dreams and nightmares, fantasy and reality. In the Monteray, Imaginary lives fold into Real lives, and the young men we meet perform an array of masculinities. The single sense of what it means to be a male that we might have seen in *The Journey Home* and *Hold Fast* has not disappeared, but it is no longer the only way for writers to imagine masculinity. Losers, too, can be winners in the ongoing footrace. The last can be first if only they keep on running.

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Postcards from the Past: The Public Record of Private Lives / *Hilary Turner*

The Courtesan's Daughter. Priscilla Galloway. Penguin Canada, 2002. 259 pp. $18.00 paper. ISBN 0-14-301504-4.

I Came as a Stranger: The Underground Railroad. Bryan Prince. Tundra, 2004. 160 pp. $22.99 paper. ISBN 0-88776-667-6.

There You Are. Joanne Taylor. Tundra, 2004. 200 pp. $12.99 paper. ISBN 0-88776-658-7.

Ordinary Miracles. Diana Aspin. Red Deer, 2003. 168 pp. $12.95 paper. ISBN 0-88995-277-9.

Initiation. Virginia Frances Schwartz. Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2003. 268 pp. $22.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55005-053-2.

An Earthly Knight. Janet McNaughton. HarperTrophy Canada, 2002. 256 pp. $15.99 paper. ISBN 0-00-639-188-5.

In 338 B.C.E., Philip of Macedon defeated Athens and its allies on the plain of Chaeronea. Dredged up from the musty remnants of a high school history lesson three decades ago, the fact by itself is a mere curiosity, evidence of a retentive memory perhaps, but of little intrinsic interest. Positioned just outside the narrative frame of a young Athenian woman's marriage to a highly placed court official, however, it takes on nearly tragic significance. Only gradually does it dawn on the characters of *The Courtesan's Daughter* that a clash with the Macedonian army is inevitable. Slowly, their small decisions take on heavy significance. As with most wars, there are those who will profit and those who will be destroyed by investing in its probable outcome. As with most wars, the temptations of treachery warp relationships within the state. As with most wars, ordinary people go on with their lives despite the net that tightens around them. *The Courtesan's Daughter*, a political thriller wrapped around a love story, makes the complexities of life in classical Athens personal and vivid, reminding readers that the dates and places recorded in history textbooks have always been real to the people who were there.

Priscilla Galloway, author of several respected works of historical fiction, has immersed herself in the Athenian culture and politics of the years around 350 BCE. She depicts a society that values governance by the many, even as it depends on slaves and denigrates women. As we are told in an Afterword, the central plot of *The Courtesan's Daughter* is based upon a real court case, of which only one document remains. The case turns upon the importance of citizenship, making clear the strong motivation of those who are excluded to obtain the rights of the citizen by fraud. Galloway does an excellent job of constructing a believable human drama around this legal fragment. Her central character, Phano, is a free-born Athenian citizen whose legitimacy as a wife is compromised by the taint carried by Nera, her courtesan stepmother. Only by uncovering proof of her relationship to her long-dead biological mother can Phano retain her position as the wife of an archon. At the same time, however, the relative autonomy of the courtesan is shown to be one of the saving graces of the social order: it is through her superior education and her freedom to associate with wealthy and powerful men that Nera is able to expose an internal plot to collaborate with Philip in the downfall of Athens. In doing so, she shores up the credibility of the prominent democratic family with whom Phano is now affiliated, and peace is preserved for a few more years. Galloway does not shy away from the ambiguities associated with the growing pains of democracy, nor does she deal in stereotypes. Ably avoiding what E.P. Thompson once called "the enormous condescension of posterity" (12), she creates personalities and a social setting that are as nuanced and complex as any we know today. Galloway's closing remarks in the Afterword nicely summarize her view of history. Although the culture and customs of ancient Athens were unlike our own, she says, "the feelings of the people weren't all that different, and they worked out their hopes and dreams in ways that resonate with modern readers" (254).

