

**ÓISÍN'S**

**JOURNEY**

**HOME,**

**A Keen at the Gates of the Heart**

By John Ennis

<b>Introduction by Rod Keeping</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Prologue</b>	<b>2</b>
*	
<b>The People's Road</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The Arc of Destination</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Industry</i>	<b>5</b>
<b>To the Coming Times</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>These Inadequate Memorials</b>	<b>14</b>
<i>Memorabilia as Seen from a Steed in Full Flight</i>	<b>17</b>
*	
<b>All Things Commensurate</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Homage to the Town Council of Port aux Basques</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>With Fabian and Gordon in St. John's</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>The Stormiest Fields in Canada</b>	<b>30</b>

*Dedications:*

to Alf Penney and Fabian Kennedy,  
who “laid the rails” for the poem in their book *A History of the Newfoundland Railway*,  
( *I merely raced along old rails*  
*rode their absence*  
*for a spell*);

and to the people of Newfoundland, in particular the people of Port aux Basques.  
I am particularly indebted to *A History of the Newfoundland Railway*, with its  
encyclopaedic detail, from which I have drawn most of the information needed for  
*Óisín’s Journey Home*. In some sections of the poem I have altered the chronology  
to suit the needs of the verse. I am further grateful to Fabian Kennedy and to Bob Cuff  
for permission to use photographs from *A History of the Newfoundland Railway*.  
I am also indebted to readings from Clayton D. Cook’s *Tales of the Rails* Volume 1V *The*  
*Newfoundland Railway 1881 - 1988*  
With special thanks also to Ron Barnes, Winnie Hickey, John Parsons and Rod Keeping  
for their generous assistance.

“It were sad to gaze on the blessed and no man I loved of old  
there;  
I throw down the chain of small stones! When life in my  
body has ceased,  
I will go to Caoilte, and Conan, and Bran, Sceolan, Lomair,  
And dwell in the house of the Fenians, be they in flames or  
at feast.”  
Yeats. *The Wanderings of Óisín* ll.220 – 224

“...Remembrance, lifting her leanness, keened in the gates  
of my heart.”  
Yeats. *The Wanderings of Óisín* 1. 152

“It is in the inarticulate part of communication, railways and bridges and canals and  
highways, that Canada, one of whose symbols is the taciturn beaver, has shown its real  
strength”(224).  
Frye, Northrop. *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*. 1971. Toro  
Anansi, 1995

“The hand that signed the paper felled a city...  
.....  
...A hand rules pity as a hand rules heaven;  
Hands have no tears to flow”.  
Dylan Thomas, “The Hand That Signed the Paper”.

*...So, in these days of post-yeatsian steeds and internet*

*horserace industry and poetry projects to transport us  
with Larry Mathews  
-and dollarless students with crashed computers –  
I'll chase above old stripped traintracks for old namesakes  
who left the family-teeming midlands for the Grand Banks  
all the spawning dollars to be had from cod. Landlubbers  
learning sealegs. Processors on the shore. Fishermen  
like John L. Ennis these forty years in Merasheen...*

*...as I left our hazelled haunts for overseas to meet my kind again,  
Niamh said,  
“Praise the old heroics wherever you see them in fine deeds  
but know there can be crookedness in men too in high places.  
Avoid it like a leprosy, ride far above it, have no truck with it,  
lash such with your tongue, rise up the kind we were and will be  
always  
& come back safe home to me...”*

## INTRODUCTION

My! How the memories flow once again!

Being a third generation family railroader on my father's side makes me so proud to be part of such history. For example, my grandfather was a conductor, his son(my dad) was a Loco Engineer on the old steam engines and diesel in later years. Dad's brother was also conductor. My parents had fourteen children(seven boys and seven girls). All the boys worked with the railway along with two of the girls. We, the boys, have all since retired except one who is presently a conductor on the former BC railway in Prince George, British Columbia. The two girls are still working with what's left over from the railway operations, namely the marine Atlantic Inc. ferry service. One on the ferries and one at the Port aux Basques ferry terminal.

So much for the family background.

When I reflect and remember the flurry of activities in the movement of ships and trains connecting at Port aux Basques with so much freight and movement of people and the prosperity that was enjoyed by so many people, I have to pinch myself and realize, yes, it all took place.

There is so much that goes through my mind when I reflect on railway related stories.

For example: myself and family as children growing up in the railway town of Port aux Basques. I can hear the CALL BOY as he was known knocking on our door any time of the day to advise my dad that the ships had arrived and passenger and freight were being loaded and the trains were being made ready for departure and he was called for duty. Dad was the engineer on the old steam engines during those times.

(That was before anyone had telephones in their homes).

Of course when we got older there were occasions when we would deliver his lunch basket from home to the railway just to get a ride on the engine and blow the whistle while getting a ride in the rail yard.

Or going up to the train station to watch what we thought were strange looking people carrying odd looking baggage coming from Upper Canada on the Gulf vessels and boarding the trains at Port aux Basques for points throughout Newfoundland. We would learn later the round cylinders were their fishing rods to catch salmon etc.)during their visit.

Then there was the whistle that would sound morning , noon and night at the CN- round house notifying the men it was starting hour or the end of the shift for the day. (The old steam whistle today is in storage at the museum and is taken out for special occasions during summer celebrations such as Come Home Year: it is hooked up to steam and activated to sound just as it did back in the railway days).

The history of the Railway on the Island of Newfoundland, NL from the beginning in the 1800's to its unfortunate closure in the year of 1988 has been presented or told in many forms such as books, video, movie, documentaries, and stories by parents, grandparents and great grandparents and in plays or skits at summer festivals to entertain tourist and vacationers alike.

*ÓIS ÍN'S JOURNEY HOME, A Keen at the Gates of the Heart* by the poet John Ennis will remind the reader of the vision, hard work and determination of all the people who made the railway possible and made it become the transportation system that it was. The great prosperity and benefits it brought to the Island and its people and the nation of Canada as well.

The purpose of this book is to provide once again a reminder of the proud history of a railway that once was in the province of Newfoundland and an opportunity to share that experience with the young generation who never had the privilege to ride on a passenger train in Newfoundland after 1988. "DADDY, WHAT'S A TRAIN?" a young child in Newfoundland might well ask.

I believe it's time for a renewed awakened interest in a modern railway system for Newfoundland. The oil industry and its future and all that it brings with transportation is one major factor. The tourism train should be part of the plan as well across Newfoundland. The traffic from Port aux Basques to locations across the province and ending in St. John's is a major stress on the Trans Canada Highway. Heavy duty traffic could be handled by trains as a support to the trucking mode as well. There are environmental factors to be increasingly considered.

Perhaps the question that will be asked after this read will be: Where is our vision today? They could build a railway in the 1800's under such primitive conditions, why not again today with new technology for a new railway in Newfoundland? A VISION REVIVED--A NEW RAILWAY ALIVE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND! might be our motto and heard more often.

"ALL-ABOARD, WHO'S GOING ABOARD?" Conductor Paddy Lee would call out for passengers to get aboard his "own" train about to depart to Carbonear. Will we make that call across the province? Do we have the vision?

ROD KEEPING

Former Mayor and citizen of railway town of Channel – Port aux Basques,  
Newfoundland

## **PROLOGUE**

*...He always loved trains  
since St. Clement's Road and Independent Bridge  
echoed to thundering engines when he holidayed  
at Jack's in Drumcondra Dublin as a boy...*

*...the ghostly outline of that black model steam engine haunts him still  
Doris had to drag him away from it over in Ballsbridge...*

*...and yearly toy carriages on a Christmas Day kitchen floor  
at Knockaville with circular tracks and he within them  
and barking collies with wagging tails he kept outside them,  
half the fun settling the engine and its carriages back on the rails  
again...*

*His uncle Larry was midlander, railway man,  
as teenager harried the Tans who terrorised a people  
raking them from cutaway bog over in Winetown.  
Their troop convoys whistled the gleaming Camp River rails.*

*Larry Ennis lived all his life after in Athlone with Janey Kilkenny  
-no kids for worry –  
worked in the station, heard trains rattle the sleepers across Costume Bridge  
first the smoke puffers then the diesels that sped his nephew*

*John went to pick clerical stones down in Mayo off seminary fields:  
who'd see, on the tracks to Balla, blue adamantine Larry  
parade the platform  
stickler with breast pocket watch and whistle...*

## The People's Road

Alf Penney taught me to read a vernier scale  
those ice-free sunny days when packet boats traversed the waters  
brought Conception to St. John's  
and railway fever fired our blood.

Like a prophecy out of Columcille, John Dearin, waxing to the House  
in 1878,  
saw locomotives "snort" vast acres "well water-margined  
and timber-bordered".

Sandford Fleming stepped one survey Sunny Side, Exploits,  
St. George's Bay –  
Quinns and Morrison walked to Bay D'Espoir –  
Lynch, Cadman and Mitchell went Sunny Side, Come by Chance –  
survey by transit, chain and level; survey lines through woods, stakes driven,  
elevations every hundred feet:  
grades to be kept at 1 to 1.2%; curves to be not more than 5%.

W.A. Ramsey was transitman; R.N. Light, the leveller.

O  
Mr. Fleming  
*-Keep off the French Treaty Coast, just too sensitive,-*

The fish merchants from St. John's (like the old tinsmiths of Ephesus)  
kicked up a din, any railway would bankrupt them, the colony. Less aid for fisheries.  
Abort! Abort! They petitioned government  
but failed.

