

**MEMOIR OF A SURROGATE'S DAUGHTER:
AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

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ABSTRACT

This is a personal history reflecting upon the part of my life that identified me as an adopted child. I was born in Vancouver British Columbia in 1940. My new identity grew within the social, political, and cultural domain of patriarchy in western Canada. My birth mystery is unravelled; difference between biological and legal kinship is explored; and differences of gender, class, and race limiting possibilities for self-definition in Canadian society are researched. Uncomfortable questions about nature and nurture and the adoption process are also raised.

The writer recognizes that double standards apply to autobiographic writing whereby discourses by Augustine, Descartes, and Rousseau form a universal standard against which other works are measured. However, their academically 'respectable' models of 'man' and 'humanity' are void of female experience. The nature of female experience is, in contrast, the focus of feminist autobiography, and it is the model I have chosen for this study.

Keywords: Feminist autobiography; adoption; identity; difference

Subject terms: Autobiography – women authors; imperial legacy; marginality, culture in 20th century western Canada

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
Introduction.....	1
Part 1: Les and Irene	14
Part 2: Esther's Alberta.....	44
Part 3: Nicola Valley	66
Part 4: Sculpting Our "Selves"	88
Epilogue	91
Works Cited.....	96
Works Consulted	101

INTRODUCTION

Looking back upon the essay that I wrote as part of my application to pursue graduate Liberal Studies, I see that I spoke of the “puzzle” of my birth. Next, I discussed the “ideal of marriage and motherhood” and the “roles” of men and women in Western society. I also mentioned the entrenchment of discrimination based upon class, race, and gender that I encountered in a place that gave the appearance of freedom. This caused me to “question the beliefs and values that have shaped my own culture,” I said. Finally I identified a feminist “self” who wished to explore her life to the point of understanding her place in the Canadian landscape (Graduate Studies Application, “Essay,” personal communication, 2002). I had no idea what lay ahead when my letter of acceptance arrived in the post a few months later.

The main themes of my first two courses in Liberal Studies, “Thinking About Human Passion” and “The Capacity and Limits of Reason” were captured in a special supplement of the *New York Times Magazine*, “The Me Millennium” (1999). It was reprinted by Kihlstrom, Beer, and Klein (2006) in “Self and Identity as Memory”:

A thousand years ago, when the earth was reassuringly flat and the universe revolved around it, the ordinary person had no last name, let alone any claim to individualism. The self was subordinated to church and king. Then came the Renaissance explosion of scientific discovery and humanist insight and, as both cause and effect, the rise of individual self-consciousness. All at once, it

seemed, Man had replaced God at the center of earthly life. And this upheaval marked the beginning of our modern era. (p. 20)

Of course there was much more in the readings, but I use the *Times* article as a jumping off point because I am focusing on how the *self* – as subject and object of awareness – is one of the enduring problems of philosophy. Kihlstrom, Beer, and Klein make this point and they single out Rene Descartes – who couldn't doubt that he himself existed; John Locke – who identified the self with memory; David Hume – whose view of self included our ability to reconstruct our experiences in memory; and Sigmund Freud – who brought unconscious memories into the selfhood mix (pp. 1-4).

This autobiographical project is an extension of my original vision because philosophy and autobiographic writing connect with *self* identities that are culturally constructed (Finn, 1982). Theorist Robert Elbaz (1987) recognizes several distinct forms of autobiography in *The changing nature of the self: A critical study of the autobiographic discourse*. His meaning of "reality" is not explained (p. 1), but his theories and choice of autobiographical texts by male philosophers – Saint Augustine, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Descartes – leaves little doubt in the readers' mind that Elbaz is a European man speaking to a male audience about the autobiographical philosophies of 'great' men. Except for a 6 line citation from Gertrude Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (p. 13), Elbaz ignores autobiographies written by women and others who are situated outside of the mainstream of Western culture. Further, he quotes a "brother" theorist, Roy Pascal, who says "autobiography has its points of

reference outside the work, in real life” (p. 158). He too appears to apply the label “*real life*” to the lives of a few “great” male philosophers in Western society.

Other autobiographies on our Liberal Studies readings lists were less exclusive. St. Teresa’s *The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself* (Cohen, 1957) records the 16th century mystical experience of a Spanish woman who became a Catholic saint. *A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas* (Baker, 1986) is a 19th century slave narrative that advocates for the abolition of segregation and slavery in America. In J.S. Mill’s *Autobiography* (1867), the British social reformer finds the means of his own recovery from depression in the world of music, art, and Wordsworth’s poetry of nature. American Mary McCarthy questions some 20th century cultural assumptions during a time of rapid social change for American women in *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* (1957). The British writer Virginia Woolf wants full citizenship in the male world of arts and letters in *A Room of One’s Own* (1928). Professor of History, Michel Foucault edited *I, Pierre Riviere having slaughtered my mother, my sister, and my brother: A Case of Parricide in the 19th Century France* (1975). It contains the memoir of the killer, which Foucault utilizes to reveal “the roots of our contemporary views of madness, justice, and crime” (p. back cover). In *Manhood: A Journey from Childhood into the Fierce Order of Virility*, Michel Leiris (1984) writes that he substituted the imaginary for the real (world) (p. 126) in a French postmodern literary autobiography designed to appal its audience by a lucid and candid exploration of a self.

If the critical measure of autobiography is gendered and biased in favor of a few male philosophers, it seems to me that feminist and other autobiographies are important because they expose the deep structures of patriarchy that underlie the oppression of women and “others” in western cultural practice. For example, when Jacques Derrida was asked, “why aren’t there any female philosophers?” he replied, “Because the philosophical discourse is organized in a manner that marginalizes, suppresses, and silences women, children, animals and slaves. This is the structure – it would be stupid to deny it” (McKenna, 2002, pp. 5-6). Ironically, the study of Western philosophy influenced my decision to write an autobiography.

Theories that presume that women in Western society do not write what Pascal call “autobiography proper” are disputed by other scholars who value the diverse types of autobiographical writings of women of various races, classes, historical eras, and cultural settings (Bunkers, 1992). Critic Suzanne L. Bunkers (1992) calls for new theoretical frameworks that respect feminist territories within the genre (p. 839).

In an article entitled “The Female Self Engendered: Autobiographical Writing and Theories of Selfhood,” the University of Miami’s Shari Benstock (1991) asks “what is autobiography?” Her answer is that the international academic institution do not agree (p. 6). Hegel’s claim to know the *self* through consciousness and Gusdorf’s mirror in which the individual reflects *his* own image” (p. 8) are mentioned, but Benstock rejects both definitions. In her view,

the most interesting aspect of the autobiographical could be the measure to which *self* and *self-image* might *not* coincide.

Jaume Aurell (2006) has another idea. Her article entitled “Autobiography as unconventional history: Constructing the author,” challenges historians to reconsider autobiography as a valid form of *unconventional* history. Gillian Whitlock (2000) also connects autobiography and history. In *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women’s Autobiography*, Whitlock suggests that autobiographical writing allows an intimate access to the processes of colonization and decolonization and the formation and reformation of identities which occur in postcolonial space.

It is beyond the scope of this project to push this long-standing debate much further, so I will assume that my autobiographical writing, like modern thought, is anchored in a sense of self that is unique to me. This will enable me to examine what Benstock calls “prefabricated notions” (1991, p. 13) that impose *cultural identities* based upon gender, class, race, and ethnicity in Canadian society.

When I was born in the city of Vancouver, British Columbia in 1940, I was registered as a Canadian citizen and a British subject in a society where British patriarchal values and laws regulating morality prevailed (Strange & Loo, 1997, p. 6). Sometime during my early childhood, I asked my parents, “Who am I”? And they answered, “You are our daughter, Elizabeth Joanne Rogers.” On the surface, this was true.

In school we recited the Lord's Prayer, we sang God Save the King, and we were required to memorize the names of the "great" men who journeyed forth from Europe to explore the Pacific Ocean and adjacent lands. The "discovery" of Indigenous Peoples appeared to be part of their adventure. The "explorers" renamed them "Indians" and then they seemed to disappear instead of "progressing" with the settlers beyond colonization.

I was a young woman when the province celebrated British Columbia's first Centennial. An official history was commissioned to mark the event and the University of British Columbia granted Professor Margaret Ormsby a leave of absence to write it. A descendent of "white" pioneer settlers herself, Ormsby described the founding and subsequent development of a colonial society divided by race, class, and gender. In fact, Ormsby's *British Columbia: A History* (1958, rep. 1971) described hierarchies of difference and intolerance that still impact cultural politics and national identity in Canada today (Mackey, 2002). Ormsby however, did not explain the disparities.

While Ormsby's history was being taught when I entered college in 1975, another UBC professor, M. Patricia Marchak, had published research that caused me to question Ormsby's cultural assumptions. The first sentence of Marchak's introduction to *Ideological Perspectives on Canada* begins, "This book is about two versions of the Canadian reality" (1975, p. viii). Using the language of political sociology, Dr. Marchak identified "ideologies" as screens through which we perceive the social world and their elements. The elements in Marchak's hypothetical model were assumptions, beliefs, explanations, values,

and orientations, which are transmitted through example, conversation, and casual observation. Ideology may not proceed far beyond the descriptive level, she explained, and for most people in western society “conventional wisdom” is sufficient. Those who feel otherwise question the assumptions and beliefs and critically assess society’s competence in meeting its own (small L) liberal values (pp. 1-4), she said. The idea that there were different “versions” of reality at play in Canadian history was a turning point in my life.

I was growing up in a middle-class British immigrant family in Vancouver, British Columbia, when I was told that I was adopted. I was three years old at the time. Then, as now, experts advised adoptive parents to provide adoption information to their children to avoid accidental disclosure (Kirk, 1981). Mine also offered assurances. They said that they loved me and my birth mother loved me, but she could not keep me because she was not married. I did not understand what they meant. So they explained that I was adopted and renamed for my own good and for the sake of my birth mother. I did not understand that either.

The assumption that adoption is a simple remedy for infertility was scarcely questioned when I was given away. Authorities simply connected a childless couple to a child. They constructed a new social identity for the child. The couple was transformed into “parents.” And the problem was solved. Or so it seemed. But biological and legally created kinship are not the same and the denial of my blood kinship ties was a source of anxiety because I felt “different.”

The dualities of nature and nurture (Damasio, 1999) were recognized when my biological mother was forced to cast me off, but the impact of the

severing of my birth connection was not given much consideration. I believe that my innate need to reconnect with my biological mother persisted, although modern brain imaging technologies cannot quite prove it. Feminist philosopher Geraldine Finn is of the opinion that women's relation to reproduction and childbirth was, and continues to be, denigrated and concealed so that "Man" can make himself (p. 167). And if the male dominated scientific and medical community continues to place its research priorities elsewhere, proof of trauma caused by mother and child separation may be much delayed (Vythilingam et al., 2000).

In the meantime, the phenomena I refer to did not pass unnoticed in my new family. To ease my distress the story of my birth and subsequent adoption were frequently retold at my request. But when I asked, "what is her name" and "where is she now," my adoptive parents steadfastly refused to answer. They knew her name and whereabouts, but they did not know the name of the man who had fathered me. Later, when they revealed her German descent, they insisted that it was to my advantage to be renamed and assimilated into the Rogers family. Their British identity was presumed to be advantageous because it positioned me in the mainstream of metropolitan Vancouver's W.A.S.P. society.

Divorce and economic hardship pushed me into the margins when I was thirty. I had little education and two young sons to raise on an income that would not support a single woman, when we fled the city in search of a better life at the Douglas Lake Cattle Company Ranch. The ranch gave the appearance of freedom with its rolling hills, thousands of acres of land, cattle, horses, and

cowboys, but my initial impression was soon tested by historical practices of British colonialism and imperialism. This went hand in hand with the reciprocal antagonism of local Indigenous people towards the past and current operations of the Cattle Corporation (Harris, 2002) which was located on unceded Indian land.

Edward Said's memoir, *Out of place* (1999), is frequently cited in postcolonial discourses and Sunil Bhatia (2002) draws on it to make the point that "both the marginalized and the privileged, the colonized and the colonist, in many ways form and shape each other..." (p. 61). However, the fact that I was assigned to a place of privilege in "white" Canadian society by Indigenous co-workers was unimaginable until I moved to Douglas Lake in 1971. But it was one thing to recognize privilege and another thing to "unlearn" it (Landry & MacLean, 1996).

I continued the impossible task of deconstructing my past when I resumed my education in 1975. In addition to attending classes, I met with other female students to explore our common experiences from a woman-centered feminist perspective. We called our efforts to explain the nature of female experience "consciousness-raising" (Levine, 1982). Courses in BC history and women's studies revealed how the culture of the British, including patriarchal ideology (O'Brien, 1982) and practice, created difference and justified the oppression of women and children, Indigenous Peoples, and "others."

Eva Mackey tells us that "frameworks" of identity, inclusion, and exclusion are changing in Canadian society, but one of the most powerful agents of change

and constraint is overlooked in *The House of Difference* (Mackey, 2002, cover). I refer to the law. This oversight and other references to unnamed structures throughout Mackey's (2002) work are misleading because they strip the meaning from the very things we need to understand (Vickers, 1982). Mackey does not name the patriarchal legal system that imposed inequalities based upon race and gender in colonial British Columbia, but Tina Loo (1998) reveals liberalism's historic limitations in achieving justice for women and Indigenous people (160). After Confederation, provincial and federal laws were enacted to regulate female sexuality, to legitimate offspring, and to limit women's property rights, to restrict Chinese immigration, to enable the internment of Canadian citizens of Japanese descent, and to enable the province of British Columbia to takeover Indian lands and resources (Drake-Terry, 1989). Mackey refers to some of these injustices but she also gets caught from time to time in the "liberal discourses" that are used to make intolerance and hierarchy logical and rational in Canadian society (p. 142).

Readings in Professor Roy Miki's Liberal Studies course entitled "The Transnational in Canadian Cultural Processes, challenged ideas about personal and national identity with fiction written from the margins of Canadian society. Fred Wah (1996) writes himself into his work as a character that rejects "white" Canadian racial identity in *Diamond Grill*. Believing that man can make himself, Wah's 'twin' chooses traditional patriarchal identification with his father's remote Chinese family over some sort of hybrid Anglo-Canadian identity. Jeanette Armstrong (2000), on the other hand, confronts Canadian cultural authority to explore injustices in *Whispering in Shadows*. Her protagonist is an Indigenous

woman whose First World is that of the First Nations, not the imperium of the so-called “founding” nations of Britain and France. Daphne Marlatt (1988) interjects female sensuality, mothers and daughters, and bodies and beds, into male-centered BC history in *Ana Historic*. Visionary poet Roy Kiyooka tests culture boundaries when he displaces English as a first language in *Transcanada Letters* (1975).

Among a younger generation of writers, Hiromi Goto (2001) challenges the forces that favor a homogenous Canadian identity in *The Kappa Child*. The writer creates a space beyond the assigned boundaries of race, class, and gender and she populates her fiction with a cast of misfit characters. Goto’s imaginative deconstruction of Western cultural practice throughout the story extends to the “Kappa” who gives birth to itself.

