Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

J.L. Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?* Toronto: HarperCollins, 1998. Pp. 156.

A cluster of anonymous male soldiers, four male politicians, and a single woman (suffragist and writer Nellie L. McClung) decorate the bright red (for blood?) paper jacket of this volume. This admirably conveys the author's standards of significance: there's not much room for anyone beyond the conventional figures in Canadian history. No wonder it keeps threatening to die on us!

This bad-tempered diatribe spews out confused and contradictory messages. Canadian history has always had problems; Canadian history is the victim of recent attention to social history. Military, diplomatic, and malestream political history wants to share space in the creation of a national imaginary; nothing else is really important, certainly not "narrow [!] social history topics such as regionalism, women's issues, muticulturalism, and native history." (41) University professors of history are to blame for the ignorance of Canadians; Granatstein, a former professor, takes no responsibility for the sad state of affairs. His response to advocates of a history inclusive of women, non-European groups, and workers? "The struggle to persuade these advocates of any view of the past but their own is terribly wearing." (74)

I've been hearing about the dullness of our past since high school. As an undergraduate at the University of Toronto in the late 1960s, I learned from reading A.R.M. Lower (among many others) that the poor reputation of our national story was nothing new. Official accounts had bored audiences since Confederation. Like many of my generation of scholars (or, as Granatstein would have it, "killers"), I set out to show that Canadian history, once fully displayed, is both relevant and fascinating. The recovered history of women, workers, First Nations, ethnicity, and gender has transformed our knowledge over the pats decades. Yet, as Granatstein points out, surveys still reveal abysmal lacunae in schoolchildren's knowledge. Advocates of the new history seem to have little more luck than our predecessors in keeping a classroom awake.

Few historians of any persuasion would disagree with Granatstein's insistence that Canadians need to know their history if we are to advance as a community. Contemporary life in fact reveals high levels of interest in matters historical, ranging from popular reprints such as Pauline Johnson"s *Legends of Vancouver* (1911) and family chronicles such as Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children* (1994) to documentaries and docudramas such as the recent "Big Bear" (1999). There is also the preoccupation of academics, journalists, and other citizens with the supposed "sundering" and "killing" of Canadian history. Both our deepening knowledge of a diverse past and the

attention given laments such as this volume confirm Canadian history's noisy and cantankerous survival.

As the mother of three sons variously located in the BC public education system and as an instructor in a teachers' education programme, I sometimes see good cause for optimism. Yet Granatstein is correct: Canadian history is far too little taught in our schools. It jostles, often unsuccessfully, for space with other claimants on the time of future citizens. For all the energy of new history, it too can sometimes be ineffective in scaling school walls. This is the failure we must jointly interrogate.

More multicultural than ever in their backgrounds, and ever more saturated by American-dominated mass media, young Canadians need a great deal more information about our common community. Like Granatstein, I believe we need to teach everyone that "history matters, and we forget this truth at our peril."(xviii) The common story we should tell our young people includes the two great wars and recognition that this country, if not always "the best of all possible lands" (83), is particularly favoured and fortunate. We have sometimes committed evil as a nation (the determined destruction of First Nations communities), but we have also provided shelter from far worse environments and done something from time to time to make the world a safer place. As Granatstein argues, we do have heroes, and heroines, who should be better known. (Indeed we have far more than his book or its cover would allow, including one of his *bête noires*, Louis Riel.)

It's difficult not to sympathize with Granatstein's call for "national standards for history in our schools" (42), the creation of a federal Centre for Canadian History, and a system of Canadian Scholarships for high school students. Such initiatives might well be useful in building history in the classroom. But they can succeed only if historians promise and deliver faithful accounts of the past, ones which speak to the needs of both present and future. Otherwise we will never win the attention of Canada's young people.

Any meaningful national history, as the past Director of the Canadian War Museum occasionally admits (103), must include all people's experiences. Granatstein's finally uneducable faith that "most of Canada's history had been made by men" (62), like his attacks on multiculturalism and class analysis, suggests he will not be Captain Canuck. Whatever he may think, social historians are greatly interested in "elites and political history." (50) Canadian history does not require, indeed has never had, unanimity. Like the nation itself, its success requires cooperation, empathy, and the ability to learn from mistakes. The real answer to "Who killed Canadian history?" lies much closer than the author is ever willing to contemplate. Those in search of a viable future for history and the nation must look elsewhere.

Readers of this volume might well be persuaded that Dr. Granatstein's particular brand of history has a monopoly on patriotism. Not so. While there

are always reasons to be suspicious of nationalism, patriots are scattered across the full range of Canadian historical writing. As the daughter of a veteran injured during WWII and the niece of an Ontario teenager caught by a sniper in France in the last month of WWI, and someone moreover who appreciates full well the many, if relative, merits of our multicultural, classed, and gendered community, I am dismayed by *Who Killed Canadian History?* This doctor will not revive his patient.

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Neil Sutherland, *Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada from the Great War to the Age of Television*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997. Pp. 334.

The re-writing of educational history has taken many different forms since the 1960s but perhaps none are as important in Canada as the new historiography of children and childhood. Reconceptualization of schooling in terms of the larger context of growing up has profoundly altered the research agenda. One result was that Canadian scholars became key figures in an international historical debate about the making of modem society. By asking "Who went to school?" and "Can you read and write?," and by probing policies of child and family "welfare", Canadian researchers helped re-orient and redefine both the theory and the method of historical research.

A most important signal of Canadian leadership was the special issue of *The History of Education Quarterly* (Fall 1972) devoted to examples of the new research, enlarged three years later by New York University Press as Education and Social Change: Themes from Ontario's Past, eds. Michael B. Katz and Paul H. Mattingly. A noteworthy feature of this book was the scholar chosen to write the introduction: Neil Sutherland. Unlike historians whose attention to questions of education and social change has moved back and forth over various topics, Sutherland has concentrated on better understanding the ways in which children fit into the larger society. He published his own major contribution the next year under the title *Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth-Century Consensus*.

His new book will inevitably be assumed to be "volume two" of that now-classic monograph. But, as Sutherland emphasizes from the outset, this new book is not in fact the extension he had planned to produce; rather, it is a quite different book reflecting not only the author's own changing interests but also the evolving historiographical context of the 1980s and 1990s. The titles of his two major works make a meaningful distinction: "children" as opposed to "childhood." Sutherland sees them as probing related but different topics. The former explored the ways in which adults perceived children and how certain