Silencing the doubting Bennets of the past, Whiteway stood, and won,  
for the "people's" road.



The iron backbone of the railway paralleled towards the light of day;  
Philip Cleary rose from his design desk with bunkhouses for fifty men.  
Terminus Station was at Fort William with a spur to Maggoty Cove  
and Temperance Street.

In 1881, as the blueberry leaves went crimson and summer's mottled  
ptarmigan moulted white, 900 men worked between St. John's and Manuels  
- their pay eight cents an hour –  
fed the *meitheal* of the times, some little pride in silvered pockets  
for gruel, your own money for the medic when the smallpox raged  
snatched away your children;  
cleared ten miles of roadbed ready for ties & rails  
& cleared right of way for more.  
“*All work*” for Whiteway courtesy of pick and shovel and your sweat  
- *bring your own, b'y, or that ready garden spade* –  
5 December, the first locomotive on SS Merlin  
assembled at Fort William skating rink  
hugged the shoreline rails at Kelligrews.  
Landowners growled, snarled *No Inland*.  
In afternoons free from school, baptisms, marriages and deaththroes  
waving from carriage windows to scythemen swinging in summer  
meadows,  
clergy and children rode station to station half-fare and back again.  
On Sundays men and women in their droves turned out in hundreds  
for a ride  
even if some churches soon crusaded *HALT* to such Sabbath pleasantries.  
Enthusiasm, and her purse, overcame deceased Mrs. Ryan from Colliers  
determined she'd ride the flat cars with the men from St. John's,  
told not to, determined it made no difference in 1882: laden down  
with baskets clambouring aboard she slipped as the train moved,  
caught between two cars.

T.P. Connors, section foreman, and his eighty men ballasted the railtracks  
towards Whitbourne.

Another gang worked fast to Harbour Grace which packed respectable carriages  
with wives & their top-hatted men on railway outings with their kids.  
From Brigus Junction Paddy Lee ran his own show to Carbonear.

## The Arc of Destination

...work carries us  
the way love can, but with  
less sorrow...

“Work”

Zan Zwicky

*Robinson's Crossing*

...

*What? Now a pile-up of celtic encomia  
like names from a bardic catalogue...*

...Enter Robert Gillespie Reid from Perthshire  
who cut his antipodean teeth on Sydney Harbour Bridge  
later on the Parliament in Ottawa,  
built bridges in Austin and Laredo,  
spanned the Rio Grande in 1882,  
bridged the north shore of Lake Superior  
triple effort over river and canal, with rails  
to Sault Ste. Marie.  
Railway across Newfoundland *to him* child's play.  
Even if rheumatics galled his old hips now for he stood too long  
in freezing rapids admiring his mighty bridge that spanned the waters  
in Grand Narrows:

R.G.Reid

brings his railway players to Newfoundland to cheers in St. John's:  
Henderson who Michaelangeloes stone for bridges,  
manners granite a few miles east of Benton;  
Watson, carpenter, piling bridge foundations, temporary  
trestles;  
Hector Ross who nudges steel girders gently to their beds;  
Ferguson, one more young carpenter, hungry for work  
promotion;  
James Bird, black teamster from the southern states,  
the best that will ever drive a team in Newfoundland  
( in his last years, near blind, runs a busy station shop  
in Whitbourne).

Five miles west of Northern Bight a delayed blast kills young James Saunders  
from Aberdeen  
takes the eye out of R.G's son, young W.D. Young Ralph Connors  
races his work engine sixty miles an hour with him to a Placentia doctor to save  
the eye.

The battle for the eye is lost.  
W.D. suspends Ralph for their twin pains for unsafe driving,  
W.D. will not pose for photos from that day till he dies.  
*Knighthed in June 1916, his youngest son, Bruce  
falls in the "July Drive", falls across in France.*

And the work goes on -

*I see the work go on -  
on old brambled ways preserved for what. For what?  
For mere Nostalgia to wreak its vengeance on the psyche?  
Deodorised day-trippers to claim they've walked the old railroad?  
I'd pull up hard, get down, risk it all, but I know my fate  
-I see the work go on -*

bogs and marshes corduroyed with criss-crossed timber  
a foot or two of sub-grade gravel laid down over it;  
rock-cuts drilled by hand; one man holds the drill  
striking in rhythm two more with seven-pound  
hammers  
echoes patient as Robert de Bruce pricking  
the moose-eared country in the fall of 1892  
black bears curious up in the tall agile pines  
and on and on till the train road gleams in the sun  
rising in the eastern sky across far Conception  
blasting with dynamite caps, hissing fuses,  
thunder-like the explosions, dust settling  
like early snow, the white dust over lichens,  
at dawn frost flowering like many a forgotten  
monstrance underfoot  
as the iron fall closes& work begins all over  
in the thaw of the year.

Wages better now, dollar a day, or scrip  
no bunkhouses in the barrens, tar paper  
palmful of nails, birch or larch poles for  
tar-paper tent, feast on rabbit, blueberries,  
iron bake pots going all male Sundays  
men kicking feet through ladies slippers  
in waste places as they ease themselves,  
bake bread back over open fires.

At dusk, the campfires of one thousand men for six miles of a grade  
refract off the evening fires into the glowworm skies above the trees  
the larch and birch turning over to gold as ever any Indian summer  
or the few deciduous forest maple with their own hectic leafstories  
reddenings in the Fall beneath the close-up stars slow descending  
with the last rosined stories silenced, the last fiddlescrapes silenced  
the last line of the last vying ballad silenced for yet another night.  
Skeins of mist and volatile embrace the uptight tents of old snorers,  
the teenearners, men whose lives are inbetween or nowhere beneath  
tarpaper  
the many shales outside hardening white and padding of black bears  
about them,  
1892. A good year for Newfoundland. Two thousand two hundred men  
at work other than the Banks.

Picks and shovels swing at dawn into an interior little traversed.  
Whiteway sees first time the prospect of a nation opening for the people  
from Little Shoal Harbour  
salutes Reid and his army, the end-stop Port aux Basques.

*I see but can't make out as I pass over them  
when the sun blinds them from behind a cloud as they're caught in the lens  
of any eye,  
who is the fourth man becaped, seated  
with foreman Billy Best in his handcart standing  
with those three other men round Port Blandford?  
Player of a melodeon, unlikely?  
Checking out his fattening wallet, maybe?  
Knees crossed as if handling a Jerome.*

What are temporary timber trestles fetched away by Newfoundland ice,  
what odds?

Construction joins Port Blandford, Terra Nova, Gambo 1892.

Timber trestles adorn Butt's Pond and Soulis Brook.

Campbell, Henderson and Forbes, *that trinity*

cut granite blocks for bridge foundations;

Watson, Ross and Pickering *no less*

raise roadhouses, assemble rolling stock

at Whitbourne.

Surveyors take the Cook's Brook Curling route.

Burton is the walking boss on construction.

1896, a good year for Newfoundland, the rails.

One hundred miles. Satisfactory for Reid.

On the feast day of St. John's in 1898

the first train whistles the miles from St. John's to Port aux Basques.

Pickering and Byrne are the historied engineers,

conductor for the first run, Stephen Howlett.

Celebration. Laughter. Quidi Vidi flows.

Construction thousands out of work take a breather with their beer.

Queue up to train as station agents, telegraph operators,

souls of track & stock.

Honeymoon over(and costly) the railway now feeds election fever.

Reid amasses vast acres by the track. "Reid even owns your graves",

the Liberal slogan thunders.

Reid fumes, is repaid with interest, minus vast acreage,

rides the stormy times between St. Andrews and Cape Bay

the wild empty spaces;

in the "Wreckhouse" sees his own demise

(like the old braveheart he is exiled in Montreal)

where the wind rakes the rough earth like a power tool

what trees there are are strained, beside themselves

brother handcarving brother to the jagged core -

*as we pass on, pass by, in the rook-*

*swirling heavens*

limit vocabularies to bare essentials at the end,  
as hurricanes paw us off the very rails.

Blown over, like a toy, in 1900 the No.1 Express.

## *Industry*

*Industry*, she comes at last to the Avalon  
from Reid's quarry in the Gaff Topsails,  
rather her statue support in white granite.  
She, herself, is pure red sandstone plucked from fire,  
gatepost once to the Anglican Cathedral in St. John's.  
Tall Fanny Quinlan from Holyrood is the model for Her.  
Ms. Quinlan. Housekeeper to the Hendersons. Beautiful.  
Henderson, himself, drapes a large tablecloth draped across her shoulders  
for classical illusion, St. John's then not being Athens.  
She stands for him hot season to season, Fall into Fall, ice to ice,  
thaw to thaw  
his cold stone chisels chipping, his eye athwart the sandstone and her  
himself leaning "in fine frenzy" into the sandstone in that local habitation  
till she's unveiled to cheering and whistling of locomotives  
venting steam.

Henderson, he becomes Pygmalion  
to all and sundry in St. John's.  
Gave the city a queen of its own to match its mood,  
Fanny Quinlan from Holyrood.