Self identity is clearly a matter of personal experience that scholars across a range of disciplines in the arts, humanities, and social sciences continue to probe. Professor Jack Martin’s course entitled “Self and Society” enabled me to decode many of my own experiences. Martin, Sugarman, and Hickinbottom (2003), provide a theory of personhood that is much more than I reference, but some excerpts from their paper entitled “The Education of Persons in Multicultural Canada” will enlighten the reader of my autobiography. What they say about self and identity is significant, for example:

At birth the person is an embodied, biological human individual who through interacting in the physical and sociocultural world comes to possess an understanding of her particular being in the world (a conceptual *self*) that enables her to act as a self reflective agent

with a unique set of commitments and concerns (*a personal identity*). (p. 3)

My identity after birth was constructed socially around the idea that I was a member of the dominant social group in British Columbia. I was raised in conformity with Anglo-Saxon culture. I knew that being adopted made me different and my lack of an acknowledged ethnic identity grew in importance over time.

More studies are needed to determine how adoptees as a whole are faring in Canadian society. In recent years adoption has globalized and adoptees are becoming more visible than in the past. It troubles me that children are being transported like commodities in a global marketplace without much scrutiny and their possible marginalization in Canadian society is of no apparent interest to the government.

When Eva Mackey (2002) refers to “beliefs of personhood dating back to the Enlightenment which are integral to modern Western conceptualizations of national identity and culture” (p. 70), one presumes that personhood by definition extends to women and children in Canada when, in fact, this may not be the case. If I am wrong, the condition of women and children at home and abroad will improve to a point where biological connections will be valued and preserved.

In relation to self and identity and the writing of my autobiography philosopher Donald Davidson (1999) suggests that if you know what it means to be a person with others in your own society, then the implicit knowledge of your own personhood will enable you to understand meaning in unknown cultures. He

believes that education for “personhood” is a worthy ideal that needs to be explored within families, schools, communities and throughout Canadian society.

I concur.

PART 1: Les and Irene

Christ! Here I go again and it's only late afternoon. Another dress rehearsal. What to wear? Dress up or dress down or no dress at all? A uniform would be nice – maybe Goto pajamas or something leftover from Little Flower Academy. But I have no clothes like that in my cupboard. And even if I did, I wouldn't wear them to class because I am looking for a place to put myself. As usual then, I'll wear ordinary pants and a top and try to blend in. I guess others will be wearing jeans and T-shirts or microfibre waterproof stuff from Mountain Equipment Co-op to the downtown campus this evening. I'll bet that at least one professional businessman will show up in a suit and tie. They will stand out from the crowd, but they won't care. Faculty favors expensive casual dress. At least, I imagine that pricey Edward Chapman labels are stitched discretely into their sports jackets and cashmere sweaters. Enough! Disown this involuntary inventory and remember where it's coming from!

It is time to put my reminiscences aside and get to the Skytrain station on Columbia Street. It's within easy walking distance of my apartment. The Fourth Street entrance is located on a very steep hill in the city of New Westminster. Cable cars used to slide up and down the way they still do on some of the streets in San Francisco. The street runs north and south. It ends abruptly at the edge of a river. Named after the explorer Simon Fraser, the Fraser River links the coast to the interior, metropolis to hinterland, my past and my present.

Railway tracks, factories, and modern condominiums encroach upon the river at New Westminster now. It is a murky, treacherous waterway for millions of Pacific salmon that must journey annually to clear spawning streams in the Interior. The St at imc people wait several hundred miles away at their fishing camps for the salmon to arrive each spring. When I left to return to university this fall, they were catching them with dip nets, and cutting them, and drying them, and freezing them, and canning them to eat in the wintertime.

The Columbia Skytrain station is underground and I hasten to purchase a two zone ticket to board. Miss a train and it doesn't matter, there will be another along in a couple of minutes. Exiting a tunnel the train pauses for a moment at New Westminster station. It is the last station heading west within the limits of the "Royal City." Like the great salmon river, the city is a renamed place where historic encounters are selectively remembered and forgotten. For example, it is not common knowledge that 4,000 Indigenous people traveled to the site by foot and by horse and by canoe to talk to Queen Victoria's representative about their land 140 years ago. Their assembled Chiefs were given Malacca staffs with silver crowns as well as British flags mounted on poles as proof of the Queen's goodwill. Her promise – that the Indians, being the rightful owners of the land, would receive one-third of all of the revenues from the land forever and ever – amounted to nothing.

But the Skytrain is a modern wonder. Built in 1986, it provides "think" time on a rail. Or entertainment – it all depends on the trip. Sometimes it's too quick. It will be tonight, when fear of the unknown pales beside fear of the known. For

mandatory introductions lie ahead and there is no escape from this all-inclusive, annual rite of passage at Simon Fraser University's downtown campus. Many have tried, but none have succeeded, except for faculty. Arrive early or drift in late, it doesn't matter. Everyone must meet the challenge of introducing a self. It is always framed as a question vis a vis "shall we take a moment and introduce ourselves and maybe say a few words about why we are here"? Silence may follow, but don't be misled. Your permission to proceed is not being sought and no one to my knowledge has ever answered "No." So it's really best to prepare ahead of time if you can.

Admittedly this is difficult, because faculty, classmates, and courses change from season to season. Some instructors encourage a brief exchange of name and occupation between their students. This disclosure can, however, impair one's self esteem if, like me, you are unemployed or retired while one's classmates are young and employed in one profession or another. On the other hand, given a bit of time, an impressive resume can be fashioned and recited on demand. I wonder if it is really necessary or even desirable to be consistent from one semester to the next when it comes to mandatory introductions. Why not reinvent a self to fit the occasion?

Naturally race, class, and gender references are to be avoided during introductions, but I am tempted to proclaim that I am a middle-class white female, mother and grandmother married to a St at imc Indian Chief. Actually, Saul is a Grand Chief. I am not sure why I am tempted to reveal this, but I am sure that reason will prevail and I will remain silent when the time comes. To tell the truth,

our quarter century long union is actually my third marriage. And strange to say, each of my husbands had one thing in common: they were all social misfits. My first marriage ended in divorce and my second ended when my husband, Jack Drake, died in 1985. I have retained his surname. But more on this later.

At the moment, I am plunging into the world of the other again, with my ghosts in tow. What am I looking for this time? It is not another university degree. For what use is that to me now? Am I seeking more education to help me understand the world and my place in it? I think so, but this is risky if one heeds the warning, that too much of anything will bring the opposite of what you thought you were getting. The course this term is entitled "Thinking About Human Passion." It follows "The Capacity and Limits of Reason," which I completed last semester.

I am wearing non-descript black slacks, a blue sweater, and slip-ons tonight. I have not eaten dinner but the dog has been fed. I'll have lots of time to eat before class. I could eat on campus in the Food Mart. But I don't think that I will. I always feel self-conscious eating alone in public. Then again, last semester's mandatory requirement to eat with my cohorts each week before class did not solve the problem. Neither classmates nor instructors were to blame. It is just that I am not accustomed to eating with strangers.

My adopted parents, Les, and Irene, Rogers, did not entertain strangers and we did not eat in restaurants except on rare occasions when I was growing up. Occasionally we did travel by bus to the White Spot at 64th and Granville. The restaurant owner, Nat Bailey, greeted all of his customers at the door and he

seated them. It was quite a treat. Back then, the place was famous for “chicken in the straw” served up to kids in paper boxes rigged up like pirate ships. Although the original place is gone, replaced by franchise operations throughout the lower mainland, White Spot restaurants still serve kids food in pirate ship boxes which they can take home to keep as souvenirs. My granddaughter, Emily, took her pirate ship box home when we ate there recently.

Despite fond memories of White Spot dining I must tell you that my mother, Irene Rogers, was a wonderful cook. I am a good cook too, although for years I resented cooking. I picked this up from Irene. Her Sunday dinners were nevertheless, in my opinion, superb. I especially liked roasts of beef, or pork, or lamb which Irene cooked and served with browned potatoes and other fresh vegetables in season. Desserts were painstakingly homemade, too. And as I recall, Irene’s lemon meringue pies and apple pies were family favorites.

Les’ mother, my Nanny Rogers, came for dinner every Sunday. Cocktails were served at 5:00 pm followed by dinner at 6:00. Each Sunday dinner was a ceremonial occasion: the dining room table was set with a spotless white linen tablecloth which Irene had laboriously washed, starched, and ironed. An expensive, hence special, bone china dinner service was removed from the dining-room cabinet, the Daffodil patterned Sunday silverware was polished and both graced the table, together with a silver-plated cruet. The ornate, engraved, Victorian piece had been presented to Nanny Rogers by her British colleagues when she got married and was forced to retire from teaching. Her treasured keepsake was the center piece on our Sunday dinner table. Her son, Les,

polished it dutifully in advance of our big weekly dinner. Nanny's cruet held a pair of crystal salt and pepper shakers, a vinegar carafe, and two shallow crystal containers with tiny, matching silver spoons. One little dish was for hot mustard and the other was filled with fresh horseradish for the meat that Les always carved and served from his place at the head of the table.

As you can see, I was not raised in ignorance of the finer points of dining. In fact, from the age of six, I was expected to hold my knife and fork properly, to say please and thank you, and never to interrupt my elders' conversation at the dinner table. The latter was not too hard to practice, because a frosty silence usually prevailed at our Sunday dinner table. The reason for this, which I didn't understand at the time, was that my mother loathed her mother-in-law. Evidently, Irene blamed her for her son's shortcomings.

I, on the other hand, I enjoyed Sunday visits with Nanny Rogers. There were several reasons for this. First, she always brought me a candy treat. I knew it was in her purse when she arrived but I was not allowed to mention it. If I exercised the requisite restraint and performed well during dinner, the candy was mine before the end of her visit. Second, the presence of Nanny Rogers also forestalled the turmoil that frequently accompanied our ordinary weekday family meals. For while I had no problem eating roast beef and Yorkshire pudding on Sundays, I definitely balked at eating such things as liver and cabbage and stew and other low budget meals that Irene prepared during the week. My parents routinely dumped large portions of this food on my plate and they would become irate when I refused to eat it. And the notion that I must clean up my plate

because there were “millions” of children starving in China did not stimulate my appetite. So the label “picky eater” was applied to me.

Dinnertime battles with Les and Irene are among my earliest memories and by the time I was six we had reached an impasse. I would arrive at the dinner table with a queasy stomach and a certain grim determination to get through the meal without being yelled at or sent off to bed with no dinner at all. One line of defense was to eat what I could and beg off the rest. Another was to refuse the food altogether and be sent straight off to bed. When I awoke in the morning, I'd eat a hearty breakfast of toast and cereal, which I enjoyed. Then one morning to my surprise and dismay, I was presented with the cold remains of my dinner from the previous day instead of the usual cereal and toast. When I howled and cried in protest, I was sent to the basement with instructions not to return until the food (fried liver and onions as I recall) was eaten. Sitting at the bottom of the basement stairs, I spied a drain in the concrete floor. So, I shoveled the mess down the drain. My parents were satisfied when I returned upstairs with an empty plate.

Of course my apparent compliance left me with an empty stomach when I left for school that morning, but this problem was easily solved when I stopped at my friend's house. As usual, her mother answered my knock on the door. After an exchange of greetings I asked for some food, preferably fruit. And when she questioned me further, I revealed what had transpired at home. She sympathized and fed me. With such positive reinforcement, I repeated the act several more times. I was caught when my benefactor became so alarmed she confronted my

parents and accused them of starving me. Naturally all hell broke loose at home. But my speaking out put a stop to the “eat your dinner cold for breakfast” punishment. However, there was an unexpected downside: I was nicknamed “big mouth” and I believed this to be an accurate reflection of my outward appearance.

On hindsight, I think that a different kind of “naming” bound me to Nanny Rogers. Her full name was Elizabeth Jane Rogers and I was named after her. She wore a ruby and diamond ring and she pinned a tiny gold watch on her ample bosom. It made her appear elegant, to me. I also coveted a modest sapphire and diamond ring and a gold bracelet inscribed with the initials EJR which she willed to me, her namesake. It filled me with pride and a sense of belonging to know that I, Elizabeth Joanne Rogers, would inherit some of my grandmother’s jewellery.

The dramatic disclosure that I was adopted and renamed was naturally, a major blow. I don’t remember the occasion, but I am told that I was three years old when Les and Irene explained that I was “special” because they had chosen me to be their daughter. Then as now, there was a consensus that adoptive parents should tell children they are adopted, however, questions concerning the identity and whereabouts of my birth mother were never answered although my adoptive parents knew her name and whereabouts. Their secrecy with respect to my adoption was not legislated but “adoption was beginning to be perceived as a means of creating a perfect and complete substitute for a family created by

natural childbirth”(Samuels, 3), so Irene and Les told me that they loved me and they insisted that we were the same as blood kin.

It was clear later on that Les and Irene believed that my adoption had improved my legal and social situation at a time when discrimination against unmarried women and their offspring placed them at a disadvantage in Canadian society. Of course, the same could be said of Canada’s *Indian Act* legislation (1876) and marriage laws that transformed the racial classification of Indigenous women from “Indian” to “white” upon marriage to euro-Canadian men. Their offspring were also denied Indian status.

The personal downside of adoption for me was flagged in a United Nations Study of Discrimination (United Nations, 1967) that contained the following warning: “An essential feature of adoption is the artificial character of the relationship it creates, which has important consequences ... the artificial family ties created by law carry with them the weaknesses inherent in every fiction legal or otherwise” (p. 160). In point of fact, my adoption spawned a quest that has lasted a lifetime. Brodzinsky, Schechter, and Henig coined the phrase “lifelong search for self” and it appears on the title page of their book Being Adopted (1992).

When I entered grade one, I learned that storks had delivered some of my classmates to their parents. Others believed that they had been found under cabbage leaves in home gardens. These mythologies were in turn supplanted by the rumor that babies come out of their mummy’s tummies. When I asked Irene if this was true, Irene admitted that it was. Except I did not come out of her tummy.

In response to further questions, Irene eventually revealed that I had come out of another woman's belly. I was told that she loved me too, but she could not keep me because she was not married. This I did not understand. At the time I did not realize that I had a biological father, so I did not ask about his identity or whereabouts.

Naturally I wanted to know whose tummy I came out of. Irene skirted the question. "Well, how did you get me?" I asked. "There was an advertisement in the newspaper offering a baby for adoption and your birth mother chose us to be your new parents because I wrote the best letter," Irene explained. The story wasn't true but she remembered it that way and I believed her.

Over a period of time my adoptive parents' insistence that we were the "same as blood kin" proved to be as unsettling as their earlier disclosure of my adoption. While my school friends could indulge in the fantasy that their parents were not their "real" parents (Samuels, 2001, p. 11), I knew that my adoptive parents were not my "real" biological parents. There were telltale signs. For example, whispered conversations between Irene and her friends would cease abruptly when I entered the room. I really never knew if they were talking about me, but I suspected they were. And comments by strangers that I looked "just like" my mother made us both feel uncomfortable and a bit ashamed.

Nevertheless, the fiction was maintained and the consequences were unforeseen. In public I easily passed as my father's daughter because Les and I both had dark hair and brown eyes. This too, was once a source of contention between Les and Irene. In the heat of an argument, Irene accused Les of

conducting an illicit affair and fathering me. But her accusations were entirely unfounded and they both knew it.

Les and Irene's inability to acknowledge our family difference was a key factor in the failure of my adoption. Their secrecy, together with the amendment of my birth certificate seemed to be part of an unreasonable cover-up, until I learned that adoption in general was a mark of illegitimacy and social inferiority (Kirk, 1981, p. 14). Worse still, mine had another negative marker that remained to be disclosed.

My parent's regime of secrecy was not a requirement of legal adoption (Samuels, 2001, pp. 1-3) and it was harmful and laden with contradictions. I was told that my birth mother had not abandoned me, so I waited for her to reclaim me. Fortunately, my adopted relatives distracted and comforted me while I waited.

