction of the existence of labourers" (Williams 32). Likewise, settler narratives valorize and praise landowners for the productivity of agricultural enterprise and conceal the existence of menial labourers, who were essential to ensure the success

of the operations. The pursuit of comfort and prosperity is reflected in the terse entries of the Sheppard journals and Gardiner's letters, and is emphasized in the georgic themes of the women's memoirs. In these settlement accounts, hired hands are like the peasants in "To Penshurst," toiling for the benefit of those of higher social rank, but never expecting to gain a fair share of the profit earned at the expense of their labour. This injustice emerges again in the relationships between farmworkers and farm owners in today's industrial system of agricultural production. The profit-oriented motives of agribusiness operators is masked by an agrarian myth of the nobleness of farmwork whose roots, MacPherson and Thompson assert, reach back to the philosophies of nineteenth century religious and educational leaders in Canada (475), and to the "classical philosophy" of the Romans and the British moderns, such as Thomas Carlyle, who venerated farming (Jones 457, 467).

Speaking out against continuing conditions of inequity on farms and ranches and at the many other facilities categorized as agricultural industries, Kosta and Dunlop maintain that farm workers in Alberta are the only labour force without the benefits of health and safety regulations. They conclude that "the means of production are in the hands of those few who can manage a large capital investment, and who hire those who have only their labour to sell to plant, weed, hoe and harvest" (1). They argue, moreover, that farm workers face opposition to their demands for guaranteed safe and fair working conditions by the Alberta government, which favours large stakes holders over common labourers. They state that "no government agency is responsible for collecting data about working

conditions, and only a few health regions have a system for reporting agricultural injuries” (5). Thus, Dunlop has taken it upon herself to publicize her experiences as a farm worker. Personal testimony, a form of life writing, is crucial evidence of unfair, unethical, and hazardous labour practices in Alberta.⁵⁴

In his memoirs, Bert Sheppard contributes to myths that mask the exploitation of labourers and privilege employers by presenting cowboy characters as models of courage, skill, tenacity, and industry, and thus deserving of the land they ‘conquered’. As well, he masks the injuries suffered by hired hands by endowing these imaginary cowboys with superhuman capacities to endure pain. Regardless of the form of his life writing, however, he reveals the ideological foundations of agrarian myths. The Sheppard journals embody those georgic ideologies, yet, Henry Sr. and Henry Jr. openly discuss the ailments and injuries they and their hired hands suffered. Even so, recollections of suffering, including visceral details that add to the verisimilitude of the narrative, can serve to support claims of entitlement, especially, when they are used as evidence of the discomforts pioneers were forced to endure during their homesteading ventures. Hiemstra’s and Neatby’s accounts exemplify this kind of narrative.

The georgic lives of the pioneer writers in my study, in contrast, unfold as a kind of progress toward utopian goals as their families fenced and cultivated the prairie land. Their accounts represent successful settlement. Among the georgic

⁵⁴ Caren Kaplan claims that testimonies, prison memoirs, and other “out-law” genres enable “a deconstruction of the ‘master’ genres, revealing the power dynamics embedded in literary production, distribution, and reception” (208). She argues that such writing, in the service of feminist criticism “as activism, in an expanded transnational sense, will produce theories and methods of culture and representations grounded in the material conditions of our similarities and differences” (215).

themes they discuss are planting and harvesting crops and “*sponte sua* analogies” like hunting, fishing, and gathering (Fowler 16-17). Like many settlers, they gathered berries that grew wild on the prairies. Key is the only writer who mentions picking mushrooms one “warm, wet June” (52). These kinds of georgic topics are literary themes in Key’s, Thomson’s, and Hopkins’s memoirs, and are patterns of behaviour when inscribed in Gardiner’s letters and the Sheppard journals. Georgic practices are still highly valued today. They stem from venerated humanist traditions; yet, at the same time, their ascendancy through practice or performance on the prairies during settlement marked the erasure of the cultural traditions and subsistence practices of the Siksika and Nakoda people who had inhabited the region prior to the authors’ arrival. The Sheppard journals and Gardiner’s letters document that process as it occurred, while the memoirs constitute its re-enactment.

Agriculture was not the only settler enterprise that had an impact on Indigenous lives. Religious institutions attempted through coercion to assimilate Indigenous peoples. J. R. Miller notes that in the early twentieth century, the Anglican Church actively supported the goals of residential schools (937). Anglicanism also promoted notions of racial superiority (Rothblatt 135). The writers in my study presented themselves as members of an elite or chosen religious group. Hopkins was a church goer as was Thomson. Henry Sr.’s and Henry Jr.’s journals provide evidence of their lifelong connections to the Anglican Church and the authors’ participation in rectory meetings, social gatherings, Sunday service, and choir practice. For these settlers, religion converged with

georgic utopian ideals, for attendance at church was both a devotional and a social activity that served to shape their sense of self-identity as members of the hegemonic group. Yet, georgic and indigenous worldviews share a common reverence for the land.