*I saw her still a beautiful woman in the snows of March 2006  
hidden almost, surrounded by the ugly spans of highway bridges  
strong-willed, her own dreamer, taciturn with the many seasons in her face  
greater than all those that closed the stations in her face,  
and more enduring for the winters here are longer than in Greece.*

*Even if the years have weathered her affections  
got to her in sandstone  
she survives us all.*

## To the Coming Times

*with apologies to the fingers  
that once penned me...*

May you no less be counted one  
with Connors, Steele and Ferguson  
Reid & son, roadmasters, engineers  
averaging eighty miles those years  
the east-west marriage was on:  
McLellan, Powell, Emerson  
Graham, Alex Cobb, - heady in their tasks -  
linking St. John's with Port aux Basques.  
Foremen in the barrens, walking bosses  
making good all washouts, ice losses,  
tracklaying. Ballasting. Young crews  
miles from balladic homes, Kelligrews,  
icebergs drifting in their heads hot days  
or the deeper greens of green Bonne Bay;  
for some the white crests of Lobster Head,  
icebergs growling off white Red Head.

Like Henderson check out every stone arch.  
Rail tracks had reached Mary March  
by 1894, beginnings of the Topsails.  
Downstream from Bishop's Falls  
see a new bridge span the Exploits!  
Go on to Arnold's Cove, Northern Bight.  
Providence lays its finger on the rail  
as faithful and Bishop McNeil  
petition North Codroy from rail crews  
to make life better for St. Andrews.  
A railway built with pick and shovel  
determined backs, few heavy cuts, few fills  
calloused palms. Mostly curvature and candour.  
Save for that five-mile stretch west of Gander.



*Cheering in Port aux Basques! End of the mainline  
construction!*

*Will it be so again?  
Will it be so again?*

Commencement of the branch line.  
Bonavista's Opening. A gala day.  
Seven bagpipers kilting it round the Bay.  
Or the new iron road to Joe Glodes Pond.  
Reid's prompt wages, his scrip his bond.

Yet the casual heroics had just begun –  
how to keep rails gleaming in the sun  
through daily usage, above all in the winter snow  
when blizzards in the Topsails blow  
drifts like hillocks across Newfoundland.

*Word or two, then, for that intrepid band:*

Ferdinand Rioux, super over in St. John's  
nerve-centre of communications  
bunked in his sleepless clock-tower for years  
the latest rail cock-up in his ears  
monitoring storms, washouts, the snow blockade  
*where and where to send out aid,*  
*and under him*  
the five hundred section men it would take Verdi  
to do justice to – *but where is Verdi?* –  
who grabbed blankets - went as they were -  
bundled pots, kettles, what food was there  
into dim cars lit by kerosene  
fought rails through blizzards, obscene  
forecasts, firing pot-bellied stoves,  
rescued snow-stranded in their droves...

...the graves and bones of these Verdimer are inarticulate now,  
many are back in the outport clays that nurtured them long ago,  
in railway culture & nomenclature they lived and died  
cursed & swore in pre-union days at the few cents, kids that cried,  
for they were more dutiful than poets with their time,  
all the time,  
whom the public took for granted hour by hour  
as they would guardian angels when an old faith was sound...

...and this, over and above the norm,  
section-men a ten-hour fifteen-cent hour day out in storm

or shine, mostly hardships we can only glimmer at  
kept people free-moving where they wanted to,

*on the earth that is a lot if nothing else,  
the souls of track & stock the first builders*

no mere poets, artists these, then, but greater, labourers, interpreters of nationhood  
mostly in silence in themselves, saw it seed its godhead in poor tree-bearing soils:  
section-men, pick-men, shovel-men, dynamiters leaning on religion in vacuity  
on their muscled handles after work, or in between long bouts of wheezy labour,  
on the welcoming ghosts of Beothuk trapping beaver for them in the streams,  
who heard real spirits tap at their tar paper with the first leaf-fall, snowflake,  
admirers of rockshapes in the Barrens, themselves lost to past and present,  
enough to get through the labour of another day, a song and sleep  
flakey too if got at, beauty in old bodies in a naked morning tent.  
Rebaptized in desolate places with exotic names in the showers  
that fell on their heads too with forebears who honeyed desolate  
rock with fine names from honeyed tongues, spat exotics in a dyke  
with orchids.

Bronzed sweat still streams on their foreheads and the past  
who attuned their days to no importance among the rocks and stones,  
who were cornerstone.

In the old photos that have come down to us their faces  
are like rockfaces, often auburn and fluid  
who worked with peat streaming auburn  
down embankments, on their foreheads  
hair, like the coarse grasses among the heathers, fell;  
sweat from their foreheads dripped on the marsh grasses  
    for intermittent miles  
    for the rails.

By their new rail road they sat down or squatted on their hunkers  
with pride in deed if little else to pocket, blue storytelling  
finetalking girls or faroff homes or sprouting kids  
in older eyes few attachments at the end  
as is the way or with hackchest sputum on the rail...eyes across the land  
saw just the rugged beauty of what is and is...and yet might be...  
by request fiddling the music of what happens to deaden pain  
the young to know the early days of link and pin  
the days of crushed fingers  
learn somehow to re-pluck the strings

rise and rosen another tune for those waiting around

praise these who built and fought to keep the lines open

... their nation's 900 miles of operating track mainline...

*salt of the earth*

all the dead souls of the rails, those who handled snow blockages, every derailment  
with inadequate equipment.

R.G.Reid, who'd worked worldwide, did them homage:  
"the best railway labourers I have ever seen"

*but theirs was no vineyard*

*yet in flames or in feast they are close to me*

## These Inadequate Memorials

At the memorial service for R.G. Reid rail premises closed for half an hour  
in Newfoundland,  
then railwaymen went back to work, the mundane or heroic or the two in one.

In 1903, in the Gaff Topsails roadmaster, ploughmaster, Davey Steele  
got himself stuck in the snow, vice-gripped  
couldn't back up to Millertown Junction –  
such the blizzard – cleared to a section by a pond  
lifted the tracks right out on the ice and swung  
the snowplough round.

Blizzards won sometimes. Even the rotary ploughs derailed,  
1903, one rolled down into Cook's Brook, took all winter to jack it up again;  
took two locomotives to stir the rotary. In attendance, courtesy of the government  
spare tenders of water, coal cars, cook cars, bunk cars  
sizeable crews in tight quarters mouth to mouth  
singing snowy tales.

How often, though, sheer rail power, will power hugged engines on the narrow,  
improvisations on a theme for no composer to this day,  
repairs *imagined*, track bolt or piece of sawn-off  
lining bar  
held a vital track part in place for speeding trains.

Even in 1928 construction was still pick and shovel, a wheelbarrow job.  
Rhodie John Kennedy from Harbour Main was still walking boss,  
getting on  
rode the pine-cut miles on horseback...

*the ghost of his old pony whinnies skyward, tosses her mane;  
John, alter ego, check well the shims, bending over take care...  
What? Fires and billowing smoke on the horizon?*



*Memorabilia as Seen from a Steed in Full Flight:*

miracle ledgers of T.P.Connors opening on a meagre budget;  
Horatio Patrick's 190 Engine, St. John's turntable in 1920:

good management men, like chief dispatcher, Frank G. Murphy,  
who takes on-the-makers by the ear back out into the cold;

competence & N R general manager, H.J.Russell,  
1923 – 1949 smoothing sunkinks, keeps trains on tight rails;

William O'Reilly even yet advancing in the Topsails, the cuts  
fifteen feet deep & forty below across white majestic country;

the first train arrives to cheers in Hearts Content  
as low sweet blueberries ripen out of camera;

Frank Moore teaches kids from *Shanawdithit*;  
a swallow-tail lights on a girl's pinafore;

pinewood stations lupin in profusion along a summer mainline;  
red foxes dart across the tracks with gold & black& silver fur;

wellkept stations like at Crabbes, St. Fintan's  
June with rhodora petals like rhododendron;

war years sparks flying with so much munitions, broken axles, men  
shrugging off death and kingdom come like old overcoats in April;

dreamers who dream of rails to Buchans, Fortune, & Bonne Bay  
above the Bay of Islands; rails one day down south to Francois;

rails between Mt. Erskine and Mt. Gregory,  
blue-eyed grasses swaying in Zen's northern fields;

the best wine holds till last, and in our time she's there for love  
heroine Winnie Hickey with sandpaper in her hands and paint

out sanding down & painting Engine 593 and her rolling stock  
in Corner Brook(when public interest shimmers elsewhere)to keep the dream of rails  
alive.

*She'd see that old train move  
again on rails*

## All Things Commensurate,

“services[to be] furnished commensurate with the traffic offering”.

Louis St. Laurent with the first pre-confederation kiss of death  
elaborates on the rails:

Derailments in a world of empty snow.

Two engines on their side in the Gaff Topsails.

Still, new stock from C.N. arrives:

hopper cars

gondolas

ballast cars.

Dissection of old engines would fill mortuaries  
the way clay will ease itself round an old outport bone.

Steam locomotives are cut apart for scrap.

Trespassey rails are sold to Japan for scrap iron.

Train bells are gifted over, PR provincial churches.

Stock is exiled to Chile, Bolivia, Antofagasta.

Bells lyricise saints' days, marriages & deaths.

At Port aux Basques rocks are blasted

to make a site for wharves, a yard for trackage.

Taunts of inefficiency daily smear the railway.

Across Newfoundland road rage now all the rage.

The railway's a *federal problem anyway*.

C.N gives the second kiss, milks the populace

Reid's decorum. Custom bred in the bone.

No solid steel cutlery anymore, stainless in its place.

Token paper mats stand in for fine linen.

Menu *is* by nature standard coast to coast on the C.N.

Bus service is what the people *really* needs in Newfoundland.

And no one's left high up at home to challenge freight run-down.

Moncton NB now rules the rails in Newfoundland.