My grandparents on Irene's side, Anna, and Fred, Young, made a lasting impression. The couple was non-conformists and they accepted me unconditionally. Unable to have biological children, my Poppa and Nanny Young had adopted Irene and her sister. Although Irene seldom visited her parents after she and Les were married, she did keep in touch by telephone. This was in large measure due to the fact that Les could barely tolerate his eccentric mother-in-law. He said that her jokes were coarse and her housekeeping was a disgrace. There was some truth to this, but his criticism was exaggerated and nasty in my opinion. It was not apparent to me until much later in life that Les may have

avoided contact with Nanny and Poppa Young because they were a temperate, working-class couple, whose lifestyle Les held in contempt.

Born in Sweden on February 7th 1879, Anna was a runaway. She had fled to England at the age of 15 after her mother died and her father remarried. Fortune favored Anna when she encountered a Protestant minister en route. She was penniless, she had no connections, and she could not speak English. So under the circumstances Anna may have ended up begging on the streets of London or worse. Instead, the minister offered her employment as a domestic servant and his family took her in. After Anna mastered the English language, she moved to London to study nursing. To her horror, Anna and her female classmates were subjected to a kind of indentured hospital labor in England that was even more menial and demanding than domestic service. Anna persevered and completed her training. Then she immigrated to Canada where working conditions were rumored to be better.

The story of how Anna met her future husband, Fred, in the CPR station in downtown Vancouver impressed me with its modernity when I was a young woman. It seems that Anna and a girl friend were looking for some fun, so they ran an advertisement in the local newspaper. The wording went something like this: "Two young lady nurses seeking the companionship to two young men. Reply to this newspaper Box number."

Anna and her friend told each of their respondents to pin a red rose on his lapel for purposes of identification. Leaving nothing to chance the women hid behind large pillars in the railway station on the appointed day in order to spy

upon potential dates. If they liked the look of a man, the date went ahead. If not, the women stood the men up and left unobserved.

I still find it hard to believe that the tall, reserved, beaky-nosed Welshman known to me as Poppa Young actually went to the railway station with a rose in his lapel to meet the cheeky, diminutive woman who would become his wife, but he did. And I think that Anna chose her mate wisely; not because he eventually delivered on his promise to build her a manor worthy of any old country home in Wales or in Sweden, but for his intelligence and compassion.

Anna and Fred lived in a tent on his acre of land on the side of a mountain in West Vancouver after they were married. Anna's nursing career at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver had been terminated when she became Fred's wife. His employment continued at the BC Electric Company, transportation division, on Hastings Street in Vancouver. So they built the house slowly together, one room at a time. It was mortgage free, with cement and plaster, wood and roof tiles, doors and windows, being paid for out of money they both scrounged and saved from Fred's monthly wages. As room after room was added (eventually there were more than ten rooms) it is clear that the couple believed they would raise a family together. But Anna did not become pregnant. I don't know why she failed to conceive, but I do know that Anna and Fred made arrangements to bring two girls home from a local orphanage to fill the void in their lives.

The ten and twelve year old sisters had been abandoned by their biological mother after her husband enlisted in the army and was sent overseas during WW1. When the husband returned, the Sylvesters divorced and

permanently relinquished their daughters, Irene and Nellie. The girls were both adopted by Fred and Anna Young. The eldest, Irene (Sylvester) Young, was never reconciled with her birth parents and she never forgave them. Irene became my adoptive mother.

Irene's unresolved anger had consequences in terms of our relationship. Attempts to form a positive mother-daughter bond were thwarted by her lack of sympathy and understanding for my particular circumstances. For example, Irene recalled that she and her sister were frequently hungry when they were incarcerated in an orphanage, so when I refused to eat, my "lack of gratitude" made her angry. Questions about my biological mother also agitated Irene. In light of her own determination to blot out the past, she presumed that I was being unreasonable and disagreeable when I broached the subject. My fondness for Nanny and Poppa Young was also problematic. Time and again Irene reiterated that Fred and Anna had been very stern parents. She said her life with them was full of difficulties when she was growing up, but she never explained what she meant. Perhaps Irene envied the connection that I shared with her adoptive parents and felt herself to be an outsider. Who knows.

I felt like an outsider too, but I truly enjoyed visiting my grandparents when I was a child. They were accepting and uncritical of one another and of me. Poppa Young usually had a boat under construction in the side yard. He dreamed he would retire and live on the water. It never happened because Anna hated boats and the ocean, but that didn't seem to matter. Poppa Young's other hobby was photography and sometimes we'd develop and enlarge pictures

together in his specially constructed darkroom. It was my introduction to the magic of chemistry and grandfatherly patience. For I was a clumsy child with a tendency to trip over my feet. Instead of scolding, my Poppa Young offered reassurance. "Don't worry Jo, you'll grow into your feet," he'd say. Unlike Les who liked to garden alone, Nanny Young encouraged me to garden with her. She hated every form of housework and did as little as possible inside the house. I remember that one end of her messy living room was screened off with chicken wire to contain canaries and budgies. And Nanny's kitchen fridge was best avoided. It was a source of unpleasant surprises. Rancid bacon, sour milk, and homemade dog food jockeyed for position inside. Under the circumstances, Nanny Young's cooking likely left much to be desired, too. But I don't remember how the food tasted because her dogs ate whatever I secretly dropped underneath the diningroom table.

This is not to imply that my Nanny Young was lazy, because she was not. Anna rose before sunrise throughout the gardening season and stayed outside from dawn until dusk tending the land. With Fred's assistance, she created terraces and flower beds, fishponds and lawns. I helped her pinch cuttings from plants in the park to replant in her garden. She told me that plant snippets grew in her garden because she had "a green thumb." I thought that she was teasing me because her thumb was the same color as mine. Nanny also took in dogs and cats and birds and strange people that no one else wanted to look after. And when she ran out of space for dogs and cats in her home, she founded the West Vancouver SPCA to accommodate the overflow.

Anna and Fred's place was a safe haven for me and a range of other people over the years. Most were outcasts in some way or another. As a child, I wondered why there were so many strange, and sometimes downright creepy people, coming and going from Nana and Poppa Young's house. According to Irene, their home was transformed into a quirky haven after Anna went a bit mad. I don't know if it's true, but it was said that Anna was menopausal when she fled her home on Queen Street. She reportedly came to rest in an adjoining vacant lot (now a park in West Vancouver), where she howled like a wolf for a number of days. Horrified, the neighbors urged Fred to commit Anna to a mental institution. Fred's furious response silenced them. "Anna is my wife and I will take care of her," he declared. According to Irene, Poppa Young did take care of his wife and when she was ready, my Nanny Young moved back into the house, but she didn't stay inside much anymore. Maybe domestic life drove her mad.

Anna filled her life with "good works" and some fun after her breakdown. She collected clothing which we sorted and laundered together. She distributed it to needy families who lived on nearby Indian reserves. Anna also saved quarters to be handed out to indigent panhandlers on Hastings Street when she went shopping at Woodward's in downtown Vancouver. In the summer she stole away to the racetrack to bet on the ponies. When I went with her, I got to hand out the quarters. But we didn't tell Poppa Young about the quarters or the bets because he authorized Nanny's household expenditures and he wouldn't approve. Irene was in on the secret, though. She slipped small sums of money to Nanny Young to cover her race track losses and to help her to "make ends meet" between pay

periods. I don't know if Anna was a Christian, but she did attend local churches of various denominations most Sundays. She visited them in succession, seeking God knows what. I recall that she interrogated ministers and criticized their sermons, which I found entertaining.

Anna's unconventional behavior did not meet with Irene's approval, but I think Irene admired Anna's independence and courage. Irene herself disliked the constraints of middle class married life, but she tried to conform. Like other married women in the Dunbar neighborhood, Irene stayed at home on Alma Road, cooking, cleaning, washing, and shopping while my father was away at the office all day. It wasn't much of a life. There were several small shops at 41st Avenue and Dunbar Street, a few blocks away from our house. They consisted of a grocery store, barber shop, beauty salon and a drugstore, as I recall. B.C. Electric trolley cars also boarded passengers bound for downtown Vancouver at 41st and Dunbar. Les caught the trolley there every weekday morning.

But the radio was really Irene's connection to the outside world when we lived on Alma Road. Evidently it was mine, too, before I was enrolled in grade one. Irene listened to popular music and I memorized the lyrics to her favorite songs and can still sing them all today. Some, like "Keep the Home Fires Burning," "My Buddy," "Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag," "How Ya Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm," "Till We Meet Again," "White Cliffs of Dover," and "Keep the Home Fires Burning" were from World War 1. Others were more modern. Irene especially liked country and western music. I remember her

perpetually humming or whistling softly under her breath when she worked around the house.

My mother had no hobbies, but she made me a wonderful dress with a full skirt that flared. It had three layers and I whirled about whenever I wore it. The dress was something special to show off at school, because she had sewn it. I admired Irene's domestic skills. She also made blackout curtains as a wartime precaution to pull across the windows at night. When the danger of war on the West Coast had passed, the blackout curtains stayed up. They kept out the midday sun when I was put down for an afternoon nap.

I loved to share small outings with Irene. We always used public transit to get around. It seemed quite normal at the time. The Young's had not owned a car when Irene was growing up and Les had sold his automobile early in their marriage, so Irene never learned how to drive. Later on when I wondered why we did not own a car, Les said it was cheaper to take taxicabs. Of course we didn't do that either. I'm inclined to believe that Les wanted to curtail Irene's activities because he was a possessive man. In fact, he made sure that she stayed close to home. As the sole wage earner, Les gave my mother very little money to run the house. And being financially dependent upon her husband, Irene was forced argue and cajole to eke enough cover the cost of necessities and extras alike, just like Nanny Young. But Les always had the final say. For example, custom fit shoes to for me in an extra-narrow AAAA heel and AA toe, could be either a necessity or a luxury. It depended upon his mood. Sometimes Les would grudgingly increase Irene's allowance to cover the cost of my shoes and other

times he stalled and offered the reminder that he was investing for the future through the purchase of life insurance and penny stocks.

So it was a real treat for my mother and I to board the streetcar and go shopping at Woodward's in downtown Vancouver. Sometimes we bought lunch at the White Lunch Café on Hastings Street. If the name "White" Lunch signified that the place was racially segregated, Irene and I were not aware of it. I do know that the diner was located near Poppa Young's office in the BC Electric streetcar station. He kept a bundle of plastic colored chips hanging on a hook beside his desk for me to play with while he and Irene chatted. I also enjoyed watching the streetcars come in, turn around, and head out again.

At other times my mother and I skipped lunch and our visit with Poppa Young in favor of making a stop at Blackburn's Market. She usually purchased pickled herrings there, for my father's very English Sunday breakfast. I didn't like herrings but I loved the taste of smoked Alaska Black cod, which I think was a bit odd for a child. It seemed to please Irene to indulge my appetite for the delicacy. She would buy a bit of cod and cook it for my lunch when Les was at his office.

We really lived a small town life. The population of Vancouver was about 340,000 shortly before the outbreak of World War II, and Irene dreamed of unnamed, faraway, places. Her favorite song was "Don't Fence Me In." Written by Cole Porter and Robert Fletcher, it was the top song of 1944-45. Perhaps I yearned to escape too, because Irene and I sang along with Kate Smith when she sang,

Give me land, lots of land under starry skies above, but

Don't fence me in.
Let me ride through the wide open country that I love, but
Don't fence me in.
Let me be by myself in the evening breeze
Listen to the murmur of the cottonwood trees,
Send me off forever, but I ask you please
Don't fence me in. (Porter & Fletcher, 1942, p. 1)

I may not have felt much empathy for my mother when I got older, but I definitely picked up on her sad yearnings when I was a child. She envied the single women who participated in the war effort, earning good money, and enjoying their freedom. And I knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that she regretted marrying Les, although she didn't leave him. In the 1940s there were no grounds for divorce other than adultery, and despite his shortcomings, Les was not a philanderer.

As I recall, my father was reasonably content with his life in the public sphere when I was very young. That was one reason why I preferred to be around him. When he awoke in the morning I'd position myself on the edge of the bathtub and watch him get ready for work. His routine fascinated me. He'd lather his face, pick-up his Gillette razor and scrape the foamy soap off. Sometimes he'd nick himself with the razor and I'd watch him grab a pencil-sized salt stick to staunch the drops of blood. When it stung him, I'd wince. The salt stick wouldn't work if the nicks were too deep. Then I'd watch him plaster his wounds with bits of toilet-paper to stop the bleeding. His face had a rare and comical appearance when it was dotted with tiny white bits of paper.

My mother hung his freshly laundered dress shirts in their bedroom cupboard and I'd watch him choose one to wear and a tie to go with it. I liked to

watch him knot his tie by reverse mirror image. Eventually I learned how to tie a Windsor knot the same way. The bits of toilet paper were removed before he kissed me good-bye at the door. Lastly, I'd wave and watch my handsome father, dressed in a smart business suit, disappear from sight.

My father's return was no less memorable as I recall. In the wintertime, I'd watch for him at the window. In the summertime I'd wait outside in the yard. Sometimes I would race with my mother to greet him and be hugged in return. Of course this routine varied if I transgressed during the day. Then I lingered behind my mother, or I stayed in my own room, while she reported bad behavior for my father to punish. I remember mustering my own arguments on many occasions to avoid being punished. But Irene's word usually prevailed against mine and I would be spanked or deprived of some privilege. I couldn't stand to be told, "this hurts me more than it hurts you!" when punishment was meted out. Sometimes I'd catch a few extra licks for declaring "that's a lie!"

All the same, I really tried to please my father. In truth I loved him dearly and I wanted to marry him, except he was already married to Irene. As I re-read what I have just written, I am reminded that Woody Allan flaunted social convention and married his wife's adopted daughter, Soon-Yi, in 1997. But strange to say, no law was broken because Soon-Yi was not Woody's adopted daughter. She was her mother's adopted daughter from a previous marriage. In our case, the law that created our "family" and moral regulation prevailed, so Les spurned my daughterly love and affection decisively and cruelly long before I reached puberty and my parent's stayed married for many more years.

Les and Irene had met at a party in 1935. Les was a bachelor and he lived with his widowed mother in a rented house near English Bay when they got together. He was among an elite minority who earned a good wage throughout the Depression. Les's widowed mother had been financially dependant upon her son for years, at that point. She took in boarders to help meet the household expenses. Les's mother would soon receive a small government pension, but her son would need to provide her with some financial assistance for the rest of her life. In the meantime, Les enjoyed playing tennis on weekends and he attended parties that were hosted by British ex-patriots. But the economic downturn resulted in fewer parties and the ranks of his bachelor acquaintances had begun to thin. When Les turned forty there was talk of war and he began to think about marriage.

Irene was employed as a secretary in downtown Vancouver when she met Les. She also lived at home and any change her social status would be by means of marriage and motherhood. This posed a dilemma for Irene since the Young's didn't approve of her "running around." In truth, their pretty, petite, auburn-haired, blue-eyed twenty-three year old daughter usually complied with their wishes and, apart from the occasional date, she stayed at home. Still there was one invitation, as fate would have it, that altered the course of Irene's life. She and Les both attended the last party of the season at the Vancouver Lawn and Tennis Club – Les as a club member and Irene as another man's date. She caused a sensation when she impetuously sang a few songs with the band. Les was smitten, phone numbers were exchanged, and courtship followed.

My parents-to-be had little in common and their marriage was opposed by both sides of the family. The Young's said Les was too old and set in his ways and Les's mother said Irene was too ordinary for her son. Disregarding their wishes Les presented Irene with a half-carat diamond engagement ring. It was expensive and flashy and she proudly accepted his proposal of marriage. Marriage to Les theoretically offered Irene certain advantages, such as improved social status and, more important, financial security. I remember her talking about the plight of the retail clerks at Eatons whose wages were so low, they simply could not support themselves. The women had tried to organize and fight for a living wage.

