

lar in parts of China for several generations. Instead, White Lily chooses to pursue her dream of becoming a scholar. Ting-Xing Ye's story gives voice to the suffering that her own great-aunt and other Chinese women have previously experienced in silence. As White Lily's mother expresses, foot-binding is "the bitterness all females must eat."

Told from White Lily's perspective, the story effectively conveys her child-like innocence, but also her perceptiveness and unabashed ability to question things that she does not understand. These dual aspects of her personality evoke our sympathy for her and draw us into her tragic experience of having her feet bound. White Lily's mother tells her that bound feet "are supposed to make you beautiful, and that means a good marriage and a secure future," but White Lily refuses to accept this tradition and others that women were expected to follow. While males can become scholars, females were expected to take care of the household. When she displays her intellectual ability, family and village members frown upon it and consider it to be a breach of tradition. Eventually her family accepts her wishes and take pride in her intellectual skill.

The narrative is interwoven around various aspects of Chinese culture during the Qing Dynasty. Descriptions of daily activities, Chinese New Year, and Chinese customs give a well-textured backdrop to White Lily's experiences. This backdrop reminds us of the difficulties of reconciling tradition with personal ambitions. When faced with the dilemma of upholding tradition and letting his daughter pursue her ambitions, her father finally respects her wishes. Like White Lily, her father defied his parents' wishes: "Master Lee felt dampness in his eyes as he thought about White Lily, who dared to challenge the rules under much harsher conditions than his, secretly learning to read and write."

Ting-Xing Ye's *White Lily* inspires readers to fulfil their own potential and to overcome obstacles that stand in their way. In her afterword to *White Lily*, Ye situates her recollections of her great-aunt's bound feet within a collective experience of foot binding. Through her story, Ye constructs a hopeful tale that expresses "the suffering and misery [her great-aunt] and many women endured. But most of all, telling of a girl in her time who won her freedom."

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.

The Sharing and Preservation of Memories

Me and Mr. Mah. Andrea Spalding. Illus. Janet Wilson. Orca, 1999. 32 pp. \$17.95 cloth+jacket. ISBN 1-55143-168-8.

Memories can be a means for transcending cultural boundaries and functioning as a locus for friendships. Andrea Spalding's *Me and Mr. Mah* depicts a cross-cultural friendship between Ian and Mr. Mah in which the sharing and preservation of

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.

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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*.