*I see noisy demonstrations. Newfoundland anger. The Trans-Canadian highway is blocked through Bishop's Falls. Sparks from the fires of Caoilte and Conan.*

Comes the Sullivan Commission of Enquiry in 1978.

*Transportation to the 1990's in Newfoundland;*  
- no reference to the railway in Newfoundland -  
“...seems inevitable that...[the railway]...must ultimately be abandoned...will not survive...ten years.”

Recommendation 29 to this federal day  
Men of a mind to undo Whiteway.  
Angel of death rides on the air, plants another kiss on  
the dead mouths of Connors, Reid and Ferguson.

Frank Moore speaks boldly out by the same year's end:  
“*Our* railway should not be abandoned under any[all?] circumstances...[all] trade-offs...unacceptable.”  
Not yet the synchronised gears. The contradictory statement.

So, the financial strait-jacket. Of course, total freedom, my dears  
“to change and innovate.” By this is meant  
C.N. federal subvention to reduce over four years  
but not yet, *not yet, complete* abandonment.

Comes Messenger's false down with feet like Mercury,  
rail car changeover to containers,  
the five-year business plan written like an artist's in longhand:  
*employees to drop by 500 in 5 years;*

rates to be comparable with the maritime, which is only fair,  
(the smaller print reads *scaledown*).  
Trumpcard. Look after those over 55, the grand armée in good faith  
marching in step with Napoleon to the plaza down at Radisson.



On February 13, 1981, the day Catholics honour frail Bernadette,  
for hundreds sunlit notices, job terminations,  
darkly nailed to media headlines, come to light.  
Rails shiver from Port aux Basques to St. John's.

But on 24 March 1981 Federal Transport Minister J.L. Pepin is on hand  
to calm the body rail: "The railway is and will continue to be  
an important element of the transportation system serving Newfoundland."  
Pep in the insurgent hope of every young rail employee.

For Messenger, congratulations!  
What a job well done!  
He accepts promotion  
across in Moncton.

Pepin's \$50 million promised for containers, railcars,  
is reprieve only for five years. For federal ears  
the tacit rails a waste of federal moneys, the real  
epiphany, frost heaving the track, shims beneath every rail

loosened that keep all even, the tracks roughening  
as the frost thaws in the spring.  
...Derailments. Every derailment  
for Ottawa is but heaven sent.

Enter Peckford's Cabot Martin to set the rails firmly  
on track again, rail conversion to a standard gauge, and this by  
third-rail stages Port aux Basques to Corner Brook to Bishop's Falls  
to St. John's, say, ten to fifteen years if all's

well, but C.N. pours icy water all over Cabot Martin:  
no third rail could be laid around Terry's Cut not to mention  
Crabbes Sidehill or Ugly.  
Much federal pondering follows on Cabot & C.N. in yet another study

which never comes to light. TerraTransport does for all to see:  
C.N.'s Special Operation for troublesome Newfoundland;  
to wit, separate from NB all across the prairies to BC  
linking the great Canadian cities and the heartlands.

TerraTransport. Big in the Provincial Bulletins.  
Aggressive selling claws back business.  
TT's in profit. So, closes more stations.  
Abandons branchlines. Lays off workers. Business!

Still not happy, early in 1982, C.N. through C.T.C.  
seeks more closures. 32 railway stations. Make hay  
the sun shines. Dressage, public hearings sea to sea  
Corner Brook to St. John's in time for May Day.

Comes Fall 1982 and to Corner Brook Premier Peckford  
with his eloquence to enthuse the dwindling workforce.  
To wit, so long as a Peckford government's in (he grows hoarse)  
the railway & railway workers enjoy his full support.

Before the taking up of rails in 1988 at mileage 340.I  
Before Reg Rowsell in dismantlement draws the first spike  
Before Robert Bailey and Reg Roach leave the first rail broken  
before Hubert Hollet's ten pound sledge hammer breaks

the final bolts in 1990 near Bishop's Falls in November,  
before the last promises are made to be broken and the last dog barks  
on this one, TerraTransport's lot gleams on like the morning star.  
Someone's discarded helmet is photographed on desolate tracks.

Viability is Heavenly Trinity with Freight & The Tourist Attraction  
in 1984. As the rails (up 40%) recapture freight market share,  
Terra closes its busiest branch line to Bonavista 20 June,  
All passenger services, 20 September, to Argentinia and Carbonear.

Nineteen Eighty Four. Orwell's terrible year and the *Plan:*  
*Revitalisation 1984! Revitalisation 1984! Revitalisation 1984's*  
500 more employees gone. Pruning to the marrow bone.  
Labour costs are down by a cool ten million dollars.

1984 and the Pope's in Canada! Travels by special train  
Ste.-Anne-de-Beaupre to Montréal, Windsor Station.  
Elephant style numbers 6297 and 6922 locomotives  
at his nose, to his rear locos 6907 & 6915 for media  
in overdrive.

Still and all, '84's quite a *successful* year for the rails.  
A high level of public acceptance saves the rails.  
Resurgence booms across the choppy waters of the freight  
carriers as C.T.C orders a raised container rate,

ups the maze stakes, its fourth mandate review,  
sabotages costs that kept the rails onside.  
1984. C.N. appeals this at Christmastide....  
The federal court dismisses appeal. Nothing new.

September '85. Don Mazankowski over in Ottawa  
advocates trading the railway for an unstated sum  
to end the misery of appeal after appeal. No end of dollars for a highway!  
*No Cries of Alarm,*

*few protestations;*  
*roads with future cars are king and queen to everyone.*  
*Hit the communications network at one blow.*  
*No need to torch the province now.*

CN and CP take over Canada Southern(Michigan Central/  
New York Central/Penn Central/Conrail);  
Toronto Transit commission opens Scarborough rapid transit line;  
the technology is new, linear induction.

Compensation packages come and go for a NL workforce down on its luck.  
Even the public's happy into highways, the rails have had their day alive.  
Mere gossip over dwindling cod and treble-pincered by the truck  
industry, water carriers and federal intent at Christmas '85

which closes the rail car service on the Gulf. Trucker boom.  
Plum pudding and the icing on the cake  
red-berried December holly on the tomb  
the trucking Angel on the make,

federal and provincial tete-a-tete  
beneath the mistletoe, small print kisses  
(as the new year grows big with off-shore oil resources)  
to be determined round the last rail footnote

truckers clamouring get on with it, *get on with it*  
all that's left, death throes and rail obituaries  
a boon time for balladeers to vent splenetic

in provincial papers. Tears. Letters to the editors.

But, look, here enter Maurice LeClair doing a Chamberlain, god-sent,  
- waving a Five-Year Plan -  
*(we, we are surely not recommending abandonment*  
Reel the cod out, reel it in, reel it out, for Mr. Chamberlain.

Come January 24, Ron Dawe travels to meet his federal counterpart  
in Halifax,  
TwoHamlets treading the federal boards over in Nova Scotia day by day,  
Ottawa's mind crystallised under frosty chandeliers. Discuss facts.  
Words. Words. To continue the railway, to abandon the railway's

not the soliloquy anymore. A battering of heads off the walls.  
Snow clouds overhead. Dire ten-year predictions as they think  
new ways around the world for no business on the rails.  
C.N. joins the two dirge-singing figures on the skating rink.

...Come January 28 1985 at Robinson's River on the west coast, granite  
piers collapse, two spans of Henderson's four-span railway bridge  
scoured out by incessant critique mounting at their watery feet.  
The steel structure holds its own. Henderson cannot be salvaged.

The last straw. A cool half million dollars are spent.  
Rails sing again to wheels on the eve of Patrick's Day  
in last ironic upgrade, for this time their own lament,  
as provincial rail car traffic is seen to have had its day.

C.N. buckles to C.T.C.'s new rate, diverts all freight  
to Halifax from North Sydney. It took some sweat,  
chance, no little effort to close and bolt the iron gate  
on the rails. Good things federal for those who wait.

*"...for if only your shoe  
Brush lightly as haymouse earth's pebbles, you will come  
no more to my side..."*

A billion dollars is the mighty carrot offered to uproot  
the rails,  
the only question how long it will take Newfoundland  
to jump the legal, constitutional and legal political hurdles  
on the island.

Sold a pup in a puppet show, but how was he to know,  
Premier Peckford wants no  
dragged-out inappropriate  
political debate...

Hello, Hello, promising the rails federal aid here's Don(Mazankowski)  
again, *inappropriate to abandon the railway*  
Difficult one. June 24 in St. John's:  
Peckford. *Yes, Yes, this is a step in the right direction.*

ERCO closes Long Harbour down. Fate's  
decided. C.N. president Ron Lawless slates  
Newfoundland railway losses. Political row.  
TerraTransport's the fall guy now.

Words. Words. None, by 1987, believes in the railway anymore.  
Like a snow shower in June in St. John's  
or the frayed thread of Damocles, some more  
flurries, future options.

Eye to eye, two governments yet don't want to be skint alive.  
Pre-Christmas dawns with a new compensation package.  
Thanatos of the rails is in young Ralph Connors overdrive.  
A Review Committee rehearse their new lines offstage,

just in case. Just in case. Break their backs  
fine tuning their own *exeunt*. In thawing March the leaks.  
Toronto media reports. The price of abandonment  
800 million dollars, or so, for highway betterment.

20 June 1988. Radisson Plaza in St. John's. For sure,  
employee benefits to cushion the effects, speeches in overdrive.  
Closure.  
*Newfoundland Transportation Initiative.*

Peckford and Crosbie trumpet Copland fanfares for Whiteway's  
common man. Photocalls on one cold miserable day.  
What? A walkout? Signatures. Of rails and stations:  
Dismantlement. Yard installations. Generations.