In fact, female dependence upon a male wage-earner was not voluntary. It was imposed and it was demeaning. Les never let Irene forget how privileged she was while he reaped the benefits of marriage. Worse still, when the honeymoon was over and the marriage began to be tested, Les would needle Irene with the remark "water always finds its own level." If married life was her "high water mark," Irene may have thought about leaving, but married women were denied employment in the 1930s, so she stayed put. With male privilege entrenched in the law, Les was the undisputed head of the house. It was his house and it was tastefully furnished with English oak furniture and Moorcroft pottery. The latest in electronic equipment was purchased over the years for his listening pleasure and his collection of classical music was informed and eclectic. The music of Beethoven, Mozart, Handel, and Gilbert and Sullivan filled the house in the early afternoon each Sunday while Irene prepared dinner. Later, I

memorized the lyrics to the Mikado, Showboat, and other operettas from my father's collection.

As the skytrain pauses at Royal Oak station, I am reminded once again, of the history in British Columbia. It began with British colonization and practices which subsequently enabled a few men to impose the English language, laws, and education on entire populations of Indigenous Peoples and immigrants from every corner of the world. My expatriate grandmother, Nanny Rogers, was very proud of her British heritage, so she found no fault with its practices. To the contrary, she subscribed to the *London Illustrated News* until her death and I for one, presumed she was related to the British royal family whose members were pictured throughout. Judging from a photograph that was taken in my parent's backyard when I was three or four years old, it is obvious that Nanny Rogers actually did set pseudo regal standards for us. Flanked by my exceedingly stiff and stylish Nanny Rogers and my grim-faced, oxford shod, unhappy looking mother, I too am picture perfect. Dressed in delicate seersucker, hand-smocked at the top, wearing white socks and patent-leather shoes, I am posed on a small bridge with every hair on my head in place. The bridge spans a gold-fish pond, one of several that my father designed for his exquisite English-style garden near 28th and MacDonald Street.

Nanny Rogers passed her *London Illustrated News* photo journals along to us when she was finished with them and they were a source of wonder to me. Irene received the paper treasures and locked them away in her cedar chest in the upstairs hallway. As a rainy day treat, she would unlock the chest and

remove the magazines one at a time and allow me to look at the pictures. I was especially captivated by the photographs of the princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret. When saw them dressed in velvet capes trimmed with ermine I recall that I longed to be a princess, too.

I don't know if Irene blamed her mother-in-law for the fact that Les wanted nothing to do with fatherhood, but she may have. Evidently the subject was not raised before the couple got married, but it became a very serious issue afterwards. On the other hand, given Les's age, family background, and his mother's financial dependence, it is understandable that he did not share his wife's desire to parent a child.

Irene knew in advance of their marriage that her husband's childhood had been miserable. Les was born in 1897 and his Edwardian parents had demanded unquestioning obedience from their only son. Apparently Les complied with their wishes throughout his youth. When his parents wanted a choirboy in the family, Les sang in the Anglican Church twice each Sunday and he hated it. They wanted their son to play a musical instrument, so Les took violin lessons and practiced by the hour although he despised it. And when his father declared bankruptcy Les responded like a dutiful son; at the age of fourteen, he got a job as an apprentice accountant and relinquished his wages to his parents. Later on his earnings helped finance the family's departure from England.

I was told that Les finally rebelled onboard the ship that carried the Rogers family to Canada in the 1920's. Ordered by his parents to continue practicing the violin, he apparently smashed the instrument to bits during the crossing. Sadly,

his sense of freedom was short-lived. For when the family arrived in Regina, Saskatchewan, Les's father consumed a bottle of whiskey and went out for a walk. It was wintertime, the temperature was minus 20 degrees, and the patriarch of the family froze to death in a snow bank. There may be a grave somewhere in Regina with his name on the headstone, but I don't know the man's given name. It was never spoken. I presume that it was expunged from the Rogers family history, so great was the shame. Les and his mother subsequently fled the scene to take up residence hundreds of miles away in Vancouver, BC.

The expatriate family was attracted to British Columbia for good reason. It was a place that provincial archivist, R. Edward Gosnell, touted in *Westward Ho!* magazine in 1908 as being British:

[There is] ... a greater Britain of the Pacific, where British arts and institutions will expand under fresh impetus, where the British flag will forever fly, where British laws and justice will be respected and enforced, and where British men and women will be bred to the best traditions of the race. (cited in Friesen & Ralston, 1976, p. 22)

Les found a good paying job in Vancouver and he did accounting work for the rest of his life.

When Irene's married friends began having babies, she likely re-opened the subject of parenthood. After all, if marriage and motherhood were the norm for women, Irene's desire to birth a baby was perfectly natural and socially acceptable under the circumstances. Unfortunately, as she explained matters to me, Les would not yield to persuasion. So, they were at an impasse when Irene's belly began to swell. She rejoiced. She was pregnant! Happy to have matters accidentally resolved, Irene waited several months and then she visited their

family doctor. His diagnosis devastated the young woman. Irene was not pregnant and Dr. Welch advised that her condition – known as a false or phantom pregnancy – was very rare and serious. The news plunged Irene into severe depression or a “nervous breakdown,” as it was called. The doctor advised Les to seek treatment for his deranged wife in a private hospital. The alternative was a mental asylum, and this was ruled out to protect their social position.

Years later, when Irene told me that she had resided in Hollywood Sanitarium in New Westminster, I assumed she had spent time in a glamorous spa with movie stars from Hollywood. It was a bit of Rogers family history that I bragged about in my youth. It turned out to be one more trick of my imagination. In point of fact, Hollywood Sanitarium was named after the Holly trees that lined the walkway of an old mansion that had been converted into a private sanitarium. Its third owner, psychiatrist and former superintendent of Essondale Mental Hospital, Dr. James Gordon McKay, had it incorporated in 1921 as Hollywood Sanitarium to cater to well-to-do patients suffering from mental illness and alcoholism. When Irene was admitted in 1940, Electric Shock Treatment therapy was being administered at the sanitarium for the first time in Western Canada. To be perfectly frank however, I do not know what treatment Irene received for her depression and I am not sure that she knew what was going on.

A decade after Irene was admitted, Dr Abraham Hoffer used its facilities for early experimentation with LSD to treat alcoholism and other forms of mental illness. Later, the man who turned Timothy Leary on for the first time, Al

Hubbard, built an LSD suite at Hollywood Sanitarium before he left for California in the 1960s. He claimed an 80% success rate with the sanitarium's alcoholic patients and his treatments were perfectly legal. Celebrities including Ethel Kennedy and singer Andy Williams, are reported to have had pricey LSD sessions at the facility (*The Vancouver Sun*, 2001, p. D5).

Irene never recalled her treatment, but she did talk about her cure. She said that she was still a patient confined to her bed at Hollywood Sanitarium when a friend, Thelma Bourne, paid a visit. According to Irene, the woman had spotted an advertisement in the *Province* newspaper offering a baby for adoption. Urged on by her friend, Irene wrote a letter in reply to the ad. This event was an important and unquestioned part of my birth story when I was growing up. Irene pointed with pride to the fact that she wrote the very best letter that my birth mother received. Her skilled letter-writing resulted in her being selected to be my new mother. I was led to believe that I was the prize in this contest. As for my father, Les was won over after he saw me, Irene said. I don't imagine that the couple ever explored the idea that their social roles, as husband and wife, failed to meet their human needs.

The words illegitimate and bastard were not spoken aloud when I was a child since the ties created by law when I was adopted made me a legal member of the Rogers family. But I was not their only child for very long. I was four years old when Irene became pregnant. She said that it was a pleasant surprise when the doctor confirmed her pregnancy. I don't remember my own reaction to the news that I would have a baby brother or a baby sister, but Les did not want

another child. Years later, Irene told my sister Jackie that her father flew into a rage when she broke the news. She also confided that she did not run away when he hit her because she had no place to go. I don't know if Irene attempted to terminate the pregnancy to appease her husband, but without recourse to a legal abortion, she failed to abort her pregnancy. So my new sister was born and Les had twin beds installed before his wife returned home from the hospital.

Jackie was their first and last biological child and I was glad there were no more. Her birth by Caesarean section undermined Irene's physical health and she neither expected nor received much assistance from Les. He provided financial support, but when it came to the day to day care of her newborn daughter and me, Irene was on her own.

Apart from his career, Les began to spend more and more time working outside in his garden at 3330 West 42nd Street. We had moved into the larger home in 1947, two years after Jackie was born. It was very close to Crofton House Private School for Girls and the neighbourhood was very rural. Riding stables on the Fraser River lowlands were nearby and Marine Drive was close enough for me to cycle off to the endowment lands at the University of British Columbia when I was growing up. The location suited Les too. He ordered expensive and unique plants from Murray's Nursery at the foot of Blenheim Street and he lavished them with attention throughout the growing season.

In the wintertime, when Les lived indoors, he indulged his passion for classical music. He purchased top quality equipment and recordings which he listened to by the hour, alone in the living room with a beer in his hand.

Life at home became ever more estranged for each of us, as Les's drinking escalated. Craving attention I suppose, I started to lash out in anger at home and at school. And my behavior did not improve when my parents struck back. "You're a bad actor – a Doctor Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde" they declared. And when name-calling and other forms of punishment failed to produce the desired results, Les and Irene declared, "you should be grateful we adopted you!" In return, I wished aloud that they hadn't adopted me. Les and Irene claimed the last word when I heard them say, "you would have ended up in an orphanage if we hadn't taken you in!" It was true, they assured me; several of my birth mother's siblings suffered from epilepsy, so I was not adoptable. It did not escape my notice that this information tarnished their earlier version of my adoption story. I had been told that I was lovingly chosen and now I was being told that nobody else wanted me! Without any evidence to the contrary, I believed that I was flawed.

I struggle with angry and irrational feelings when I spy Science World signage from the window of the Skytrain. I have never visited the place, although I have resolved to do so a number of times. I imagine that it extols the virtues of science whereas I am inclined to dwell on its failings in respect to my childhood. After all, medical science declared me to be defective, and untold numbers of German citizens were being similarly labeled and snuffed out in gas chambers the year I was born.

PART 2: Esther's Alberta

When I was twelve years old, I found prohibited materials hidden in my father's dresser drawer. There was a book entitled *Eugenics*. The text on taboo subjects such as masturbation, prostitution, and madness, was illustrated. Monstrous looking people were depicted and scientific nonsense explained their afflictions. God! Did Les believe this bizarre stuff, I wondered years later? More exciting by far was finding a copy of my original Birth Certificate hidden away in my parents' bedroom closet. It was all forbidden information that I planned to savor in secret.

"You're not my real mother and my name is not Elizabeth Joanne Rogers, it's Gwenneth Ann Bader!" Did I really scream this out just a week or two later? I did and something died. My words struck like bullets and the hurt registered in Irene's eyes. Their usual hazel color became overcast, almost gray. It scared me. I knew I had gone too far, but the deed was done. Forgotten was the fact that she was the one who did her best to meet my childish daily needs, whether I liked it or not. And I didn't like it when she licked Kleenex and tenderly sponged small smudges of dirt from my face. But she was the reliable parent; the one who visited me at summer camp each year to deliver candy bars and other treats. I expected some kind of immediate retribution. Instead she whispered, "Just wait until your father gets home."

I do not remember the circumstances that triggered my rage and it didn't really matter afterwards. But I learned that day that some things cannot be undone. My first birth certificate named my birth mother, Esther Bader; it confirmed our biological connection as mother and daughter; and it revealed the name she had given me when I was born. I was named Gwenneth Ann Bader. The rest of the story of my mother's flight, my birth, and the identity of my natural father, was subsequently gleaned through years of research into official government records, unofficial private sources, and personal contact with family members.

On June 12, 2000, Information and Records Officer, Leslie Matheson, informed me that access to the information I requested under *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* was granted. The envelope from the Ministry for Children and Families for the Province of British Columbia, File 99-2092, was at her office on West Broadway Street and it must be picked up by me, in person. "I'll come right over," I said and hung up. I sounded calm, but I was very excited. I had been asking questions ever since I was born. Now maybe I'd find some answers!

I drove over to the Provincial Government Office in a nervous haze and checked in with the receptionist. She immediately referred me to another woman, a social worker I guess, and I followed her into a private office. I really don't remember what the social worker said or exactly what I was required to sign – probably some kind of a waiver – before she handed me a brown envelope marked "To Be Opened By the Addressee Only." I imagine that I thanked her

before I escaped to my car. I recall getting behind the steering wheel still clutching the envelope, uncertain about what to do next. I needed a sanctuary, a place to digest the contents of my envelope. I started the car and drove until I found a deserted parking lot overlooking the ocean. Then I opened the envelope. It contained a sheaf of badly photo-copied papers. I ruffled through them, not knowing where to begin, afraid to begin. Come on you coward, concentrate! And suddenly, there it was – my original birth certificate. It named my mother, but not my father. The notation “born out of wedlock” was inserted in place of his surname. Although I had read a copy of the document many years before, I devoured the information that I had been deprived of in childhood. But there wasn’t much more to be found in the secret registration of my birth. It set out the following:

Name of Child:	Gwenneth Ann Bader
Date of Birth:	March 21, 1940
Sex:	Female
Place of Birth:	Vancouver General Hospital
Name of Father:	Child Born Out of Wedlock
Birthplace of Father:	*****
Maiden Name of Mother:	Esther Estelle Bader
Birthplace of Mother:	Hilda, Alberta
Occupation of Father:	*****
Residence of Mother:	Medicine Hat, Alberta
Doctor in attendance at Birth:	Dr. J.W. Welch

So I pressed on. The next document was entitled, *A Memorandum* from the Children’s Aid Society of Vancouver, B.C., dated May 29, 1941. Referring to the adoption of the child named on the *Certificate of Birth*. It read:

We wish to advise that on July 7th, 1940, Mr. and Mrs. Reginald (Irene) Rogers, 2972 West 32nd Avenue, Vancouver, took the infant female child of Esther Bader, Born March 21st, 1940, into their

home with a view to adoption. This was a private placement made by the natural mother. Due to a rare hereditary disease in the mother's background, the Rogers, who contacted us after the baby was placed, were advised to consider this as a free home placement. The Rogers have filed notice of their intention to adopt.

It was true, then! Les and Irene had adopted me despite the warning that they were taking a terrible risk. The document called the impediment to my adoption "a rare hereditary disease" and the agency was so relieved that I would not become a burden on the state that the usual fees were waved and I was placed free of charge. No wonder my adoptive parents had expected some gratitude from me in return for their act of compassion.

Next, a *Memorandum* in my envelope revealed that 108 days had elapsed from my date of birth at Vancouver General Hospital until I went to live with Les and Irene Rogers. A file labeled "United Church House" disclosed my whereabouts for those months.

Subsequent research revealed that the United Church Home for Girls succeeded the Presbyterian Church Social Service Home which was established in Vancouver in 1914. According to an article in the *Vancouver Province* (1973) entitled "Old ideas in old home," written by Aileen Campbell, the original place had a mission to reform female prostitutes. It surprised me to learn that the need to rescue and reform women who had sex out of wedlock and the need to protect men from women who were judged to be immoral was publicly supported during the first half of the twentieth century. Unfortunately, the most obvious sign of a woman's downfall was being pregnant outside of wedlock, so my natural

mother was among the sixty “fallen women,” who went into hiding at the mansion on Sussex Street in Burnaby between 1939 and 1940.

