memories play a significant role towards their relationship, as well as Ian's acceptance of his parents' divorce.

Initially unable to accept his parents' divorce, Ian remains psychologically locked in the past. In the seclusion of his mother's backyard, with its "patchy grass and dirt" and a "prison-like fence," Ian fantasizes about his father and the possibility of his parents reuniting. He evokes memories of his father by playing with the tractor and other items, and wishes that he and his mother were wild geese so that they could "fly back to Dad's farm and be a family again."

Ian's relationship with Mr. Mah helps to lessen these painful memories of divorce. Ian's sharing of his memories of his father with Mr. Mah, and Mr. Mah's sharing of his memories about his wife's death and the home that he left in China, both help Ian to move on from the past and to look towards a new life without his father. In this altered view of reality, Ian accepts Mr. Mah's friendship and those of others.

Janet Wilson's illustrations supplement the story well by suggesting Ian's feelings about the divorce; she achieves this by contrasting Ian's initial seclusion in the backyard with later scenes that show him with Mr. Mah and a new friend. In one illustration, Ian is sad and secluded on his side of the fence, while Mr. Mah and his family are chatting on the other side. The contrast suggests that Ian has not overcome the memory of his parents' divorce. Similarly, another illustration shows Ian riding with another boy, thereby contrasting with Ian's earlier physical and psychological isolation; by extension, the illustration suggests Ian's acceptance of the divorce.

In a reversal of roles, Ian is the one who later offers comfort to Mr. Mah when he is in the nursing home. Their close relationship continues after Ian moves away, for he and Mr. Mah continue to contact each other. In addition, they preserve memories of each other: Mr. Mah adds Ian's "Get Well" card to his box of memories, and Ian wears Mr. Mah's hat and gardens with his sunflower seeds. Memory is thus central to keeping their relationship alive.

Huai-Yang Lim *is currently doing his PhD in English at the University of Alberta. He enjoys reading and writing children's and young adult fiction.*

Cocooned in Cosy Canadian Childhood

Too Young to Fight: Memories from Our Youth during World War II. Comp. Priscilla Galloway. Stoddart, 1999. 208 pp. $29.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7737-31903.

> Since I was as self-centred as most children are, the question of whether or not I might be allowed a pair of skates was much more important to me than any world news. To me, reading the newspaper usually meant reading the comics, and listening to the radio ... meant *Baby Snooks* and *The Jack Benny Show.*

Most children do not pay much attention to public events. So it is hardly surprising that most of the memories of World War II recounted by a dozen Canadian authors in *Too Young to Fight*, are similar to Dorothy Jean Harris's solipsistic observations, quoted above. "It's frustrating not being able to find in my cluttered memory a single recollection of the Hiroshima disaster," writes Roch Carrier. "I don't remember anything the grownups said about Hitler, the Nazis, or their rise to power," Janet Lunn admits. Jean Little took her father's absence overseas more or less for granted: "The one deprivation I really resented most bitterly was not getting a rubber doll like my cousin Dorothy's."

Some authors have, or have invented, more war-centred recall. Claire MacKay gives us a wartime journal laced with her family's left-wing activities. Brian Doyle's vivid account of the victory celebrations in Ottawa ("The War Monument is covered with kids riding the huge black iron horses and sitting on the iron soldiers' shoulders and helmet heads and riding the big black gun") is thought by the editor probably to be a bit fanciful. Perhaps because Budge Wilson was a teenager for most of the war, her Halifax perspective, centring on fears that there might be another great explosion like 1917s, speaks most directly to the sense of a country at war.

Given that Canadian children never experienced the horrors of war directly — the worst that happens to any of our authors is the relatively benign internment suffered by Joy Kogawa as a Japanese-Canadian — it is not surprising that searing, traumatic experiences are in short supply. Some parents and siblings die, others are shattered by the war, but, compared to the people of most of the world, Canadians were wonderfully well off through World War II. "I lived through the war years cocooned in my cosy Canadian childhood," Jean Little concludes.

The sense of cocoonment is heightened by the compiler's failure to find an author who could recollect what was surely a central Canadian childhood experience during the war, the bloodthirstiness of the young male animal aching to become old enough to fight. My older brother and all his friends were like that, and for at least a decade after the war Canadian boyhood centred on cowboys and Indians, cops and robbers, and cadet training in high school. Girls' experiences and point of view are over-represented in *Too Young to Fight*, which could be accused of denying the reality of testosterone in our wartime history. Every year from 1939 to 1945 a new crop of boys put aside their skates and comics and volunteered to fight and kill.

Not surprisingly with authors of this calibre, the essays are beautifully written, with Roch Carrier ("The radio cracked like an egg that's cooking in a frying pan") narrowly winning my prize for the best contribution. The collection as a whole was hard to put down, and as an historian I found *Too Young to Fight* a useful addition to my library. I'll refer to it in my lectures about the peculiarities of the home front during the War. The book is advertised for age 12/grade 7 and up, however, which is hard to credit. Not many children seem particularly interested in learning about adults' memories of childhood, nor is this the most sensible genre to use in introducing children to these years. Well-written histories and fictional recreations clearly do a better job.

The black-and-white illustrations depict mostly toys, kids, and families. Not a single corpse, Nazi, or even a comic-book caricature of the evils 40,000 Canadian men gave their lives to defeat.

Michael Bliss is an author and professor of history at the University of Toronto. His most-recent book, ***William Osler: A Life in Medicine*** *was shortlisted for a Governor General's Award for nonfiction.*

More Canadian Women

Her Story III: Women from Canada's Past. Susan E. Merritt. Vanwell, 1999. 200 pp. $15.95 paper. ISBN 1-55125-037-3. $19.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55125-046-2.

This set of fourteen mini-biographies introduces more Canadian female forebears, including: Elizabeth Simcoe, diarist; Bobbie Rosenfeld, Olympic medallist; Georgina Fane Pope, military nurse; Elsie Gregory McGill, aeronautical engineer; artist Laura Muntz Lyall; and Thérese Forget Casgrain, political party leader. Biographies show us what choices others have faced and made in their lives. Biographies of our women ancestors give today's Canadians a context for the choices they face.

The book is well illustrated, although colour would be welcome, and the pictures help tell the stories. There is a timeline, an index, and references, bibliography, and detailed picture credits. The reader therefore can go beyond the book, and do research — just as important in learning about history as being given the "facts." Like any good anthology, this book encourages you to explore more.

The presentation somewhat conflicts with these strengths, however: one wonders who the intended audience is. The paragraphs are short, often only one sentence, a format that suggests a readership of children. Yet the content is frequently adult; e.g., the discussion of "country marriages". Merritt deals, although with admirable clarity, with complex concepts such as Impressionism and English Common Law, which would benefit from longer and more developed paragraphs.

Certain assumptions in the book also need questioning. There are frequent references to social classes that are more Old World than Canadian. We, like all societies, have a ranking system, probably more pronounced in the past, but even then the groups were not clearly defined, with uniform attitudes and behaviours. Then too, and more serious, Merritt's discussion of class tends to be value-laden. Further, it also seems to be a given that women's lot was worse in the past than now, and various points are built upon that assumption.

This approach is not unique to Merritt, but it should not stand unexamined. It is a fine line to tread, between chronicling woman's difficulties individually and collectively and the struggle to overcome these through time, and automatically concluding that everything earlier was worse. That interpretation is, woman's history or no, the Doctrine of Progress, which historians long ago identified and discredited as false, as they do still. Many women's lots were, in fact, better at