Sure, what was there left at the end  
only freight customers, sentiment?  
The right thing by the rails none has any doubt.  
Except that all Port aux Basques walks out.

Down by the midsummer station terminus that was old St. John's  
Pygmalion's ghost shivers with his love, theirs a last brief cry,  
as the fingers of a brief sleety wind from the Grand Banks with Henderson's  
touch the streaming cheeks of *Industry*.

## Homage to the Town Council of Port aux Basques

Maybe celestial Mari over in her New Euskadi engenders storms here too  
lights up Table Mountain and frightens the piping plover in Grand Bay,  
lights the eyes of aged citizens in their cottages at Charles L. Le Grow  
floods the streams that reminiscence in their heads in Codroy Valley.  
Maybe people here walk in her proud Basque footprints to this day.  
Maybe her spirit still attaches to *their* port though *they themselves*  
are long gone  
with the whale that gave them food and livelihood in Bay St. George.  
Who withstood Pompey. Humbled the might of Charlemagne.  
Tuold it was immortalised them in *The Song of Roland*.  
Roland. Paragon of the unyielding. A victor in defeat.  
The oaks of Guernica stood tall still after Hitler's planes  
if a province lay in ruin with iron and mining in its blood.  
Stubbornness with millions dead in lands nearby withstood the *Reich*,  
later Franco's *Spain* -  
Mari's are these proud names remembered here, steel in their backbone:  
*so speak them with no little pride*

Winifred Pretty

John Harris

George Critchell

Stephen MacKenzie

Donald Hann

all councillors

Ronald Major

town manager

Richard Button

deputy mayor

Edward Sheaves

mayor

*remember them, who would not be party to the Radisson charade  
All WALKED as a GROUP and by their walking penned a new chanson de geste*

trusty as cornerstones, neglected, angular in their thoughts  
going by sorrowful sold-out rails home long angry miles to  
Port aux Basques

where whalebones like old coulters still strew the stormy shores.



## With Fabian and Gordon in St. John's

I have heard tell of them  
I have heard tell of the faithful meeting  
in Gordon's upper station room in St. John's  
keeping faith with the days that were  
in doldrum spirits like the boy downstairs  
who wanders in, touches the section-man,  
casts wistful eyes at the model train,  
his tiny fingers glued to the glass frame.  
His father sighs: "I spend all my money  
following him in here day in day out."

*This boy who surfs the net like any other  
Karachi to the Khyber, Santos to Santa Cruz  
sees the old steam veterans City of Truro, the Mallard  
speeding one hundred miles an hour*

*and in our day  
Petersburg to Tashkent, the tourist trains of India  
or if fleetness be the order of his thought  
Pandolino tilting trains that might have run  
in Newfoundland at 200mph  
Alstroms 300km that carry 40 million  
X'trapolis fitted to any track gauge  
or voltage  
Coradia Juniper 200km in quietude...*

*...one day he'll go Eurostar London to the Alps  
his two hands pressing harder on the glass frame of  
the Model Newfoundland Railway in St. John's.*

*Passing by him  
I look deep down into his eyes and know that I am home.*

the old faithfuls

maybe hoping for a wind of change

no spirit yet come to breathe on them

the old faithfuls

I have had a coffee or brief chat  
with Fabian in Tim Hortons, Winnie Hickey and John Parsons  
at the Glynmill Inn,  
Gordon behind his St.John's terminus desk

*still lots to do*

1500 it's said still in the Railway  
but of the old rolling stock  
how many

faithful dwindling to an idea  
faithful dwindling year by year  
like souls lost out on the pans  
drifting away in a dwindling  
sea  
or  
until rails gleam again

## The Stormiest Fields in Canada

i.m. Lauchie McDoughall *who harnessed Aeolus around The Wreckhouse;*  
for Rod Keeping disappointed Lauchie was not in the text

The man whose trapper face bestrides the brick-wall mural at Casual Jack's,  
"The human wind gauge", it is his; sharp-eyed Lauchie McDoughall's  
Rugged face outside his house, who assesses each approaching gale's  
Velocity, whose nostrils flare to smell the storm even on the plaque's

Bronze memorial to him down in Port aux Basques. From Cabot Strait to grace  
Daredevilling in fury, the swept-bare Table Tops of the Long Range Mountains,  
Valkyries like south-easters ride in, drench Lauchie's few cattle, pelt them with rains,  
Create with hurricanes down treeless gulches their playground in this place:

"The Wreckhouse", which Lauchie farms with Emily for all of thirty years, -  
Cranks, cranks his phone yet again to warn the station master in St. Andrews,  
Puts bread on the table. Uses his loaf. Twenty dollars monthly. CN pay him  
his dues.

Storm after storm Lauchie and Emily huddle in to howling in their ears

Where anemometers nailed to telegraph poles are plucked upwind  
Whipped across foolhardy boxcars blown over at a bend.

For Lauchie's word is law for many the year of Our Lord.  
Huge locomotives sleep like kittens till he gives the word.





## Oisín's Journey Home

Niall McElwee

### Carcinogenic Carriages: The Story of Locomotion

The story of locomotion and the railroads is closely linked to the development of Canada itself as we see in John's poem in this volume which locates itself in Newfoundland. There were very many vocal opponents of the proposed transcontinental railroad, in fact, it was referred to as "an act of insane recklessness". It took until 1881 for a railroad of 2,900 miles linking Montreal to Vancouver to gain commitment. In the Province of British Columbia alone, it took 22,000 men to construct 600 bridges and trestles and they had to blast 27 tunnels thru the coast area mountains. In one period, a man died a day and no more than six feet of ground was laid with track such were the conditions faced by those rail pioneers. It was far easier laying track over in the east where as much as 417 miles were laid by 1882. In both locations Irish, Chinese and Indian laboured together.

The human heart is pumped with hopeful beats and one often found tents pitched along proposed routes with the hope of the rail passing thru. Indeed, Calgary in Alberta started off as 'just a cluster of tents under the open sky hoping for a train to pass on by'. Not too far from Calgary lies Inis Fail.

There is something inherently romantic about the entire railroads experience in Canada and, for me, it evokes the true frontiers spirit that one associates with a country such as Canada. But, the Great Steel Horse was not welcomed by all First

Nations and Metis peoples and was not necessarily seen as progressive. First Nations peoples were shamefully exploited by the white man. Just to take a few examples, the wrappers of tin cans were given over to Indians as change for their annuity dollars by unscrupulous traders, their buffalo bones were sold on as fertiliser and they were regularly not informed of changes in plans or details. In this, some Irish were complicit.

### **Why this Poem?**

I started writing this reflective piece in the early 1990s after the death of my mother, Christine, from cancer – hence the central character, Oisín seeks comfort within the steel-hulled ‘carcinogenic carriages’ which hurtle across the beautiful Canadian landscape. The carriages hide their cancerous cells well thru their anonymity. I did not return to attempt to complete the poem until late 2005.

And so Oisín removes himself from a fairly miserable post Celtic Tiger Ireland where mobile phones are held by practically every man, woman and child, DVD’s and MP3’s bulge in jacket pockets and he jumps aboard the great North American Locomotive. What better way to see a country than thru the rhythm of a train as it crosses tracks and trucks. Or nearly. My character, Oisín, moves more thru the Canadian mainland thru several Provinces encountering some interesting characters along the way. This is the way of rail travel.

### **A Few Words on why a Joint Volume**

Whilst it may not be the norm for two people to jointly write a poetry volume, particularly one with such political overtones, John and I have been working together on academic courses and editing each other’s work for well over a decade in the area of child and youth care advocacy so this seemed a natural extension of our interests.

In this time we have come to spend many thousands of hours in each other's company. In 1994, I edited a volume of poetry called *Humanitas* which, amongst others, featured some of John's poems and it was always my intention to write with John again - but I wanted it to be in a much more personal vein.

Our book owes, in part, to John's fourth book all those years ago, *The Burren Days* published in 1985 which he gave me in 1992. I just loved that volume with the central characters of Ray and Grainne who were on a motorcycle adventure around Ireland. It starts off in such a rural context with

"Ray Daly's Super Yamaha ate up the miles and gleamed  
Towards the white portals of the Bord Baine complex"

and ends with Ray heading west as does Oisín in our poem now

"At that precise second  
Ray Daly, laboratory technician and sometime lover,  
Brought to life his Yamaha 850,  
Set out at his ease on the eternal road to Grainne  
And the great silences of Maam".

Oisín is headed west in our poems, west of Europe, west of Leinster, west of the Shannon, west of the Maam Mountains, west of the great Atlantic Ocean, west of the Salishan. I like the idea of Oisín fundamentally staying west of center.



OISIN'S JOURNEY HOME

Scenes from the Canadian Railway Logbook

There was a time in this fair land when the railroad did not run  
When the wild majestic mountains stood alone against the sun  
Long before the white man and long before the wheel  
When the green dark forest was too silent to be real  
But time has no beginnings and hist'ry has no bounds  
As to this verdant country they came from all around  
They sailed upon her waterways and they walked the forests tall  
And they built the mines the mills and the factories for the good of us all  
Gordon Lightfoot, *The Canadian Trilogy*

I wish I was the brakeman  
on a hurtlin' fevered train  
crashin' head long into the heartland  
like a cannon in the rain  
with the feelin' of the sleepers  
and the burnin' of the coal  
countin' the towns flashin' by  
and a night that's full of soul  
with light in my head  
with you in my arms...