Esther’s doctor, John William Welch, had recommended the United Church Home for Girls to his patient. Dr. Welch was also Irene Rogers’s family doctor. Esther contacted the home and she was admitted to await my birth.

Esther was six months pregnant when the Women’s Social Service Council and other organizations made sure that a tree and gifts were supplied to make the Christmas season special for the inmates of the home. The Annual Report of the United Church Home for Girls published in 1941 notes that the rules were bent a bit at Christmas. After morning worship, the girls [a disparaging term applied to the unwed mothers-in-waiting] sang Christmas hymns, read from the Gospel of Luke, and listened to the King’s Christmas message which was broadcast from England. Evidently, a few of the residents who had already given birth, held their babies and sang “Away in a Manger” (United Church Archives Annual Report, 1941).

I cannot imagine what it must have been like for my mother to hide out for months in a home for girls whose sin was having sex outside of marriage and whose punishment was pregnancy and childbirth. She was probably grateful to have some place to hide, given the fact that the law would not allow her to terminate the pregnancy. Abortion would not be legalized until decades later. So it was our fate to be stigmatized and confined for months while my (unidentified) biological father remained at large.

When Dr. Welch and the staff at the home asked Esther to identify my natural father, she refused because he was a married man. Esther clung to the hope that her lover would get a divorce and marry her, but as the months passed all she received in the mail were small sums of money. "Would she give me up for adoption, put the sin of having sex behind her, and return to Alberta, or did she plan to keep me?", the authorities demanded in the weeks preceding my birth. With no word from my biological father, Esther advised Dr. Welch and officials at the home that she would put me up for adoption as soon as I was born in the spring. Once again she was questioned about his identity and again she refused to co-operate with the social work staff at the house.

My birth occurred on March 21st 1940. Esther was in labor for nine and one half hours. To my knowledge, no birth photos were taken. I weighed eight lbs. 13½ oz. and I am told that I had black hair. My head was reported to be quite well-shaped, despite a deep skull abrasion caused by the doctor's forceps delivery. This notation explained where the mysterious lump at the base of my skull had come from, and I was relieved to learn that it had not been caused by something worse, as I had imagined.

When department officials arrived at the hospital seeking background information to place me for immediate adoption, my mother provided our maternal family history. She steadfastly refused to divulge my father's name or whereabouts. But she did confide in Dr. Welch when he told her that he knew of a childless couple who might wish to adopt me.

Then Esther changed her mind about immediate placement. My head wound upset her, so Esther told the authorities there would be no placement until she had nursed me back to good health. She didn't reveal that she had renewed her efforts to contact my natural father through Dr. Welch. For she and I had bonded and Esther clung to the hope that my natural father might offer to marry her, if he could be persuaded to visit us at the hospital. Of course, Dr. Welch never revealed his name, but it was Jacob Hahn. Esther whispered his name to me in 1980 during the course of a brief telephone conversation.

Perhaps Esther neglected to inform Dr. Welch about the change in her plans, because on April 1st, 1940 he sent his patient, Irene Rogers, to the Vancouver General Hospital to look me over. Evidently Irene was pleased when she visited the hospital nursery and she and Les decided to take me. There is a discrepancy here between the official recorded version of my adoption and Irene's memory of a newspaper advertisement. I cannot explain it, except to say that Irene may have concocted the letter-writing story, but she believed it. Perhaps it was her way of saying that she had more of a claim on me than her husband, Les.

Irene's friend, Miss Bourne, was in fact the social worker assigned to Esther's case. She was an employee of the Children's' Aid Society and when she learned that Irene had visited the hospital she contacted Dr. Welch. "There is a problem," she declared. "Was he aware of an epileptic history in Esther's health background?" Clearly this impediment to my adoption surprised Dr. Welch. Evidently Esther was also caught off guard too, because as far as she knew

there was no such thing as an epileptic medical history in the Bader family. Nevertheless, Irene and Les were told that the matter would have to be cleared up before anything further could be done.

When Esther's hospital stay came to an end, she and I returned to the United Church Home for Girls to wait and see what would happen. Jacob (who was nicknamed Jack by Hahn family members) had not contacted Esther or visited the hospital and she was becoming resigned to the fact that he would not marry her. Pressured to help the social worker clear things up to expedite my adoption, Esther revealed the name of the Bader family doctor in Medicine Hat. She was assured that Dr. Gershaw was bound by oath to keep all matters under discussion entirely confidential. Miss Bourne then sent a letter to a Dr. Gershaw in Medicine Hat. She received a reply on April 16, 1940. Dr. Gershaw was of the opinion that I was not adoptable because three children in the Bader family had epilepsy.

Esther was not given the bad news until ten days more had elapsed. The woman in charge of United Church House, Mrs. Newcombe, summoned my mother to her office on the 26th of April and broke the news. "Adoption is not possible," Esther was told, "perhaps you should return to Alberta with your child" (Mrs. Newcombe, United Church House Correspondence, 1940, United Church Archives file 4404). It was noted for the record that my mother was very upset. She didn't tell Mrs. Newcombe that it was not possible for her to go home to Hilda, Alberta, with me, her illegitimate child, in her arms. "Well, what was she going to do?" Mrs. Newcombe inquired. She hinted it was time for the "Slavic

looking woman with a long face and brown eyes and hair” to move on. “Perhaps we’ll stay in Vancouver, if I can find work,” my mother replied.

By the 1st of May, Esther had managed to contact the man who had fathered me and Jacob Hahn reluctantly agreed to visit Dr. Welch and provide him with paternal family background information to facilitate my adoption. He refused to see me and my mother.

There is a break in the record as to the Esther’s whereabouts in May and June 1940. I believe that she rented a room somewhere and we lived together with some financial assistance from my biological father. But as summer approached, Esther could see that her affair with Jacob had come to an end. The man made it clear that he did not want us to stay in Vancouver any longer and, lacking any other means of support, Esther was forced to give me up. She was unemployed and provincial mothers’ allowance programs required women to demonstrate proof of good moral character. Unmarried women like Esther could expect to be excluded (Strange & Loo, 1998, p. 111). In any event, Dr. Welch had indicated to Jacob that Les and Irene Rogers were still willing to adopt me.

My adoption enabled the government to circumvent any public expense it might have incurred to ensure the well-being of my birth mother and myself. Further, it appeared to be a remedy for Irene’s infertility. And last but not least, my adoption erased all proof of paternity and all liability that might encumber Jacob Hahn, so my biological father left word for Esther to go ahead with the placement and return to her family in Alberta. Esther complied with his wishes. But the subsequent failure of my adoption suggests that it is not easy to give a

child away because nature and nurture influence identity and the outcome of adoption.

My birth mother delivered me to Les and Irene Rogers's house in the Dunbar area of Vancouver on July 7th, 1940. I was three and one half months old and our parting was extremely painful. Evidently Esther made several attempts to see me afterwards, but my adoptive parents sent her away. I do not know if they gave her a duplicate of the photo that was taken when I joined the Rogers family. It shows me wrapped up in blankets, propped up, with one tiny foot protruding. I do not appear to be in distress, but I am inclined to believe that my infant need to reconnect with my biological mother was as urgent as her need to reconnect with me. Damasio (1999, pp. 222-223) and others who are studying the structure of the brain suggest that the self is a brain state that is influenced by genetics and experiences. And modern brain imaging technologies that allow neuroscientists to measure brain changes in the cortex suggest that childhood trauma may influence the function of the brain. This may explain why many adoptees struggle with issues of identity and feelings of rejection and abandonment after their biological ties are severed, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (National Adoption Information Clearinghouse, 2004, p. 2).

So my adoption was processed and it appeared to be finalized in December 1941 when my birth certificate was legally altered to conceal my origins. By then, Esther had returned to her parent's farm near Medicine Hat, Alberta. It was the center of trade and commerce for prairie farmers with huge acreage's in southern Alberta and Saskatchewan. English was not the first

language for most of the immigrant families from central Europe and, like most of their neighbors, the Bader's spoke German. They were Seventh Day Adventist converts, and they lived in tightly knit rural communities. An extensive history of the Bader family was compiled (Solheim, 1980), and it is a primary source of information with respect to my genealogy. I also interviewed family members in confidence, to reconstruct the lives of my natural parents. Library, archival, and internet research have also fueled my re-creation of the past.

Although Medicine Hat (pop. 9,500) was not many miles removed from the family farm in Hilda, Alberta. Esther's fundamentalist parents, Emanuel and Mathalida Bader, had not allowed their daughter to leave home to get an education. Emanuel had fathered a total of fourteen children by the mid-1930s: four by his first wife, whose grave was dug in the pasture, and eight by Mathalida. Born in 1917, Esther was the eldest child of her father's second marriage.

The family was not large by German immigrant standards, but it was more somber than most. Emanuel exercised his "god-given" right to control his family quite freely and his children learned at a very young age to comply with his authority and yield to his wishes in all matters. The decisions he made were often arbitrary. For example, Emanuel recognized the importance of education by helping to establish an elementary school in the neighborhood. His two eldest daughters had attended regularly and they had been allowed to complete high school in Medicine Hat. The girls paid their own way by selling religious books

door-to-door. After they graduated, the sisters even managed to put themselves through college. One took up nursing, the other pursued a teaching career.

During the same period of time, Emanuel kept his two eldest sons out of school to work on the farm. Like many of his neighbors Emanuel had little formal education and he took pride in being a self made man.

Emanuel was born in Paris, Bessarabia, in November 1882. His people had plowed land and harvested crops for generations on contested land in the old country. Wars shifted borders from Turkey to Poland and to Russia in eastern Europe, but after burying five children in Russian soil, Emanuel's parents decided to leave in 1898. Some members of the family stayed behind despite the political turmoil and ever-changing rules and their descendents presently reside in Germany.

Emanuel was sixteen years old when Joseph and Louise Bader fled Russia with his six year old sister and newborn brother. As the eldest son, he was accustomed to back-breaking labor long before the family emigrated. Toil had muscled his arms prematurely, but it had not dulled his mind. He had little schooling, but Emanuel evidently picked things up quickly. He had even taught himself how to play a variety of musical instruments before the family joined relatives and friends who were farming government confiscated Indian land in North Dakota, near the town of Ellendale.

Emanuel married his first wife, Elizabeth Weller, when he was twenty-five. Several years later, in 1911, the young couple and their two children moved to Hilda, Alberta, to build a farm of their own on Indian land. They broke up the soil

with horse and plough to plant a crop and garden. They built a house to shelter themselves and their animals. And they erected fences to enclose their 640 acre homestead (*Hilda's golden heritage*, 1973, p. 57). His lack of education did not prevent Emanuel from carving out an important place for himself in the local German Russian community. In addition to a school, he helped to establish an Adventist Church, and he served as a municipal councilor for nearly a quarter of a century.

There was, however, a price to be paid and Emanuel's family paid it. His first wife, Elizabeth, died on the farm in 1914 after giving birth to their fourth child. Left with four children under the age of eight, the widower quickly married a niece of his first wife, Mathalida Maier, to run the household. Emanuel's marriage to Mathalida, resulted in the birth of nine more children. My mother Esther, was their first child. Esther's stepbrother, Richard, started doing a man's work on the farm when she was born. He was nine years old. The place was so isolated there was no primary school for him attend, but even after one was built the boy and his younger brother were kept back to supply the back-breaking, cheap labor that built the Bader farm.

Esther attended primary school, but she was kept out of high school to help her mother cook and clean and look after the growing family. It was not an easy job for a young girl. Esther had been born at home on the farm in Hilda on June 6, 1917. The births of two brothers and two sisters followed over the course of the next seven years. Esther's four siblings were big eleven pound babies and Mathalida had a long and difficult labor with each of them. The babies were

delivered at home with the help of a local midwife. Later, when it became apparent that something was wrong with the children, Emanuel and Mathalida arranged to have the last four children of their nine children delivered in a hospital at Medicine Hat. These children were normal and healthy.

Mathalida and Emanuel did not know what had gone wrong during the home births. One baby had simply died after twenty-one days of life which, in itself, was not an uncommon occurrence. But the next three children had reached school age, when mental and physical disabilities became apparent. They were labeled mentally dull in the lower grades and sent home from school. They also suffered from a type of paralysis. A local doctor in Medicine Hat was consulted, but his diagnosis of epilepsy did not satisfy Mathalida and Emanuel. So the couple decided to take one of the children to Mayo Clinic. They wanted a second opinion and they hoped to find a cure for the ailment. Instead, they were told that the damage was permanent. So upon her parent's return, Esther was taken out of school to care for her disabled brothers and sisters, together with an equal number of healthy siblings.

Life at the Bader farm was hard for the teen-aged girl who loved school and sports, home economics, and Christmas concerts (*Hilda's golden heritage*, 1973, p. 59). Put in complete charge of what had grown into a very large farming family, Esther was capable, honest, sincere, steady and hardworking, according to a close relative (Personal correspondence, Woodruff to Drake Feb. 20, 1994).

Esther's first opportunity to move away from home came in 1939 during the Depression. She was twenty-one years old. "I went to the city to find work

and see how the other half of the world lived,” she said many years later (*60 Years Hilda’s Heritage Part II*, 1983, n.p.). A photograph taken after Esther moved to Medicine Hat in 1939 shows a stylish, attractive young woman with long slender legs encased in sheer nylon hosiery. She has a radiant smile on her face; I wonder if she is in love.

Romantic love would have been a new experience for Esther. It was not part of her cloistered life on the farm. That is to say, she had few opportunities to meet young men except perhaps Adventist Church members. So, she would have been no match for my sophisticated biological father.

My profile of Jacob Hahn has been slowly garnered from official adoption records and relatives from the Bader and Hahn families. I have relied upon e-mail correspondence, personal interviews, and family photographs to compile the history of my paternal family (Hahn, 1999, personal correspondence; Woodruff, 1994, personal correspondence).

My biological father was a charismatic man with a reputation for “liking the ladies,” according to most reports. Raised with four brothers and sisters in a fun loving, musical, sociable family, Jacob was a party-guy who made his own wine and drank a lot of it himself. He was almost the same age as Esther’s father and both men were acquainted. Jacob’s cousin, Charlotte Hahn, had married a Bader son. Other than that, Emanuel Bader and Jacob Hahn were as different as god and the devil.

Jacob Hahn’s family had immigrated to North America from Austria in the late 19th century. They may have resided in the city of Strasbourg, however the

family members that I contacted were vague about their European ancestry and date of departure from Europe. I asked if the family was Jewish, but no one knew if there was a connection. A man with little education himself, Jacob was nevertheless proud of his distinguished European ancestors. They were said to include a general, post office inspectors, and schoolteachers. Jacob's vocation was that of a general merchant. He spent time on the road servicing accounts in Alberta and Saskatchewan, where he sold everything from cars to ladies clothing during his lifetime. Jacob's ambition – which he realized before his death – was to own and operate a fashionable ladies wear shop in the bustling post-war city of Vancouver.

Jacob was fond of his cousin Charlotte and her husband, Richard Bader. They operated a hotel in Medicine Hat. So when Jacob came to the "Hat" he was bound to pay them a visit. He came by in 1939, when Esther and her sister were boarding at the hotel. It was close to the Savoy Grill where Esther was employed as a waitress.

Women were attracted to Jacob and Esther was no exception. Photographs show him dressed to accentuate his swarthy good looks and I am told that the man was very self-assured. It is certain that Esther had certainly never met anyone as worldly and exciting as Jacob Hahn. Unlike the shy Adventist boys that she saw each week in church, her distant relative distained religion. Bent on a good time, Jack invited Esther to join him in his room for a few drinks one evening. Flattered by the older man's attention, and sensing no harm

in it, Esther nevertheless, took her sister along with her. The story would have ended here except for the fact of my conception.