Portraying the land as sacred, Blood Elder Pete Standing Alone states that it ““was put there by the Creator for our use, but only what we needed”” (qtd. in *Treaty 7 Elders et al* 83). Blood Elder Adam Delaney refers to the Bloods’ view of the land as a gift from “the Creator”: “We respected and protected this traditional territory with our minds and our hearts and we depended on it for [... everything] that we ever needed for our way of life” (qtd. in *Treaty 7 Elders et al* 85). The *Treaty 7 Elders* assert that communicating the concept of landownership during the treaty process was difficult because “no single person present could speak all of the languages of the people in attendance”; thus, it was “especially doubtful” that everyone understood the meaning of “words like ‘surrender’ or ‘cede’” when these words were spoken during treaty negotiations (124). Significantly, such “words did not exist in the various Aboriginal languages; the very concept of landownership, for example, was completely foreign to a number of the nations present” (124).

Land ownership is at the centre of the *Georgics*. There is still value in georgic traditions as a philosophical ideal, however. In a review of David Ferry’s recent translation of Virgil’s *Georgics*, Becker draws attention to the timeliness of renewed interest in the text and to the value of Virgil’s advice in today’s world. She compares Virgil to “our contemporary pastoralists—Maxine Kumin, Mary Oliver, Wendell Berry and others—who, in this age of genetically-engineered

food, habitat loss, and environmental degradation, write about rural places and subjects from a sustainability perspective.” Becker applauds Ferry’s translation for its “respectful attention to Virgil’s detail, [which] fixes our attention on the consequences of particular farming practices [...] includ[ing] methods promoted by the contemporary movement for sustainable agriculture.” She identifies a resurgence of interest in the *Georgics* coming at a time when we seek in literature, models that echo “the Edenic paradise Virgil evokes.”

Robert Stirling, in a study of environmental degradation as a consequence of the increasing control of food production by agribusiness conglomerates, asserts that we must look to the past to “reclaim the forgotten wisdom of previous generations of farmers, a knowledge built up from the hands-on experience of, for example, dry land farming, global markets, and creating ‘community’” (39). Gayton asserts that present-day farmers, Don and Dorothy Swenson of Moose Jaw—exemplars of agriculturalists who employ sustainable methods—base their knowledge on scientific research, but their practice of crop rotation as a means to improve soil fertility is something that early farmers knew intuitively (96). The Swensons’ rotation of alfalfa and wheat “allow[s] them to minimize the amount of tillage, build the nitrogen and organic matter levels in the soil, and reduce the amount of fallow time to a negligible amount” (93). It is for these purposes, no doubt, that Henry Jr. “plant[ed] Clover [...] Harrowed garden [Took?] harrow over to fallow” (5.13.1938). Crop rotation is advocated in Virgil’s *Georgics*. Henry Jr. also grazed livestock and spread manure on the fields to improve soil fertility, and used summer fallowing for weed control. Gayton does not mention the

Swensons grazing cattle on their fields as the Sheppards did, but their practice of crop rotation bears similarity.

The Sheppard journals preserve the all but forgotten wisdom of sustainable farming traditions and community cooperation. Moreover, the journals reveal that the Sheppard family practiced animal husbandry methods that were humane, much like those of the present-day ranchers interviewed by Bernard Rollin, who “see themselves as stewards of land and animals, [...and as] the standard bearers of the old husbandry ethic that society is trying to preserve” (55). Henry Klassen describes the ranching operations of the Macleays, the Chattaways, and the Blades, who, collectively, own and operate several cattle ranches, including the TL Ranch, as examples of ethically run family businesses (109). Klassen writes favourably about the operators of these small and medium size ranches in regard to their tending of cattle and horses, including winter feeding with hay grown and baled on the home ranches, and summer pasturing on the forest reserve (101-22). Their ranching methods, which are models of sustainability, resemble those of the Sheppards who tended their cattle and horses with care, fed them all winter long, and grazed them on the forest reserve in the summer. Part of Bert’s purpose in writing about his ranching operations is to document and preserve a traditional way of life that he believes is disappearing in the face of technological changes.