- Mike Scott & The Waterboys, *Fisherman's Blues* (1988)

## 1 Riding on Embarr

Came then a storm of starving ravens  
so black the sky was blotted out,  
over us  
circling ruts of lines and wheat wagons  
in Manitoba and Sasktwatchen  
in vain for spillage was nil  
or nearly

And so finally even the ravens  
doubted him

*2. Jumping aboard the carcinogenic train.*

Banba dead in Calgary.  
Mother, I crossed oceans and lands  
scattered the very leaves  
to touch again your delicate hand.

### 3. The promise of a re-railed Grand Trunk Railway

Star-lit skies with sweeping road front trees  
kept him going spiritually.  
Irish-First Nations Foreman took him on.  
Shovelling the light red Atlantic sandy mixture  
with adult musculature  
it still took him two Leonard Cohen CD's  
to mix the barrels of cement.

Oisín,  
son of Fionn mac Cumhail  
hard at it  
the shovel, an extension of his groin.  
Cohen cranked on and on within his soul.

Unlike his forebears  
in Canada Oisín, at least, would make it past western Ontario,  
regain the beaver pelts for his kind.

Oisín.  
The dreaming west of Ireland labourer  
hired by a Halifax firm of Irish Jacks.  
Who slaved beneath the dusty boardwalk  
sweating with post 1885 Act Chinese  
Dusty dropouts and general white trash.  
Another child of the Celtic Tiger.  
Irish nigger

North America.

#### 4. Of Moccasins and Kings

Oisín, who remembered hitching the previous September  
westward across the cornlands of Alberta  
(giant harvesters swung into horizons).  
Row on row of seed-shafting splendour  
the sun luminous on golden thighs.  
Corn in trucks.  
Liquid gold transport.

"Those prairie sod houses practically broke our souls"  
The old bones murmured in the earth.  
And Stoney kind scattered like the birds  
in ghettos of forest crowns.

As extinction loomed.

All futile now.

All infinities.

How plaintive the songs to Mother Corn!

The elaborate details of Hako ceremony!  
None's left to see the footprints of children  
mirrored in the prints of their moccasins.

*See the stalk of wheat standing  
He is my younger brother*

Always Christine caught up with him:  
he remembered his mother walking in  
in Knocknacarra  
to mock him in his terminal drowsy sloth.  
"Get up, get up" she shook him.

The prairie train, it echoes on.

## 5.En Route

So Oisín comes  
defying sleep.  
Defying slumber.

The droop of eyelids  
the nodding head  
is his, in someone else's  
Gethzemane.

For time asleep  
was a winter's day with no log fire.  
A broken date.  
A quarrel beyond repair.  
Time asleep.  
Poe's toasted slices, black and charred and cold.

Oisín  
eases his nomadic frame into the carriage.  
It is night.  
All lights burn bright.  
The black night duty porter  
himself's consumed by darkness.

Like a frightened embryo,  
Oisín  
touches the moving inner walls  
of his chosen womb.  
It is cold.  
He is told

the train will soon move  
out.  
Where it will breathe thru sands and fickle reeds  
Finally bring him to his loved ones in Montreal,  
the St. Patrick's Day parade.

And Niamh he hadn't seen, made love to, for years.



## 6. In Another Mojo Country

Oisín, dollar hoarder, worker on the roads, on pumps of Canadian gasoline,  
and down-town Moncton building sites,  
once a bog tanned twelve year old west Ireland lad  
fed a diet of Connacht rugby, cowboys, trappers and knackers.  
The soda bread and skim milk of his dreams.

Since a youth he had been mimicking percussion.  
The ancient song makers, the Cree drummers  
dazzled him.  
Oisín had long looked west  
put himself to the test  
of Cordilleran heroes.  
He now longed for Quebec and, perhaps, a few kindred patrician kind.

The train thundered on thru the prairie darkness  
like a shocked and frightened girl.  
Dawn crept in with moccasins.

Chief Red Thunder in the seat opposite  
sprawls dead beat to this world.  
Oisín reflects on their conversation  
Of dead beat dreams, dead kings,  
Jim Morrison.

## 7. The Ghost Dance Religion Round The Pine and Spruce-Lined Lakes

The Algonquin are fallen into disillusion.  
"My Children, when at first I liked the whites I gave them shelter.  
I gave them fruits.  
Ghosts of our head feathers sing on their skyscrapers.  
We dance until daylight in hunger of spirit  
and no one sees us in blossom or kind.  
we cry out with thirst to abandoned Gods  
and we place no drink or water or call their names.  
The fallen Messiah, the one with the whirlwind maybe.  
He wants to come, is late that we might know one another".

The railway dead are alive in the sun's yellow rays.  
The prairie wind stirs again the wolves and the long grasses.  
Far away  
The whirlwind raises dust on the March Slemish of longing  
Nearby  
the rocks and streams are leaping with bright metals.  
Our hills were melted down for cheap light.

Birds sing in his mind in the dawn as he sleeps.

*"Mother, I will come home to stop my younger brothers crying.*

*I have eyes like yours and ribs like yours  
Because I am poor in tears, I pray for every creature.  
This is the secret of the Oriole, the human heart,  
the palpitant.*

*Do not the red streams of my veins run towards you?  
No one was ever lonely when with you.*

*You were very handsome.  
Your soul could be the centre of souls".  
An old prairie chief reminded Oisín  
"Even the brown buzzard can be scalplless and happy  
In the ashes of the burnt houses".  
Oisín spoke with him like in the old days.  
"Better the breast plate of the Warrior than Patrick's  
Where we soul friends live there I should wander.  
Where lilac blooms in the doorway  
There I shall wander.  
On the corn trails,  
on the horse trails  
on the iron rails  
wander forever*

## 8. The Carcinogenic Train

"For there was a time in this fair land when the railroad did not run  
When the wild majestic mountains stood alone against the sun  
Long before the white man and long before the wheel  
When the green dark forest was too silent to be real  
When the green dark forest was too silent to be real  
And many are the dead men too silent to be real"

- Gordon Lightfoot, *The Canadian Railway Trilogy*

Reawakening of  
imaginative  
streams

take this train  
take this trip  
- Home?

A taste of home  
and is it ever again  
possible?

Some beauty  
some magnificence  
bloomed once with esparta in this country.  
Some humans.  
Some honey in dry vacated trunks.  
Indians claiming the expanse  
on stallions stolen from the Conquistadors.  
Power for an inkling between their First Nation thighs  
racing their beloved buffalo.  
Food for song for thought.

But over cliffs.

Deerhides for Tepees.

## 9. After Tapestries, Trails and Tales

And after love  
A life of action.  
Dreams beyond the stars.  
Oisín  
by the friendly vultures of the sunlit prairie skies picked  
clean.  
His bones on skins birch stilts, to bleach and fall  
to earth in time and hallowed clean  
by the cicada in an airy place.

Some short centuries ago  
the white settlers came.  
Manly, Genesis with women lurching in their wagons.  
The stern fist. The stern eye. Future stengun children.  
Code makers. Code breakers.  
Their lights now, flash ugly, bright and neon.  
To their front, a son, a gentle deity  
but at their backs rage for the rampant grey spire  
and temple  
It was not bread they wanted, but flesh,  
and Oisín's and mine in the dwindling air  
as they sent us on their coffin ships to the bright Americas.  
Found it, and us diaspora  
any McElwee

in 1851.  
An airless place.

#### 10. Hey Ned, where are your coolies?

Oisín.  
Duffle bag, his soul sojourning in the Great Lakes of St Lawrence Lowlands  
sutured at his side,  
pillow and constant companion  
bisexual, transexual, hetrossexual aids of the night.  
His jaw was angular.  
His jaw was bronze.  
His jaw was detective comic handsome.

Oisín  
gentle in love,

his hazel eyes  
swelled an even deeper hazel dreaming of Niamh.  
Yet hazel either was hardly the word  
those pupils of almond with a golden sheen  
(since he first tasted love as a teenager)  
shone now in the darkness across new Saskatoon.

Oisín  
Still had his razor foam,  
toothbrush, two pairs of regulation faded levis,  
two pairs of socks, two cotton shirts that reeked of salt and sweat.  
A Claddagh sweater, black as basalt, that did his wandering spirit no justice.  
These in the stomach of the bag  
where his entrails lay waiting for their ultimate embrace  
trembling for a reawakening.  
O, would these few things be his gentle epitaph?  
Would he too, embrace darkly, the last, lonely furrows  
of hoboland?  
Would an aged clan still reach him there?  
Hobo youth too lost on the mountains of Slemish  
among the wormy-assed sheep and the hungry hogs and their bickering wives?

No. He would never go home  
Not in rural boozy Sunday hazes would he find his end.  
Not for ever in the troughs of acids find his doom.  
But in the arms, and on the breast of one  
or more of those he could call friend.

*Why matter then the why or where?*

Oisín.  
He still survived,

made out the winter in cold towns in icy  
prairies.

Fuel attendant, with pump frozen in his fist.  
His fingers numb, his breath spiralling  
off into the winds sweeping away from the Rockies.  
He choked on the smell of gasoline ether  
where fellow Chinese and Irish exiles before him died.

Penury, and no hope.

Soup kitchens.

Those forgotten great granduncles:  
Their old stitched leather bags  
lasting longer to comfort them, held together  
in gnarled fists with the last faded thongs of homeland memories  
of lost streams and May hawthorn in their souls.