It may have been a straight-forward seduction given Esther's youth and inexperience, but this makes me wonder what happened to Esther's chaperone that night? Jacob indicated afterwards that his affair with Esther was a one night stand, but this is unlikely if Esther's sister was actually present. Jacob also claimed that Esther and her sister "got him drunk" and seduced him, which is even less plausible. It is a matter of record that Esther was devoted to him. She protected Jacob's reputation throughout her pregnancy and she made no demands after my birth. Therefore, it seems more likely to me that my biological parents were lovers until Esther became pregnant.

Their love affair threatened to turn into a public scandal when Esther became pregnant. Jacob was a married man with two young daughters and he did not wish to disturb the status quo. To make matters worse, Emanuel may have charged Jacob with seduction if he had known about his daughter's pregnancy and he would most certainly have shunned and disowned her. So with Jacob's help, Esther told her family that she had a new job in Vancouver and she fled to British Columbia to birth me in secret. Esther never revealed whether or not her lover promised to get a divorce and marry her in the future, but clearly the couple went their separate ways before I was born. Esther returned to the family farm in Alberta and married a neighbor in 1945. Jacob's first marriage eventually ended in divorce. He moved west, he remarried, and he established a clothing store on Main Street in Vancouver before his death in 1959.

Whoops. Where am I now? I must have zoomed by 22nd Street Edmonds, and Royal Oak Stations. Oh, oh, here's Metrotown. Doors open and seemingly under magnetic attraction people ebb and flow, in and out. It is a vast temple of trade, a fantasy world, a friendship center, a lost and found depot for those with time to spare. Joyce Station is ahead and I recall the Hahn and Bader cousin who assisted me on my quest for information about the lives of my natural parents.

There were no malls when I was growing up near 41st and Dunbar, in Musqueam territory. It was a country place in which frogs and woodlands, dogs and stables, meandering back roads, books, radio programs, and movies kept me amused. *Lassie* and *Black Beauty* were beloved companions. My role models were adventurous, unconventional women: Kathleen Windsor's prostitute and (bastard) character, Amber, in the fictional novel *Forever Amber* and the indomitable, self-centered Scarlett O'Hara in the movie version of *Gone With The Wind*, were two of my favorites. The unorthodox literature of my youth may have influenced my friendships, for I have always enjoyed the company of socially unconventional people, dogs, and horses.

I was torn from my childhood reveries when Les had a nervous breakdown. I was 12 years old at the time. It was a cataclysmic event, since he was the head of our family and its sole breadwinner. At first, Irene made excuses when her husband took to his bed. He could not go to work because he was sick, Irene told his boss. I remember that both of them cried when my father lost his job. Nobody knew what to do. On the brink of financial ruin, Irene persuaded her

husband to consult a psychiatrist. And I remember the day that he went for a long, long walk. Irene panicked as the hours passed and Les did not return. She tried to push thoughts of his possible suicide from her mind. "But," as she explained when she placed an emergency call to her husband's psychiatrist later on in the day, "our home is close to the Fraser River and what if he has jumped in and drowned?"

According to Irene, the psychiatrist replied, "So what if he drowns himself – he would be doing you both a favor." I am not making this up. That is what she told me. That much is true. Why she repeated it, I cannot say. But she was very afraid and angry with him, even after he returned. Then she abandoned him for a month or so, taking us children with her. With no means of support, we stayed with a relative until Les attended an alcohol treatment centre and he snapped out of his depression. Then he came to fetch us.

I cried when Les and Irene reconciled and she agreed to sell our home at 42nd and Blenheim and start over again in another part of the city. Les found another job, but that did not forestall our move across town to 38th and Cambie Street. I hated living in a subdivision circa 1952. Distrusting the future, Irene ventured forth and she found a job in a fledgling banking establishment at Broadway and Quebec Street. It was the first branch of Vancity Savings Credit Union.

Like other middle-class men of his generation, Les did not approve of his wife working outside of their home. He seemed to think that it reflected badly upon him. Besides, it gave Irene a sense of independence which he could not

abide. Nevertheless, Irene refused to quit her job. So once again, Les turned to alcohol for comfort. Only this time, Irene joined him and they began to drink socially on weekends with some of Irene's new acquaintances. Regular Sunday dinners with Nanny Rogers ceased several years before she died in a rest home in 1956.

I rocketed into puberty and Irene explained by phone where a belt and pads were stored when I called her at work with the news. That was it. My approaching womanhood and the illnesses of grandparents coincided and our family was disintegrating. I began to stay away from home on weekends, except to eat, read, and sleep. For when Les and Irene were not fighting with one another, they focused their attention upon me. They called me a lazy, bad girl, and I acted the part. I took to smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol like the grown-ups around me. School was irrelevant, so I cut classes. Les and Irene issued empty threats in return.

I understood from my parents that a university education for girls in general, and pretty girls in particular, was a waste of money. I was destined for marriage and motherhood. Until a suitable mate was found, I should trade upon my good looks and become a model or an actress, they suggested. I was further reminded that an opportunity to study with veteran actor and former Vancouver Playhouse theatre director, Joy Coghill, had been provided years earlier and I had failed to take advantage of it. I did not tell them that I already had a boyfriend and we had another future staked out. I was fifteen years old.

We had met under Birks Clock near present day Granville Station. It was a pickup place in my youth. I'd head downtown with a girlfriend on a Friday or a Saturday night under the pretence of taking in a movie. Instead, we would hang out in a coffee shop near the clock and check out the guys who cruised Granville street. Good girls were not supposed to meet guys this way, but our crowd was fast, so that is what we did. Getting picked up was not an invitation to have sex, but it often led to lots of fondling and kissing. Fear of an unwanted pregnancy prevented me and most of my friends from going "all the way" on casual dates.

Main Street Station is presently located two block east of a historic divide known as the west and the east side of Vancouver. My parents would explain that we lived on the right (commercial class) rather than the wrong (working class) side of town. My pick up boyfriend, Howie Nadeau, lived on the east side, in a James Dean tough kind of place. Guys wore leather jackets and they fixed up old cars and renamed them hot rods. My boyfriend didn't own a car, but he was a handsome, athletic, Emerald Gloves amateur boxer in his spare time. Howie had lots of spare time because he had dropped out of high school a year before me. He lived with his parents in a walk-up above George's Plumbing and Heating at 25th and Main. His father, George, was the plumber.

The world was ours and it was perfect. I had met my prince and he promised love everlasting. I forged notes to explain my absences from school so we could be together. And for a time, the clandestine risk of it heightened our pleasure. But the threat of incarceration in a school for bad girls brought me to my senses. I subsequently found employment and persuaded my parents to

allow me to quit school at the end of grade 10. BC Telephone provided the training and I, together with several of my friends, found myself gainfully employed as a long distance telephone operator. When I got my first paycheck, I rented a room and moved out of my parents' house. I was sixteen.

“Don't you dare get pregnant and come running home!” Les and Irene yelled after me. It was a scary thought, but I was lucky. We practiced withdrawal for birth control and I did not conceive until I was nineteen and safely wed. There was only one hitch beforehand. Howie presumed that George Nadeau was his father and blood kin, but it turned out that he was not. The matter came to light when we were preparing to apply for a marriage license and Howie's birth certificate could not be found. His mother, Kay, subsequently confessed that her son was illegitimate – just like me. And like Esther, Kay also refused to reveal the name of the man who had fathered her son, but the matter was considered settled when the adults agreed it would be best to apply for a legal change of name. Howie's revised birth certificate proved the fiction that George Nadeau was his father and Howie and I were able to get married in the Anglican Church in Kerrisdale. In compliance with tradition, I wore a formal white wedding gown as a signifier that I was a virgin bride. I assumed my new husband's Francophone surname without question too. I wanted to turn my back on the past and make a new life. Ironically, Irene decided to bail out of her marriage when we returned from our weekend honeymoon in Seattle. I resented the fact that she waited so long, but nevertheless, I helped her pack-up and leave. It was 1959 and my grandmother, Anna Young, died the same year.

PART 3: Nicola Valley

Ten years later, when our eldest child Stephen was nine and his brother Michael was five years old, Howie Nadeau and I parted. I was distraught. I blamed myself for abandoning our vows and our dreams. In fact, despair settled upon all of us – Stephen, Michael, myself, and Howie – when we separated. I cannot revisit this painful period except to say that Howie's descent to the streets of skid road Vancouver was halted by a Salvation Army missionary, while my own thoughts of suicide were checked by an unbidden sense of duty to Stephen and Michael, whom I love dearly. Part of me wanted to die and a part of me did die, but grieving nudged me into action when our circumstances became dire. There was no other option, for I could neither bow out like my natural mother, Esther, nor stay married as Irene had for many years. So I resolved to fight single-handed for our survival.

I had worked in offices during my marriage but the wages were too low to support a family. After the rent was paid, what little was left was used to purchase food and pay for childcare. Being chronically unemployed, I knew that Stephen and Michael's father would not pay child support and he would make no demands. In fact, when the courts ordered Howie to pay some support, he stopped visiting and dropped out of sight.

Subsidized daycare, affordable housing, and union wages, were beyond my immediate reach so I fell back on women's work. I began by contacting

Canada Manpower Employment offices throughout the province. I sent out new resumes emphasizing my housekeeping and cooking skills. I offered to work for our room and board plus wages. I knew wages would be less in the country, but I could envision no alternative except state charity if we stayed put. Charity is an old English label, but I could not shake its negative connotations; the Rogers family did not believe in charity, not even for the marginalized in society. Or if they did, my sons and I could not meet the moral criteria of the Church of England. It pitied the elderly, orphaned children and widows who were deemed morally worth saving, but divorcees – being failed wives – were thought to be responsible for their own misfortune.

Les Rogers died on January 3, 1970. Irene was struggling to make ends meet at the time and my sister and I had irreconcilable differences, so Stephen and Michael and I had no one to call upon for help. Unable to bring myself to apply for welfare, I strove for independence and acted as if I was in control of our lives. My determination was rewarded in February, when I answered a remote radio/telephone call. The general manager of the Douglas Lake Cattle Company was on the line. The Company was looking for someone to cook at the Home Ranch, he said. It seemed a stroke of good fortune, so I made an appointment to meet with him during the course of his next business trip to Vancouver. Since I had never set foot in the Interior of BC and I had never heard of the Douglas Lake Cattle Company, I contacted the Vancouver Public Library. The librarian located a book entitled *Bar III*. It said that the Douglas Lake Cattle Company was the largest cattle ranch in the British Empire. She volunteered the information

that the ranch was presently owned and operated by millionaire C.N. (Chunky) Woodward, whose father had founded Woodward's Stores in western Canada.

The possibility of living on a huge ranch rekindled my childhood infatuation with all things western, from radio shows like the Lone Ranger, to western movies starring Jeff Chandler as Cochise, to games of Cowboys and Indians played with the other kids in my neighborhood. I thought about my lifelong love of horses and dogs. Between the ages of ten and thirteen, I had haunted the riding stables near our home and I knew how to ride. I imagined we would be able to own a horse and a dog if we lived on a ranch. Steve and Mike were not convinced this was reason enough to relocate to the country. But my mind was made up and I presumed that my sons would come around in time.

I was interviewed and hired by the general manager when he came to town several weeks later. Neil was thirtyish, tall and slim, blue-eyed, blue jeaned, and stylishly booted. He sported a chocolate brown cowboy hat which he removed when he introduced himself. I wondered if he was married. He was. And he was all business (with a Bachelor of Commerce degree.) When he listed the job benefits, they seemed too good to be true: a house, free food, good wages and health benefits, and a new life for Steve and Mike and me on a famous ranch in the Nicola Valley. "So when can you start", he inquired. A date in March was agreed upon. It did not occur to me to ask why he had come all the way to Vancouver to hire a cook.

Patterson Station prompts memories of Scotty Patterson, the truck driver who was sent down from the ranch to move us. He arrived at our apartment late

on moving day, not because he was delayed at a cattle auction as claimed, but because he had drunk too much whiskey the night before at the Fraser Arms Hotel. Our driver's dissipated drinking was all but legendary in cattle-ranching circles.

When Scotty arrived several hours late, my nine foot chesterfield became the focus of his attention. It was a wedding gift from Les and Irene and a fixture in my life. I admit that my attachment was a bit strange. It smacked of materialism which in my opinion, was always one of my Dad's most unattractive traits. But Les had died two months before our departure in March 1970, and I needed to take the chesterfield with me to Douglas Lake, just as settler and immigrant women have always lugged seemingly superficial items around to remind them of home. At least my keepsake was not a mirror or a piano.

"So, where's the help"? I replied that my friends couldn't wait around any longer. "I guess I've got to do it myself then, " Scotty declared. And without further discussion he tied a rope to the chesterfield and threw it over the third floor balcony. I should add that he held tight to the end of the rope to prevent it from hitting the back end of the manure-filled cattle truck which was parked below. While he misjudged the weight of it, he managed to hang on when the rope gave a great jerk and the balcony railing threatened to give way and carry the poor man over the side. Miraculously, Scotty saved himself and my sofa, but he had injured his back. Cursing, our driver dismissed the suggestion that he seek medical aid. "I've got my own medicine," he gasped. And so he did.

This portrait of Scotty places him among a string of wicked genies that have escaped during the writing of this autobiography. I do not intentionally release painful memories that may distract from the narrative, but they are part of the story. For on hindsight, it is clear that Scotty was inebriated before we left Vancouver and I placed my sons at risk when we climbed into the cab of his truck and left for Douglas Lake. My eldest son recently remarked that Scotty drove at a snail's pace and the Trans Canada highway and the other roads to Douglas Lake were lightly travelled in 1971, but it seems miraculous to me that we reached our destination.

The unrestrained consumption of alcohol by white people was widely tolerated at the time, whereas Indigenous people were subjected to legal prohibitions regarding the purchase and consumption of alcohol. Of course, I cannot pretend that I was conscious of this or other cultural anomalies during our trip to Douglas Lake, so many years ago.

Yet I was conscious of the fact that we were following a historic pattern when we forayed into our own mythic West and I experienced a sense of adventure. Stephen and Michael on the other hand, sat in stiff silence as the truck lurched along hour after hour with many so-called medicinal stops along the way. They were utterly exhausted, and so was I, when our warm vehicle finally turned off the paved road. It was sunset when we wove through gently rounded, dun colored hills, following miles of fences with snow-mantled cattle huddled in fields. Scotty even turned cheerful as he named local landmarks. He pointed out Nicola Lake, the old Gilmore field, the Guichon Ranch, and the Lauder Place.

Then we crossed an invisible boundary and he announced that we were driving through Douglas Lake Ranch land. "It's half a million acres!", Scotty exclaimed as we passed the Hamilton field. A few miles further, the lights from a small settlement perched along one edge of a frozen lake marked the main village on the Douglas Lake Indian Reserve, as he called it.

It was after midnight when we drove beneath the massive log portal that marked the entrance to Douglas Lake Ranch. The buildings were black silhouettes. Except for one large spotlight in the yard, the place was lit by starlight alone. The noise of the truck engine woke up some dogs, but the sound of their barking did not wake up the residents who were bedded down for the night. Claiming to be overcome with back pain, Scotty applied the brakes and told me to knock on the door of the nearest house. "I can't do that – they're all asleep." "Just do as I say and tell them that I need help," he yelled. So I did as I was told. I knocked at the door of a stranger's house and informed the sleepy resident that I was the new cook from Vancouver. Scotty was ill and needed a hand, I said. "So old Scotty's drunk again, is he?" The man had a gentle, New Zealand accent, and he certainly knew what was going on. "Just a minute, I'll get dressed, and take you to your place." Our furniture was not unloaded until the next morning, so we slept on the floor of in our new home that night.