Indirect evidence of the truth of this avowal is furnished by a work of "real" history, not about ancient Athens but about a period almost as alien and unfamiliar. Bryan Prince's *I Came as a Stranger* brings to life the struggles and heroism of those who put together and those who used the Underground Railroad between the United States and Canada in the middle years of the nineteenth century. Rich in original letters, newspaper reports, photographs, and the personal narratives of freed slaves, this compact but detailed account of an obscure chapter in Canadian history allows real human beings to speak for themselves. Prince sets his subject in the wider

context of the history of slavery in the New World; he is knowledgeable about the pressures that made slavery appear an economic necessity in the American south and unsentimental in his treatment of the abolitionist cause, nor does he exalt Canadian attitudes toward slavery and race at the expense of those south of the border. In the years before Confederation, he observes, both French and English Canadians made use of slaves; indeed, one of the widely-approved provisions of the settlement of 1760, when the French surrendered to the British, was that "neither side could take away the other side's slaves" (8). The point is made graphically as well with a bald notice reproduced from the *Upper Canada Gazette*, dated August 17, 1795, which warns the public against harbouring "a Negro Wench named Sue" who "ran away from the subscriber a few weeks ago" (12).

Nevertheless, it is the case that slavery was officially abolished in Canada in 1834, nearly 30 years before the Emancipation Proclamation forced the Confederate states into line with the anti-slavery position of the Union. Prince therefore devotes the bulk of his account to the middle decades of the century, when the Underground Railway to Canada provided the only reliable means of escaping what in many cases amounted to legalized torture. Since secrecy and anonymity were of the utmost importance, little documentary evidence remains of the deeds of the white architects of the system. Prince assembles what is available, sketching the stories of Catherine and Levi Coffin, for example, a Quaker couple whose Ohio home became known as the "Grand Central Station" of the Underground Railway; of John Fairfield, who traveled deep into the southern states from his base in Ontario, bringing back "hundreds, if not thousands of slaves" (73); and of Laura Smith Haviland, a Michigan schoolteacher who wrote and safely directed hundreds of letters for freed slaves to those they had left behind.

The most compelling part of this interesting book, however, concerns the narratives of the slaves themselves, many of whom wrote candidly of their experiences under slavery, their perilous escapes, their eventual enjoyment of freedom, and their efforts to assist the many thousands who remained in bondage. Frederick Douglass, whose hard-won position as a newspaper editor allowed him to spearhead the American abolitionist movement, figures prominently in this section of the text. So does William Still, author of *The Underground Railroad* (1871), a first-hand account of the way a crucial portion of the network was put together under his capable leadership. Equally important is Harriet Tubman who, based in St. Catharines, made many personal ventures back to the south, spiriting away as many as 300 slaves, while the bounty on her head grew to a then astronomical $12,000.

Bryan Prince, a resident of North Buxton, Ontario, traces his own ancestry back four generations to passengers on the Underground Railway. He is superbly qualified to tell this story and to extend it into the period of settlement and acclimatization experienced by those who made it across the Niagara River and other border crossings. Theirs was not an easy lot, for although Canadian laws did protect former slaves from injustice and oppression, "the administration of those laws was not colour blind" (100), and many continued to experience prejudice, poverty, and exclusion. Prince's brief survey of the black communities of Ontario — in Windsor, Amherstburg, Chatham, London, Hamilton, and other cities and towns — is a fascinating piece of research in itself, and makes it clear that the people of Ontario should be both proud of their role in the emancipation of so many and troubled by their intermittent hesitations and resentments.

Quite apart from its absorbing content, *I Came as a Stranger* is an exemplary

introduction to the practice of history. It places authentic historical documents before young readers and encourages them to think broadly about geography, economics, politics, and social relationships before making judgments. The scholarly features of this book — detailed endnotes describing archival sources, a map, a substantial bibliography, and a useful index — are designed to assist in further research even as they provide a model of what careful scholarship should look like.