## 11. Gods of the Underworld

Oisín.  
Whatever words and shapes  
and forms there were  
slid surreally down University corridors.

Investiture.  
Divestiture.  
Still he wasn't sure.  
Would test them always against life.

Alive. Alive.  
Begrudger of deaths little slices,  
sleep.  
Jobless.

Graduate of Galway's Liberal Arts  
tailored youth of many parts  
riding the great Trans Canadian Locomotives.

Oisín.  
who felt at home and younger by far  
then the ancient redwoods of a Reich nightmare.

As if restored by his natural habitat.

Always in his mind's eye, the apple tree.  
But, it must be the scented one  
the same that tempted Aengus on.  
The golden apples overhanging oblivion

with sweetness, juices, for plucking and tasting.  
He would lyricise the apple  
masticate it to the core,  
digest its goodness over and over.

Oisín.  
The train beginning to chatter  
across a hackyned landscape.  
Even in the new world he was old.  
No longer unique.  
Still his own helicon  
waited for his lips alone.

## 12. The Battle of Gabhra

*"We were paid by the White Settlers in can wrappers".*

And Oisín remembered a deepwood spring  
coming alone to a white rimmed falls  
fear had not ventured to since the Battle of Gabhra.  
Deep in Saskatchewan country

speckled chinook salmon freely swam  
amid sprigs of watercress and sprigs of lime.

Oisín scooped his own amid the black bears  
all madly plunging  
added to the feast and the swopping of stories.

Even in Canada the forests recede  
their carcinogenic ferns explode  
and trees meekly fall to pulp.  
The day's deliberations recorded long ago within sappy rings,  
dead orioles and blind Viscos sing.

The red clay is limitless everywhere.

The rootless brushwood blows underfoot  
like demented souls that have no friends.  
And as the train climbed the timber frozen landscape  
like one intoxicant on the ether of spring Oisín's fingers gave the v to everything,  
everything.

In that carriage  
He felt vulnerable. For the killers  
opposite vented their carious breath in his face.  
Their gory handlers too were inchoate  
with fury at his innocence. A hard time  
they'd had of it reaching to the top  
maiming bison meat and thighs  
along the First Nation Trail  
corrupted to rails.

### 13. Fear and Loathing

Oisín.  
Huddles in the black shell of carriage sixteen,  
cocooned and comfortable.

*Earlier the scrap yards loomed, vacant of souls.*

Loveless forms, those chrome tipped cars  
in abandonment from brazen highways  
no youth to make love in them  
parked now in the affections of scrapdealers.

Or none.

Waiting for Godot the dealer.  
Waiting for the great crunch  
the recycling of bones  
and metals.

How can we ever begin to imagine  
The loneliness that is each of us?  
How can we ever begin,  
Oisín mused.

Forever  
the search for the spark  
for the ignition  
that will move us  
side by side  
and then forever  
on parallel rails.

He saw their sad and shattered eyes  
from which the light had long since gone  
the final beam on and the daily dim  
beseeching him, beseeching him.  
*Do not abandon us in this place,  
Do not abandon us in this place.*

*El cementerio de los automóviles.*  
At the carriage window  
a sole Hispanic crossed himself and wept.

What spirit on that metal groaned  
cried out to him to touch?  
He never knew but rode past on the prairies  
En route to Niamh and St. Patrick's Day men.

#### 14. Pontiac

Came the children  
from the viscera of Alberta  
and the molten steel.  
Flowed the cars, lorries, mile long trains of the continent.  
And twelve Pontiac trucks  
gleamed in the sun light  
defying nature and dank rust.  
In the morning sun  
on the siding an old train  
caught his eye.

An iron horse rusting  
into oblivion.  
Majestic in the Pullman days.

Black men in black suits.  
Obedience.  
White faces in black suits.  
Dominance.  
The familiar story of the continent.  
And now clanking of steel, ungreased and slow.  
Carriages were used for cheap steel hulled cargo.

Oisín dreamed, drifted in and out  
of slumber, dreamt himself  
a hobo jumping the train  
sneaking on easier than expected in  
the best of times, the worst of times  
job cuts in abundance  
good times renewed  
the beatnik fifties  
the gonzo eighties,  
the Celtic tiger nineties.

Leaf pickers.

Train hoppers all  
of myths of progress.  
Ultimately.

In dreams, in lies  
Oisín had seen Poe's interminable slices

harden and grow stale.  
Fit for the bin.

Three nights he watched  
lain awake like a Seventh Day Adventist  
till sleeplessness drew him back within her melting thighs.

## 15. Path thru the Rainbow

A shotgun blast.

The harsh chambers echoed in his slumber.

Who was this figure at the intersection

silhouetted against the skyline

pumping shot at defenceless carriages

and wind swept windows?

The slow train inched like a Morrison image  
with a slight curve from where the snowed over  
points were bedded  
like a Penis, coming but peppered with shot,  
terrified passengers rushing  
to the floor  
headlong to where the engine throbbed.  
All this shooting from a mere barn  
where red roosters ran blindly for cover.

*But this was not to be Oisín's judgement day.*

A gunman, alone and methodic  
angry Augustine blasting the generations  
guttural with guilt and his own mutilation, successive loadings.  
Power and loathing in the will of his fist;  
Eros denounced because of its beauty.

He falls sobbing to the earth.

Police take him away.

Oisín remembered the modern Great Canadian Shield  
Reincarnations with teepees, sexual skyscrapers,  
And the extinct First Nations with souls of neon.



## 16. Nightmare in the Pullmans

Shot after shot sliced the orioles.  
Double barrelled pump action shotgun  
raked carriage windows with "intent and injurious vision"  
as the lonely mid-dawn marksman frowned.

Oisín was rising to meet his fate in the glass  
as if viewing the scene from another continuum.  
A dart in his shoulder brought him back to consciousness.  
He raised his hand to the handcuffed gunman  
almost in a salute.  
The screams of sirens belittled the sun on the horizon.  
Hammers were cocked and gave no quarter.

A final spasm, a choked cry, a jerking of thighs,  
the falling as if forever, cradling the smoking gun.  
The gunman fell as red bullets roughed his buttocks and his brains.

Sirens of blue fuelled the even bluer morning.  
"They came to take me and you away", cried Oisín.  
High, he hummed like a Beetle, "All we need is love".  
Remembered soldiers carrying wounded on their shoulders.  
Remembered the pismires he disturbed as a boy in that Galway bog  
as the police zipped the gunman in the black body bag.

"Wished we could have lynched the son of a bitch"  
hissed the young trade executive Ben Lynch  
after an all night bar crawl on Montréal greened beer.  
His glass sloshing and tumbling wildly

splattered with a handful of Patrician edges  
in Montréal.

## 17. Bury my Heart

*Spem Reduxit*  
(Hope was restored)

The carcinogenic strains of Danny Boys  
the come-all-yes of complacence  
rejected by new generations.  
Old suppurations from old wrongs  
exploding vainly into song.

The gleaning of jobs far back home  
gnawing thru Montréal Irish.  
Pressing the flesh, giving audience.  
Successful Sinn Fein trips & press conferences.  
Further south, on Capitol Hill, the March Shamrock  
blessed, but withering on the stem.

Vocalists, Green-haired impressionarios  
appearing on morning shows.  
No Morrisons these, but full of guile.  
Successful stints if measured in dollars  
US or Canadian.  
The thousand carcinogenic smiles.  
Laughter at carcinogenic tales.

Yes, he was near home. The usual bore,  
No point alighting anymore.  
He could no more than Sisyphus  
uplift for all the cursed stone  
entombing each new generation.

18. Full Circle  
from Canoe to Canal to Railway

*Oisín aq Niamh agnutmajig*

(Oisín and Niamh are talking)

From their souls the Rocky Mountain gold dust is shaken.  
Peregrinations of emotion are stripped from their souls.

No Conquistadors  
could ever fully drain their speechless Eyres.

See the nakedness of lovers  
complete the species.

Limbs and liquid sun beams lie intertwined.  
Civilisations dance in a suicidal shroud.

Oisín,  
Subvert our myths in your rebellious depths.

Oisín

who turned away to seek his Niamh  
in gold hair, the drop of sleeve.  
Style of deportment, style of feature  
driven by the need to need her.

Oisín

who turned his back on St. Patrick's Day  
rode plains and prairies to Hudson Bay.

## GLOSSARY

*Aengus/Oengus*

A Gaelic name reputed to have the meaning 'sole strength'. A number of Irish heroes held this name such as Oengus Gai Buabthech (of the terrible spear). Another, Oengus Ceile De, was a noted reformer of the early Irish church and his feast day is celebrated on March 11<sup>th</sup>. The name Ennis is derived from the root Gaelic. Thus John Ennis, Seán Mac Aonghusa.

### Algonquin

A member of any of the North American Indian groups speaking an Algonquian language and originally living in the subarctic regions of eastern Canada. Over a period, many Algonquian tribes migrated south into the woodlands from the Mississippi River to the Atlantic coast (Source: *The Free Dictionary*). The original peoples were nearly wiped out by the Iroquois and by European diseases.

### Banba

In Irish mythology, Banba, daughter of Ernmas of the Tuatha Dé Danann, was one of the patron goddesses of Ireland. Her husband was Mac Cuill. With her sisters, Fodla and Ériu, she was part of an important triumvirate of goddesses. When the Milesians arrived from Spain each of the three sisters asked that her name be given to the country. Ériu (Éire, Ireland) won the argument, but Banba is still sometimes used as a poetic name for Ireland, much as Albion is for Great Britain.