The next morning, we got our first look at the place and it felt absolutely right to me. I cannot explain my sense of well being, except to recall that my Bader ancestors were fixed to the land as they migrated from Poland to plough the steppes of Russia, the plains of North Dakota, and the grasslands of

Saskatchewan and Alberta. I didn't question my elation or my desire to start a new life.

Within a matter of weeks I purchased an old, second hand, black and white, Chevrolet Apache pick-up truck to explore the countryside. Then I sought the advice of the cowboys who rode the land. They pointed out the dirt trails that led to the lakes and rivers, pastures and cowcamps, and satellite outposts where other people lived and worked at Douglas Lake Ranch.

Later research revealed that the rolling grasslands of the Nicola Valley had first attracted fur traders early in the 19th century. Gold-seekers and land-seeking settlers came a bit later. In fact, Douglas Lake and its fields (for example: the Gilmore and the Hamilton and Chapperon ranches) were named after foreigners who had come from England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany, the United States, and eastern Canada to claim lands and resources along the Nicola river. Packers with mule teams and horses and cattle from Mexico and South America also claimed land (Woolliams, 1979, p.12). But most of the foreigners had moved on by 1915, leaving blood kin named Charters, Holmes, Hall, Stewart, Sterling, Guterrez, and Manuel behind on bits of land that were reserved for the Indian designated inhabitants of the Nicola Valley. The term *Indian* has been supplanted by designations that include Indigenous, Aboriginal, and First Nations, but in the 1970's the word Indian was used in Indigenous communities and it is still used among family members presently living on reserves in the interior.

Like most white people, I had no idea that there was an unresolved Indian Land Question in the province of British Columbia in 1971. It had to do with the

give-away of Indian lands and resources after everything was claimed by the British Crown. Furthermore, I did not know that in the future I would research part of the history of the Indian Land Question for the St at imc. *The Same As Yesterday: The Lillooet Chronicle the Theft of Their Lands and Resources* (Drake-Terry, 1989) was published long after I heard how two Scottish immigrants named Douglas had run stakes through the middle of Spahomin land and claimed 640 acres in 1872. Their original claim expanded beyond the limits of normal imagination after the property was acquired by British investors. Provincial and federal government legislation enabled the British financed ranching syndicate to acquire water rights, commonage grazing lands, cut-off Indian Reserve lands, old land pre-emptions and whatever else the company required for over a century. Touted as being the largest ranch in the British Empire, the Douglas Lake Cattle Company controlled 500,000 acres of land with 11,000 head of beef cattle on the range by 1971 (Woolliams, 1979). It is no coincidence that local Indian Reserve economies were being driven by welfare payments from Ottawa when the takeover was completed.

My kitchen helper, Margaret, was born on the Spahomin reserve in the 1940s and she had cooked for the ranch all of her life, like her mother and her grandmother before her. Margaret lived at the ranch with her longtime partner, a Caucasian man who was born in New Zealand. They were living common-law. I did not understand until much later that a legal marriage would have forced her to relinquish her Indian status and that of her son, so she lived in sin on the margins of white ranching society. Living at the Home Ranch in a company house,

Margaret could not refuse to cook, but she explained why I had been brought to the ranch. Relations were very strained between the Douglas Lake Cattle Company and the Spahomin reserve community. Scotty had misnamed the place when he called it the Douglas Lake Indian Reserve because he had no idea that it had an Indian name. In fact, the women and men from the Spahomin reserve had recently refused to be employed at the ranch as cooks and cowboys and farm hands. One point of dispute was over wages, with Spahomin residents refusing to accept less than whites were being paid for doing the same work. And then there was the over-riding matter of the Indian Land Question: for the Douglas Lake Cattle Company was trespassing on unceded Indian land throughout the territory and litigation was pending for the return of some Indian lands and resources.

The times were definitely changing when we arrived, but some changes were more apparent than others. Gone were the days when British remittance men played polo at Douglas Lake, but members of the British royal family had visited within recent memory and it soon became clear to me that there was a strict hierarchy on the ranch. It was based upon class, race, and gender; and the modern corporate structure of the ranch continued the tradition of discrimination. At the top was the late Chunky Woodward. The millionaire owner of the now historic and defunct Woodward's Department Store building on Hastings Street between Stadium and Granville Skytrain stations had taken possession of the ranch in 1959. His opulent residence was situated on an elevated plateau overlooking the Home Ranch. Chunky commuted by private plane between his

country estate and several cities where his family's retail stores were located. It was generally agreed that Mr. Woodward was a genial and generous man who had ranching in his blood. His mother's family had owned Alkali Lake Ranch in the Chilcotin region of the B.C. interior and the former Ruth Wynn-Johnson established and operated Woodwynn farm on Vancouver Island after her marriage to William Culham Woodward.

Chunky made no secret of the fact that he loved ranching, but he was an absentee landlord. The Woodward family merchandising business claimed most of his time. Some said it was his misfortune to be saddled with 18 stores and sales to well over \$1 billion, but I didn't think him unfortunate. True, he spent most of his time in urban centers throughout BC and Alberta. Still, he flew to the ranch for fall roundup and he came at Christmas time. There were celebrations on both occasions and invitations were widely sought after. Chunky also took time off from business to ride his world champion cutting-horse, Peppy Sans, in shows throughout North America. The stallion was stabled at Douglas Lake near the Home Ranch in a luxurious quarter-horse barn. A special staff was responsible for his care and the care of Chunky's other purebred cutting horses.

The millionaire ranch-owner had two sisters, Elizabeth Russ and Mary Twigg White. I do not recall the former, but Mary Twigg White and her husband, Robert, had their own fishing lodge on a private lake near the Home Ranch. I remember their visits because Twigg and her husband were enthusiastic dog breeders. They bred black Labrador dogs and I admired the breed. On several occasions, Twigg loaded two or three dogs in the back of her pick-up truck and

she drove down to the store at the Home Ranch to shop for supplies. When she was inside the store, the dogs would jump out of her parked vehicle and raise hell in the main yard. Steve and Mike and I acquired a puppy that was fathered by one of her dogs. That was our sole connection to Mrs. White. She mistook our dog, Snoopy, for one of her own once, but our dog belonged to a neighbor until he adopted us. Snoopy was a member of our family for fourteen years until his death in the mid 1980s.

The actual work of running the Douglas Lake Cattle Company and family vacation homes was left to others most of the year. The general manager, the top cow boss, lesser cow camp bosses, and married farm managers were elite staff. Next came the quarter-horse staff, the store clerk, and several caretakers. Last came the more marginalized laborers. They included whites and local Indigenous people from the Spahomin Reserve. In this male bastion, women had replaced bachelor Chinese cooks, but otherwise, the cowboys, farmhands, and handymen were all men. In general, the hired hands owned very little. Houses and horses were owned by the company and management determined our wages and working conditions. For recreation, the hired hands mostly got drunk in town on weekends. Healthy recreation such as riding, boating, skidooing, and other social events were reserved for the more privileged classes at the ranch.

When I began working at Douglas Lake, Nina Woolliams had recently married the general manager. Born and educated in Wales, the young woman seemed to settle into her new life with ease. If life at the top was a bit lonely, it was not evident from Nina's demeanor. She had a large house to run, friends

and business associates to entertain, travel abroad, and two children to raise when she decided to write a history of the Douglas Lake Ranch. Evidently, the local history captured Nina's imagination. So over a period of several years she ploughed through primary documents, unearthed historic photographs, and interviewed some key company players. The result was *Cattle Ranch* (1979).

Cattle Ranch (Woolliams, 1979) received favorable reviews despite its vexing oversights and contradictions. Writing from a British Imperial cum corporate position of privilege, its author inadvertently reveals how life below stairs was imagined and misrepresented when I was there. To cite one example, Woolliams refers to 1949 when Ranch Manager Brian Chance and second wife, Jean Hay, are said to have "hired Indian girls from Spahomin, dressed them in maid's white and gradually taught them how to run a household" (p. 181). Then Woolliams elaborates, "One who appreciated the invaluable training, Monica Tom, later certified as a hairdresser and attended happily to a stream of customers" (p. 181).

The patronizing voice of the writer assumes that Monica was grateful, but this idea is not attributed. So I wonder, did Monica tell Woolliams she felt grateful? Did she actually interview Monica? I do not know. Yet Monica lived nearby at Spahomin with her cattleman husband, Jacob Coutlee. And given the fact that the ranch had been cut out of land that their ancestors had utilized for thousands of years before Douglas claimed it, there was precious little for them to be grateful for.

I met Monica when I cooked with her sisters at the ranch in 1971, so I knew that she had completed twelve years of schooling in the Kamloops Indian Residential School. She told me that in addition to academic work, all female students were taught how to sew, cook, and run a household. It was presumed that Indigenous students would be assimilated into Canadian society and their education was geared to that end. Young women like Monica were expected to meet the demand for domestic labor until marriage and motherhood claimed their time.

Unlike Nina Woolliams, the author of *Cattle Ranch*, I imagine that it was a demeaning experience to have earned a high school diploma and be offered nothing better than employment as a domestic servant on a ranch. It certainly was not Monica's ambition – or mine – to remain in service. In fact, she was already a very successful business woman with a shop in nearby Merritt when the Woolliams book was published in 1979. It had taken many years of hard work on Monica's part and the financial backing of a female friend. Monica's business has grown and she has inspired other Indigenous women to follow her example. Unfortunately Woolliams' text actually creates not only questionable knowledge, but also the very colonial reality it appears to describe" (Said, 1993, as cited in Young, 2001, p. 75).

I had cooked at the Home Ranch for several months when I met my future husband. The work hadn't changed much since Victorian times when Chinese indentured labor was available. I rose at 4 am and retired at 7:30 pm each day. In return, my employer provided us with a comfortable home, all the food that my

growing sons could eat, and wages that allowed me to save a bit each payday for extras. Jack Drake was working in the cow camps when I was hired in the spring and he didn't come down to the Home Ranch until the cattle were rounded up in the fall. The camps were closed then and the cowboys relocated to the Home Ranch to over-winter.

The fine reputation of the veteran sergeant of the Westminster regiment had preceded him. And this was no small feat in a community that thrived on gossip. Yet Jack Drake was reported to be a gentleman, a good friend, a grand old man, an amazing horse-shoer, and a fine horseman. Naturally, I looked forward to meeting him. Yet when he rode up to the cookhouse unexpectedly one day and introduced himself, I was skeptical. With sons to protect and a heart to mend, male friendship was an oxymoron to me.

In the months that followed, Jack worked hard to win my trust and the admiration and affection of my sons. When the school bus deposited Steve and Mike at the Home Ranch, Jack was waiting to greet them. Some days they sat around the kitchen and swapped stories and ate cookies and drank milk. Other times, Jack would saddle his horse and give them a ride. When I wanted a night out in town, Jack would come to the house and babysit, to my son's delight. I could see that Jack's fondness for Steve and Mike was not contrived, but he did not reveal his entire plan until the spring when it was time to leave for the cow camps again.

That is when Jack asked me to marry him. He was sixty-two years old – the age I am now. I was thirty years younger then. My immediate reaction was,

“you’re too old for me”! He agreed. And wise man that he was, Jack said he would settle for friendship. But matters didn’t end there because I had come to depend upon his friendship and his company. Furthermore, I was flattered by his proposal. Respect for the man resonated in the ranching community. In addition to his professional accomplishments, Jack was a charming man. His grace on the dance floor in the local pub was only exceeded by his casual elegance astride a horse. And I surreptitiously savored the stories he told of his childhood, the sport of boxing, the Depression years, soldiering through Europe and North Africa during WW II, the profession of horse-shoeing on American race tracks, and more.

Like so many others who worked on the ranch, Jack Drake had first moved from the prairies to the West Coast. He was born in Eyebrow, Saskatchewan, in 1909. Jack’s father, Yates Drake, had left England to claim 320 acres of free farm land on the prairies. Jack and his brother were born on their parent’s homestead, but the family soon moved from Saskatchewan to British Columbia. In contrast to Emanuel Bader whose options were limited by his German origins, poor English language skills, and large family size, Yates Drake was a British immigrant with a small, mobile family and marketable skills. Trained on English estates, Yates was a horse breeder and a cattleman, and BC Fruitlands – a British farming and ranching syndicate – engaged him to manage their vast landholdings at Cherry Creek outside of Kamloops in the early 1900s.

Young Jack learned to ride his father’s polo ponies and jumping horses when he was still a child. It was part of Yate’s business to buy horses, train them,

and sell them to wealthy clients for their recreation. In his teen years, Jack delivered polo ponies to the Douglas Lake Cattle Company in the B.C. Interior and he traveled to Chicago to ride jumping horses in competitions.

Jack's ambition was to become a cattle buyer, but there was a Depression and the market for cattle collapsed. Jack, as other desperate men before him, turned to prize fighting. The money he earned in the ring and his pay for exercising racehorses at Exhibition Park in Vancouver supported his then wife and their son. And when war was declared in 1939, Jack "Ducky" Drake hastened to sign up for military service at the headquarters of the Westminster Regiment on Sixth Street in New Westminster. His family had several relatives still living in Britain so the trip overseas satisfied Jack's curiosity about his parent's homeland. He looked forward to the adventure. His military wages would provide for his family in his absence and Jack assumed that World War II would be over in a matter of months.

A photographer was on hand the day the men of the Westminster Regiment marched proudly down Sixth Street on their way overseas. Jack's wife and their young son were not there to wave goodbye, but another soldier's child dashed out from the crowd to clutch the hand of his departing father that day. The man was marching in front of Jack and the poignant moment was captured on film. The photograph was featured on the cover of *Life Magazine* after the United States entered the war.

Sometimes Jack's stories would end with a quip like, "Well, that's all she wrote!" And he had another when he polished his go-to-town cowboy boots on a

Friday night. “ As my old father would say: if you can’t shine at the head, shine at the toes,” he’d repeat with a grin. All this from a man who wore a fine Stetson hat with more dash and confidence than any Hollywood cowboy.

Our growing involvement eventually ended our employment at Douglas Lake Ranch, but before Jack and I and Steve and Mike left, I worked with Margaret to ensure that her relief cook wages were increased to the same hourly rate as mine. Only eighteen months had elapsed since my arrival, but there was really no question of continuing to work on the ranch. For despite the beauty of the land, there were drawbacks that could not be overcome. In the first place, Steve was required to travel in excess of 100 kilometers each day to attend school in Merritt and he suffered from motion sickness most days. Second, living and working conditions were not designed for our cohabitation. Before I arrived Jack had lived in bachelor bunkhouses at the Home Ranch in wintertime and in remote cow camps in the summer. Gender mattered and only men were allowed to work as cowboys and they lived alone in primitive cow camps for six months at a time. Finally, the house assigned to my sons and I was contingent upon my ongoing employment as a cook at the Home Ranch and it had become impossible to stick with the physically exhausting, lonely, dead end job.