Settler narratives are stories about home and time and place. In *If This Is Your Land, Where Are Your Stories?*, Chamberlin emphasizes the importance of stories that “give meaning and value to the places we call home” (1). He also recognizes the value in hearing stories that are not ours, for “the strangeness in

other people's stories" makes us aware of the strangeness in our own (1). Life narratives, whether written or told orally, Chamberlin continues, are "ceremonies of belief as much as they are chronicles of events, even the stories that claim to be absolutely true" (2). Oral cultures, whose forms of imaginative expression are found mostly in speech and performance, he asserts, are rich in other "forms of writing, albeit non-syllabic and non-alphabetic ones: woven and beaded belts and blankets, knotted and coloured strings, carved and painted trays, poles, doors, verandah posts, canes and sticks, masks, hats and chests [which] play a central role in the cultural and constitutional life of these communities, functioning in all the ways written texts do for European societies" (19-20). These are things Hoskins defines as biographical objects, things that tell the stories of people's lives, that "anchor the owner to a particular time and place" (8). Comparative literary practices that incorporate phenomenological tools of analysis might serve to intervene and disrupt the normalization of settlement history and first hand accounts told by pioneers.

How things can tell stories for people of Indigenous heritage is beyond the scope of my investigation, however, for other than a brief mention of the life writing of Dave Cunningham, whose ethnicity is a mix of Cree and Scottish, my focus is on the histories told by settlers, not by the colonized. Rather, my investigation looks at the remnants of pioneer life, such as old farm equipment, which are on display at the Museum of the Highwood, and references to household goods in pioneer life writing. Read as phenomena in the Sheppard journals, such goods reveal the material conditions of the family's life. Yet, clothing, furniture,

riding equipment, and farm implements take on political power as symbols in pioneer memoirs. Examining them through a postcolonial lens reveals their function as metonyms, as literary devices that serve to emphasize not only their owners' cultural heritage and history, but also their social status. Part of my purpose in drawing attention to the common concerns of settlers and Indigenous peoples regarding land ownership and usage is to suggest that analyzing pioneer life writing through a phenomenological lens unearths the ideologies embedded in sub-literary and semi-fictionalized accounts.

My study determines that Gardiner and the Sheppard diarists embraced colonial attitudes during the time of settlement and engaged in the performative acts of erasing Indigenous culture. Nonetheless, examining settlers' writing using phenomenological tools of analysis has the potential to serve postcolonial interests by expanding knowledge of the daily lives of the first immigrant ranchers and farmers. Perhaps the most important purpose the journals and letters serve is to provide non-fictional representations of settlement experience to compare to anecdotal history and pioneer memoirs. In contrast to mythical representations, the Sheppard journals portray the authors as people with a multitude of personality traits of which we ought to be aware when studying historical personages. Memoirs promote myths of settlement and feature stereotypical figures, which foster disassociation among today's citizenry from the pioneers who were complicit in the subjugation of Indigenous peoples when they took up prairie homesteads. Likewise, identifying colonizers conceptually, as Day does, as "spatio-temporally delimited *discursive positions*, and not physical bodies" (14;

original emphasis), removes an element of personal responsibility for the continued oppression of Indigenous peoples in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Comprehension of the authors is furthered by identifying them, not as symbols of privileged immigrant settlers and not as ‘selves’, but as human beings (Bennett and Hacker 334). As such, the accounts of their lived experiences have the potential of engendering readers’ self-identification with pioneers and of evoking awareness of their shared ideologies.

Among the ideologies embedded in the manuscripts of these seven pioneer writers are their racial biases. Justifying their privileges and those of other expatriates and migrants from eastern Canada, they fail to imagine living in peaceful cohabitation with Indigenous peoples. The Sheppards divulge that, with the exception of assimilated “Indians” like Rider, their ideologically constructed georgic world of ranching was designed exclusively for them and their elite society of educated and literary settlers; it afforded no room for Indigenous peoples. The memoirists show similar disregard for their Indigenous neighbours. Rather than constituting “moves towards justice and positive integration,” they employ their narratives to put forth “new faces of colonialism” that “encroach on Indigenous sacred histories, homelands and cultural practices in somewhat familiar ways [...] to mask the ugly truths” (602). The seven authors also betray their class distinctions in their various letters, journals, and memoirs by employing them to assert claims of rank over their hired hands, whose toil was necessary to improve the land. By masking the contributions of these itinerant workers, they self-legitimize their claims of entitlement to it. The primary goal of my study of the life

writing of Henry Sr., Henry Jr. and Bert Sheppard, Claude Gardiner, Joan Key, Georgina Thomson, and Monica Hopkins has been to disclose the racial and class discriminations inherent in these examples of settler life writing.

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