Something of the same dedication to a moment in history and to a particular community can be seen in Joanne Taylor's short novel about Cape Breton, *There You Are*. The setting is the Margaree Valley circa 1947. Following the end of the war, Jeannie Shaw's father has come home from his service in Germany. His boyhood friend Alf Parker, however, is buried in an unmarked grave somewhere along the Rhine. When Alf's widow and children return to the valley, Jeannie's social circle is enlarged, but although it now contains three lively boys and a girl of her own age, the latter is a bitter recluse, disfigured by polio, the scourge of the summer months. Jeannie's forthright manner and eagerness for a friend cause her to push too hard, and she alienates those she is trying to cultivate. When Jeannie's younger sister and a cousin wander off and get lost in the woods, however, everyone rallies round and helps in the search.

This is mostly a story about a family. The loneliness of the elder daughter is powerfully conveyed, as are the envy and general peskiness of the younger. Yet what makes this book stand out from others of its kind are the economy and precision with which the pastoral Cape Breton landscape, way of life, and cultural attitudes are conveyed. Jeannie picks blueberries, earning 25 cents a pail. She spends her money on fabric and thread at Campbell's store to make her own dresses. She babysits her sister and her cousin. Just before the two younger girls wander off, Jeannie teaches them how to make "fairy houses" out of twigs. On the fourth day of the search, a shot rings out from somewhere in the woods: hearing it, "the searchers gathered into an ever tighter, protective circle. Their voices dwindled to church-sized murmurs, trying not to hope too much, trying not to give up hoping" (191). When the girls are brought home at last, the entire community is united in friendship: "As a last cloud drifted away, Jeannie tried to take in all the details, to make sure it was real. Sun shone on them gathered there, shone on the house and barn, shone on the dangerous dark emerald forest and softened it again to leaf and moss and meadow greens, all dappled and gentle in the clean air" (195). Although the great public events that comprise history as it is usually understood are in the background here, the texture of real experience is unmistakable.

Diana Aspin makes a more overt attempt to locate a Canadian community in the crosscurrents of history in *Ordinary Miracles*, a series of linked stories set in the fictional Muskoka town of Sky Falls. The community's resident old-timer, a retired funeral director named Art Pinner, came to the town in 1911 as a friendless orphan. The first story in the collection introduces him as an eleven-year-old runaway who attempts to put as much distance as he can between himself and Jeremiah Hastings, the sadistic farmer to whom he had been sent as a "home boy" fresh from mother England. Lost in a frozen landscape and mistrustful of every adult he sees, young Art is rescued by an apparition of sorts, a young girl wearing red leggings and a Blue Jays cap — unusual garb for the time — whom he privately names The Girl from the Future. As she points him toward his salvation (an apprenticeship as a carpenter to a much kinder man) the girl mistakenly pockets Art's only piece of identification, a landing card from the S.S. Dominion. The missing card haunts many

of the stories in *Ordinary Miracles*. Symbolizing both identity and a link to the past, it is restored to the dying Art in the concluding story — in which the future has at last become the present — through the agency of his granddaughter, dressed in red leggings in the same frozen landscape.

Between these two bookends, the stories weave a picture of a northern Ontario town in the present day. Like Joanne Taylor, Aspin has taken pains with the details of her setting, and the interlocking lives of her characters are rendered so as to convey a strong sense of community. As in most small towns, secrets are few in Sky Falls, and the most shameful secrets are the most widely known. Unlike *There You Are*, however, *Ordinary Miracles* is not a nostalgic book. Rather, it confronts some painful problems — mostly those of young adults — in a clear-eyed but sometimes ironic fashion. A young man faces up to the fact that he is gay. A teenage girl discovers her father in an adulterous relationship. A boy interferes in his mother's e-mail flirtation with a stranger. A star athlete drives his new car straight into a moose; both are killed. A girl must decide whether or not to remain with her alcoholic mother. Small miracles of insight and forgiveness do occur in these vignettes, but they stand out starkly against the blind vagaries of history.