It is ironical that while the business of ranching was changing in the 1970s, labor practices lagged far behind. I cut up 150 lb. sides of beef, peeled potatoes, baked bread, and scrubbed floors. I worked 15 hour days, starting before sunrise and ending only after the dinner dishes were washed by hand and the dining-room tables were reset for breakfast the following day. Sometimes the

crews were small but most of the time I prepared food for larger crews of up to thirty-five men, seven days a week. As days off depended upon my being able to find a relief cook, I was trapped in the kitchen for twenty-eight days straight several times when relief help was refused. When I complained to Neil Woolliams, the general manager was not sympathetic. Evidently, it was up to me to locate and hire relief kitchen help. "Besides, the Chinese cooks of old were paid next to nothing; they grew the vegetables that provisioned the cookhouse; they fished for food; they never asked for a day off; and they never complained," he said.

If this was true, I have no idea how they managed under the circumstances. It was rumored that small opium bottles were found beneath the front porch of the cookhouse, but when I was there the medicine of choice was alcohol. Many relied upon it to ease the strain of work and to obliterate the prevailing social barriers. For as a rule, Douglas Lake Ranch management families kept to themselves, the Spahomin community was closed off, and men and women worked in different spheres.

In hindsight, it is clear the Douglas Lake Cattle Company was a large corporation and profit was the bottom line. I didn't understand it at the time, but the callous expendability of life bothered me. For example, when I was there heifers were being bred so young that dead calves littered the floor of the birthing sheds. And frail old farmhands were banished to hotel rooms in town when their productivity declined. Their treatment seemed on a par with the livestock whose

destiny was always the slaughterhouse. So Jack and I and Steve and Mike left Douglas Lake Ranch to find a new home.

After several misadventures, we moved to Nicola Lake Ranch. The history of its establishment was much the same as Douglas Lake Ranch, but Nicola Ranch had absorbed the historic town site of Nicola where town lots had been surveyed and sold in the 1870s. At the time it was rumored that the town site would become the capital of the new province of British Columbia. After the dream was shattered, the community residents began to disburse. Some of the old buildings were still in use when we moved there, but we bought a trailer to live in. After Steve and Mike were enrolled in schools in the nearby town of Merritt, I went to work at the local Credit Union. Later, my divorce from Howie completed our metamorphosis: Jack and I got married; I changed my name to Drake; and Jack adopted Stephen and Michael at their request.

We put down roots in the Nicola Valley complete with a snug home, good friends, a dog and two horses. Nicola Lake Ranch provided free meat, milk, and eggs to our family in return for Jack's chores. There was summer work for Steve and Mike and plenty of opportunity for recreation throughout the year. They played hockey, they rode bikes and horses, they swam and they fished, and they hung around with other Indigenous and white kids who lived in the neighborhood.

As it turned out, living at Nicola offered no escape from the past because the ghost town with its churches and graveyards, courthouse, bank building, and pioneer homes, fed my compulsion to reconstruct the past. Nicola's elegant buildings stood forlornly on a grid that had been surveyed and mapped out on the

grasslands. A tiny Indian reserve had also been surveyed and carved out on the landscape within walking distance of the old town. As if by instinct, I began to research the history of the place without any idea of where it would lead. Local friends and neighbors repeated old stories and the newspaper office in Merritt had back issues archived. Eventually, enthusiasm for the local history project resulted in the founding of the Nicola Valley Archives Association in the mid-1970s. Within a few years its members constructed a building in Merritt to preserve documents, photographs, and artifacts. The public repository is very accessible and association members publish quarterly reports which include excerpts from primary documents. I should mention that correspondence between Jessie and Annie McQueen found its way into the Archives in the early 1980's.

The McQueen sisters came West by rail from Nova Scotia to teach school in the Nicola Valley in the previous century. The young women were prolific writers and their letters prompted BC historian Jean Barman to write her award-winning *Sojourning sisters: The lives and letters of Jessie and Annie McQueen* (2003).

Our family was targeted by filmmakers in 1973. Jack's son, Tom Drake, had given our address to an acquaintance at the National Film Board because the board was looking for a western story to tell. Acting on his tip, Tom Radford and John Taylor visited us unexpectedly at Nicola one day. The filmmakers were interested in our impression of ranch life at Douglas Lake and, to my surprise,

they asked me to jot down some notes. The notes landed me a small contract to write a bit more for their proposed film.

During the weeks leading up to film-making the crew was introduced to members of the Spahomin community and interviews were conducted at Douglas Lake Ranch. Jack and I had no idea how the film would unfold, but we hoped that it would attempt to deconstruct the imaginary west, revealing it as a place strongly marked by disparities.

Our hopes were dashed when the film was released in 1974. "A Slow Hello" was subsequently shown on TV across the country as part of the CBC's "Pacifcanada" series. Jack was featured in the film. It depicted him in many roles: horseman and cowboy, farrier and gentleman, husband, and father to Steve and Mike. I was there, too, in the dual role of wife and mother. The film showed cowboys and Indians at home on the range, galloping horses, branding cattle, and whooping it up in town on Saturday night. Old-timers from town spoke a few words. The Douglas Lake Cattle Company ranch manager punched numbers on his adding machine. Unfortunately, many of the issues that really mattered to the subaltern subjects of the film, including Jack and myself, had been missed. At the same time, the film marked a turning point in our lives because Jack suffered a major stroke shortly after it was released.

He was hospitalized in Kamloops for several weeks and when Jack came home, we began to plan for the future. Thankfully, Nicola Ranch did not serve us with an eviction notice, but we knew that our days there were definitely numbered. Imagining the worst, it was clear that I could not remain on the ranch

without Jack. Nor could I see myself staying put at the Credit Union in Merritt until the organization pensioned me off. And while I did not know what I was capable of achieving, Jack and I agreed that I should act without delay.

We had very little money, but Canada Student Loans had just become available, so I enrolled in Cariboo College (renamed Thompson Rivers University) and applied for a loan. For the next two years I traveled back and forth by bus each day from Nicola Ranch to Kamloops. After I completed my first year of introductory courses, I focused on Women's Studies. Women and their work in the Thompson/Nicola region was the subject of an oral history project which I developed into a slide and a sound production entitled "A Matter of Doing Something to Live" at Simon Fraser University, where I earned a BA degree with a major in History and a Minor in of Women's Studies in 1979. Five years later, Mary Twigg White and her sister endowed a professorship in Women's Studies at SFU.

My education paralleled that of my sons. Stephen graduated with honors from Merritt High School in 1978. He subsequently studied at the BC Institute of Technology before he earned a degree at the University of British Columbia. His brother Michael chose to attend college in Vancouver after he graduated from high school. Jack attended our graduations before he suffered a fatal stroke.

PART 4: Sculpting Our “Selves”

... the brain reconstructs the sense of self moment by moment. We do not have a self sculpted in stone and, like stone, resistant to the ravages of time. (Damasio, 1999, p. 144)

The opportunity for women with no financial means to be able to enroll in college and university programs is a recent advancement. *The Royal Commission on the Status of Women* (Bird, 1970) had tabled their report in the House of Commons in 1970. Other steps had been taken to address issues of women in the economy, education, family, and public life when I enrolled in college in 1975. In addition, legal rights that placed women on an equal footing with men were being demanded, birth control pills had been developed, the legal grounds for divorce were being expanded, and abortion on demand would be legalized. At the age of forty, I was privileged to be in the vanguard of social and cultural change; I embraced it with enthusiasm.

In 1969, Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Jean Chretien, Minister of Indian Affairs, released their white paper policy for the assimilation of Indigenous peoples. It rekindled the fight for recognition of Indian title and rights across Canada. Representatives from interior and coastal First Nations gathered on the grounds of the Indian Residential School in Kamloops, where many had been incarcerated as children to be educated, and they founded the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. Rejecting assimilation, the chiefs demanded decolonization and the curtailment of Trudeau’s white paper policy.

Court battles and demonstrations followed throughout the 1970s. Indian Residential Schools were abolished; the Kamloops regional office of Indian Affairs was closed; and an Indigenous candidate of the Liberal party from the interior of British Columbia, Hon. Len Marchand, became an elected member of Parliament.

Saul Terry attended the founding meeting of the Union of BC Chiefs in Kamloops, BC, in 1969. The first born child of Nelson and Ella Terry was delivered at their farmhouse on the Xwisten (Bridge River) Indian reserve on a cold day in January, 1942. His parents spoke two languages: St at imc and English. Saul was the eldest of their thirteen children. Saul had struggled to finance 4 years of post-secondary education at the School of Art in Vancouver and he had no political aspirations when he returned to Xwisten. In fact, Saul was fully engaged in sculpting and painting in a refurbished log building on the reserve when his help was sought and his metamorphosis from artist to political leader began.

When I returned to the interior with my BA degree in 1980, I was looking for work and the St at imc Tribal chiefs were looking for someone to research their history. I applied for the job and was hired in 1981. I was introduced to the chiefs of the (then) Lillooet Tribe a short time later. There were eleven chiefs representing scattered communities within their vast unceded St at imc territory. The communities were called Pavilion, Fountain, Lillooet, Cayoosh, Bridge River, Seton, Anderson Lake, Mount Currie, Samaquam, Skookumchuck, and

Port Douglas. Saul Terry was the elected chief of the Bridge River band at that time.

There have been many changes during the past quarter century. The St at imc language has been revived and place names have all been restored to what they were called before contact with Europeans. Bridge River reserve is now called Xwisten and Saul Terry and I call it home.

It's the end of the line and a disembodied voice asks everyone to leave the train at Waterfront Station. It's been a quick trip and my destination is near – up the escalator, through the station, out the door and onto the street and there it is: Simon Fraser University's downtown campus. Dodging panhandlers, I walk a block and enter Simon's place. With a few minutes to spare, I'll take a quick pee and scope out the classroom. There's a cohort or two inside the room, so I grab a seat next to a familiar face. Can't concentrate on the small talk buzzing around, so I sit quietly and wait for mandatory introductions to begin.

I'm still thinking it through as the seats fill up. When the course instructor enters and closes the door we fall silent on cue. "Good evening. Perhaps we could begin by introducing our selves and maybe say a bit about yourself if you wish. Would anyone like to volunteer to go first"?

As usual, someone does. Unfortunately, I'm sitting beside the bloody eager beaver, so I'm next. Countdown: illegitimate female, daughter, girl, woman, friend, wife, mother, divorcee, cook, university student, widow, grandmother, misfit, surnames: Hahn, Bader, Rogers, Nadeau, Drake. "Oh, is it my turn"? Uhm. OK. "My name is Joanne Drake and I'm a writer."

EPILOGUE

I have thought about why this writing should exist at all and I have discovered that the question is often put to writers. Margaret Atwood compiled a list of answers that various writers themselves volunteered. I have chosen a few that she listed in *Negotiating with the Dead: a Writer on Writing* (2002).

To produce order out of chaos... To defend a minority group or oppressed class... To justify my own view of myself and my life, because I couldn't be "a writer" unless I actually did some writing... To act out anti-social behavior for which I would have been punished in real life... (xx-xxii)

There were many other answers but they were so diverse that Atwood decided to pose another question. She asked writers to reveal how they felt about writing and she found some common ground. According to Atwood, writers write because, "just possibly, writing has to do with darkness, and a desire or perhaps a compulsion to enter it, and, with luck, to illuminate it, and to bring something back out to the light" (p. xxiv). I would hope that word "illumination" sums up my motive for writing about my life as an adoptee living in an adopted land.

Of course, I may not have written an autobiography or anything else if my birth mother had kept me, but she was forced to relinquish me to the care of a childless couple when I was three months old. They wanted a child of their own, so they changed my name from Gwenneth Anne Bader to Elizabeth Joanne Rogers and they prohibited visits with my birth mother after my legal adoption.

Like many others, I struggled with issues of identity and feelings of rejection and abandonment when I was growing up. But my desire to be reconnected with the 'lost mother' who was the object of my suffering set me apart from my acquaintances and this was not understood. For most people, including my adoptive parents, it was enough that the law had connected a so-called "fatherless" child with a childless couple. The state was spared the expense of providing for me and my mother's disappearance did not seem to trouble anyone else.

Years passed before I understood that when laws are enacted to construct new social identities in patriarchal societies they may exacerbate gender, race, and class differences to preserve the status quo. Moreover, in Canada, adoption and *Indian Act* laws actually appear to be logical until one considers that biological and legally created kinship are not the same. So what happens when identities are split and one becomes two?

A "double identity" is created. This phenomena may have fated me to be a writer, although I did not publish work in high school magazines, or earn a degree at Radcliffe College, or write twenty-five volumes of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction as Atwood has done. To the contrary, I dropped out of high school, I got married, I raised two sons, and I did many other things. The absence of biological, genealogical, health, and other information that most people rely upon to develop their healthy identities, also led me to believe that I was flawed. This may have been an asset for some writers but I was no Charlotte Gillman, so I must admit that depression impeded my writing career.

Things could have been worse. I came across one example of mistaken identity that resulted in the death of two men: a St at imc man named Frank Gott and the game warden who tried to arrest him for killing a deer. The case is referenced in *The Same As Yesterday* (1989, pp. 291-292). Frank Gott's German name was his legal name but he was the son of a St at imc woman and he was entitled to hunt and fish for food. It made a great difference in the end, for Frank resisted arrest and he was shot and killed. Several memorials mark his passing and they attest to his St at imc identity.

When I learned the whereabouts of my birth mother, she told me that my German-speaking, Seventh Day Adventist grandparents had emigrated from Russia to western Canada in the 20th century. I remain uncomfortable with the knowledge that British law was used in the west to transform the homelands of Indigenous peoples into British Columbia and Alberta Crown lands, and the takeover benefited me and my relatives.

I don't remember if I consciously searched for the truth and the nature of my existence, but I did learn that "there are no simple answers to complex problems," to quote Professor Michael Fellman (Simon Fraser University, Commencement Address, June 2006). Somewhere along the way I stopped blaming my adoptive parents for the failure of my adoption and I began to enjoy the positive benefits of my upbringing. Things like grandchildren and good food, music and gardening fell into this category.

There will never be a reunion with my elderly birth mother. She did not want me to reveal her secret and I agreed to honor her wishes. In return, she

named my father, she answered family health questions, and she sent me a written history of the Bader family. I probably will not contact my two half-sisters and their brother, or several hundred other relatives, when she dies.

The fact is that I have a number of other things to do. For example, the Canadian Children's Rights Council reports that 76,000 children are living in some form of public care other than their own homes, of which about 22,000 are legally eligible for adoption. I suspect that the children of Indigenous peoples are over represented, but I cannot be sure. The council has asked the Canadian government to use the census to find out how many people living in Canada are adopted, but to date Ottawa has not responded (Canadian Children's Rights Council, 2005, p. 1). However, the same council reports that there have been 250,000 adoptions in Ontario since record-keeping first began in that province (Livingston, 2005, p. 2).

While we do not know how many domestic and foreign adoptions occur each year in Canada, we do know that a considerable number of infants and children are being removed from biological kinship groups and placed in legally created families. Without a better understanding of the consequences, perhaps we should at least entertain the idea that lack of data preserves myths about family formation and well-being in Western society. It also exonerates the countries that choose to champion adoption instead of advocating for the rights of women and children throughout the world.

On this point I should explain that I chose the project title "Surrogate's Daughter" to indicate that my birth mother bore me on behalf of another woman,

although she did not plan it that way. But abortion was clandestine and illegal at the time, so I was born despite a double standard of sexual behavior that condemned my mother (but not my father) for having sex outside of marriage. There was no welfare or childcare from the state afterwards, so my birth mother confronted a situation of poverty and shame that she could not remedy in order to raise me herself. So while small and perfect nuclear families are being modelled in our consumer culture, I believe that it would be wise to pause to consider that biological and legally created kinship are not the same. But boundaries and limits of identity, belonging, and inclusion can be altered (Mackey, 2002, back cover).

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