Virginia Frances Schwartz's *Initiation* also draws attention to the chasm that can open up between private desires and impersonal necessity. Set in 1440 along the coast of the Pacific Northwest, the story depicts a year in the life of the Kwakiutl, a tribe dependent both materially and spiritually on the seasonal return of salmon to their spawning grounds. When some rebellious Salish youths slaughter the fish before the appointed time, the Kwakiutl raid their village, killing the faithful warriors, dispersing the women and children, and claiming the trophy of a young girl as a slave. This murder of the innocents sets in motion a series of disruptions in the natural order, leaving the tribe in danger of starvation. Noh, as the slave girl is called, turns out to have inherited the powers of her shaman mother, and she functions as an intermediary between her new chief's two children and the world of the spirit that lies all around them.

Narrated in turn by each of the three children, events in the story conspire to impel the characters toward personal sacrifices made for the preservation of the community. For each, initiation into adulthood involves a renunciation of self. Although he has dreamed of being a warrior, Nanolatch accepts the necessity of leading his tribe to make peace with the Salish. Nana, his sister, gives up her human life and is transformed into "Salmonwife," the guiding spirit of the sustaining fish. For her part, Noh must return to what remains of her own people, despite the attachments she has formed in her new community, and restore the balance that initially unsettled the forces of nature. This is an absorbing portrait of a period in North American history about which little is known. Schwartz relies to a certain extent on ancestral myths, but the impact of the novel derives primarily from its narrative technique. Interior monologue is continually juxtaposed with conversation, accounts of daily life, and descriptions of the movements of nature. Each narrator's angle of vision is slightly different, permitting the reader to assemble a composite picture of the community and to see that the survival of the many must sometimes require the personal surrender of the few.

In something of a class by itself is Janet McNaughton's medieval romance *An Earthly Knight*. In part a historical novel, the work is set in the early years of the Norman occupation of Britain. Castles, tournaments, falcons, deep forests, and traveling musicians abound, as do authoritative priests and the fairy folk whose

unruly designs they refuse to acknowledge. Although we are given the sense of a society in transition, the major conflict in the story occurs within its protagonist. The daughter of Scots-Norman nobility, young Jenny is torn between two marriageable men. Intrigued by the wealth and status he can offer her and by the potential to improve her family's fortunes through marriage, Jenny is drawn to Earl William de Warrene, an arrogant young brawler who sees her only as a possession. On the other hand, she is befriended by the inscrutable Tam Lin, a landless Scottish knight who has been claimed by the fairies as one of their own. Jenny's task is first to know her own heart and then to liberate her suitor, at great personal risk, from the magical chains that bind him. A curious but successful blend of historical realism, psychology, and fantasy, *An Earthly Knight* is a well-structured and entertaining novel. Like the other works considered here, it insists upon the lived reality of a place and time remote from our own. This is the best reason to read about the past, of course, for by increasing our knowledge of how other people have lived, we are better able to judge our own performance on the vast public stage of history.

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Going Beyond the Limits of YA Fiction / *Laurence Steven*

The Black Sunshine of Goody Pryne. Sarah Withrow. Groundwood, 2003. 177 pp. $9.95 paper. ISBN 0-88899-577-6.

The Canning Season. Polly Horvath. Groundwood, 2003. 203 pp. $8.95 paper. ISBN 0-88899-522-0.

The First Stone. Don Aker. HarperTrophy Canada, 2003. 229 pp. $15.99 paper. ISBN 0-00-639285-7.

Flux. Beth Goobie. Orca, 2004. 258 pp. $19.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55143-314-1.

The Hippie House. Katherine Holubitsky. Orca, 2004. 233 pp. $19.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55143-316-8.

The limits of YA (young adult) teen fiction are found in its circumscribed purview. The work of Beth Goobie, whom Tim Wynne-Jones claims "just might be the best YA writer in the country" on the blurb for her earlier book, *Before Wings* — is an exemplary case. Her YA protagonists such as Sal Hanson in *The Lottery* are fully absorbed in their world, but to readers outside the YA audience and world or on its