The LÉ Banba (CM11), a ship in the Irish Naval Service (now decommissioned), was named after her. Initially, she could have been a goddess of war as well as a fertility goddess (Source "<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niamh>").

### Basques

A people whose homeland in Europe today comprises the westernmost part of the Pyrenees Mountains and surrounding region. The word Basque is a French term; the Basques call themselves Euskaldinck and their homeland Euskadi. In Newfoundland, at least from the 1540s, the Basques set up whaling stations at Trespas (Trepassey), Santa Maria (St. Mary's), and Cunillas et Petit Placentia (Placentia and Argentinia: Source <http://www.cdli.ca/~jsooley/basque~1.html>). Port aux Basques is a town and the western gateway to Newfoundland.

### Battle of Gabhra

When Cairbre, son of Cormac Mac Airt, became high king of Ireland, he wanted to break the power of the Fianna. Cairbre believed that the Fianna had become too powerful and arrogant. Furthermore, Cairbre did not like paying tributes to the war-band for the protection they offered. Cairbre conspired with other provincial kings, to destroy or disband the Fianna. He raised a huge army to face the Fianna. Munster was the only Irish province to support the Fianna. The battle took place at Gabhra, in Leinster. Fierce fighting erupted, with the Fianna; the Fianna were heavily outnumbered. Cairbre and Oscar, the son of Oisín, fought in a single combat, where Oscar killed the king. Oscar was also dying when his father found him covered with countless wounds. Weeping, Oisín and Caílte bore Oscar's body away. According to this tale (*Cath Gabhra* or "The Battle of Gabhair"), five warriors murdered Fionn/Finn at Garristown (Gabhra). While in the *Aided Finn* (The Violent Death of Finn), Aichlech Mac Dubdrenn killed Finn in battle at Ath Brea (Ford of Brea). Casualties were extremely high on both sides, however, only twenty Fian warriors survived the battle. The Fianna was defeated and the power of the Fianna was broken in Ireland. Caílte Mac Ronan and Oisín were the only two surviving heroes of the Fianna (Source: *Timeless Myths, J. Joe*).

Caoilte

**Caoilte mac Róna'in, a warrior of the Fionn/Finn cycle supporter and champion of Fionn mac Cumhail**

Chief Red Thunder.

A chief of the Pabaksa or Cuthead band of Yanktonai Sioux in the early part of the 19th century; also known as Shappa, the Beaver. Lieut. Z. M. Pike saw him at the great council at Prairie du Chien, Wis., in Apr. 1806, and pronounced him the most gorgeously dressed of any chief he met (Source: *Genealogy.com*).

Chinese Immigration Act 1885

This act placed a \$50 head tax on every Chinese person entering Canada following the successful completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). This act was meant to reduce the number of Chinese entering Canada, as it was believed that they wouldn't adapt well to Canada's then-burgeoning agricultural society. No other ethnic group had to pay this tax. The act was rewritten in 1900 and 1903 to increase the head tax to \$100 and \$500 respectively (Source: *Canadian Encyclopaedia On-line*).

CN

Canadian National(Railway).

Conan

A warrior of the Finn cycle, known also as Conan the Bard.

CTC

Canadian Board of Transport Commissioners.

Euskadi

The Basque homeland in Europe.

Expectocracy

A satirical term coined by David McWilliams in his book, *The Pope's Children* (2005), to describe the Irish youth (post Celtic Tiger) in terms of their many expectations and love of instant gratification.

Hako Ceremony

For the Hako ceremony of the Pawnee, in which the Corn Mother plays a central role, two main groups take part. One group, the Fathers, initiates the ceremony and pays a ritual visit to the second group, the Children. These two groups cannot belong to the same clan of the tribe, and very often they are members of completely different tribes, a considerable distance from each other.



The term Hako refers to the various items concerned in the ritual, especially the pipe stems which feature prominently (Source: *Sacred Hoop Magazine*, No. 6, 1994).

Gethzemane.

The place in which Jesus Christ suffered the Agony and was taken prisoner.

Grand Trunk Railway

A railway company incorporated in 1852 to build a railway from Toronto to Montreal. In 1853, it amalgamated with five other railway companies, and traffic on the line opened in December of 1859. It continued to grow, supported by financing from Britain, but, by 1860, it was \$72 million in debt. Canadian government financing saved it. Continuing to buy competitors and expand, it declared bankruptcy in 1919 and was absorbed by Canadian National Railways (Source: *Canadian Encyclopaedia On-line*).

Immigration Facts

After Canadian Confederation in 1867, thousands of Irish, Chinese and First Nations labourers were imported as workers to build the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Intercontinental Railway

A railway built to link the Maritime colonies with the province of Canada. The first portion of the line was opened in 1858 between Halifax and Truro. There was some difficulty with financing, and ultimately the completion of the railway became a condition of Confederation. The last gap between Halifax and Montreal was closed in 1876. Freight rates were kept low to promote trade, the results of which were deficits. The federal government covered losses until 1919, at which time it became part of Canadian National Railways (Source: *Canadian Encyclopaedia On-line*).

Irish Canadians

A group of immigrants from Ireland who came to Canada generally in the early 1800s. Since many were poor and had little money for travelling into central British North America, many of them settled in the Atlantic region of Canada. However, in 1847, a particularly devastating potato famine in Ireland caused many to migrate

there, even though many were in such poor health that they died of starvation on the journey. This immigration continued in droves into the 1860s, but many would use Canada as a resting point before continuing on into the United States. Comparatively few Irish would immigrate to areas west of Ontario. Some Canadians viewed the Irish as a threat in the 1860s thanks to the Fenians (Source: *Canadian Encyclopaedia On-line*).

Keen

(Keen, caoineadh, keening). A poetic or sung lament praising the dead performed at a person's wake; originally maybe jointly therapeutic and ritual in nature, it comprised direct salutation, the dirge proper and the cry or *gol* in which those present joined in with the voice with the keener. If the dead person had met a violent death at the hands of another, or others, the keen could incorporate a *malairt* or curse or satire on the perpetrators. The anthology *However Blow the Winds* (2004) features three caoineadh, including an extract from the most famous of the Irish caoineadh, *Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire* (pp.125 – 137)

Mi'kmaq

Aboriginal people living in eastern Canada. At the time of European contact, the Mi'kmaq occupied the Gaspé and the Maritime provinces east of the Saint John River. Since then, they have also established settlements in Newfoundland and New England. The Mi'kmaq language is in the Eastern Algonquin family of languages (Source: *Canadian Encyclopaedia On-line*).

Niamh

In Celtic mythology, Niamh was the daughter of Manannan mac Lir and Queen of Tir na nÓg. She fell in love with Oisín, poet and son of Fionn mac Cumhail, and rode to Ireland on her horse, Embarr, to get him. Oisín was a member of the Fianna and, though he, too, fell in love with Niamh and returned with her to Tir na nÓg, he became homesick after what he thought was three years. Niamh let him borrow Embarr, who could run above ground, and made him promise not to touch Irish soil. The three years he spent in Tir na nÓg turned out to be 300 Irish years. Whilst travelling through Ireland, Oisín was asked by some men to help them move a boulder. He tried to help them from his horse, but he fell, and upon touching the ground he instantly became an old man. Meanwhile, Niamh had given birth to their daughter, Plor na mBan. Niamh returned to Ireland to search for Oisín, but he had died.

The LÉ Niamh (P52), a ship in the Irish Naval Service, is named after her.

(Source "<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niamh>").

## Oisín

The name derives from the Gaelic for deer or stag. Hero of Irish mythology, made famous by WB Yeats in his long poem *The Wanderings of Oisín*, Oisín rode away from Ireland and lived with his partner, Niamh, in the paradisaical land of the ever young (Tir na nÓg); pining for his former friends, he was warned by Niamh never to alight from his steed and touch the earth on his return visit or he would forfeit immortality forever and their happiness.

## Pacific Scandal

The Pacific Scandal was the result of an improper granting of a contract to build a railway to the Pacific Ocean. Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald had solicited \$360,000 to help win an election in 1872 from Sir Hugh Allan, and awarded him the contract soon afterward. Liberal politicians under Alexander Mackenzie, and newspapers controlled by the Liberals, revealed this to the public and the government was defeated in 1873 (Source: *Canadian Encyclopaedia On-line*).

## Railway Act 1851

An act passed in Canada West and East in 1851 to set the ground rules about how railways could be built and maintained. This was to prevent fly-by-night railway companies from cutting corners on construction and maintenance, and ensure the safety of railway builders and passengers (Source: *Canadian Encyclopaedia On-line*).

## Reserve

Land set aside by the federal government for status Indians. Though the government owns the land, the particular band that lives on the reserve is responsible for managing it (Source: *Canadian Encyclopaedia On-line*).

## Sod Houses

A type of home on the rural Prairies, usually before World War I, that was made entirely out of hard-packed blocks of earth or sod. These homes were cheap and relatively quick to build, which was a necessity considering many settlers to the region during that time usually didn't have money nor time to construct a proper brick-and-mortar home during their first seasons of farming (Source: *Canadian Encyclopaedia On-line*).

## Stoney

Stoney are a First Nation People indigenous to Canada. Also known as the Stoney-Nakoda or "Rocky Mountain Sioux." They are related to the Assiniboine in language, but some members of these tribes have cultural and language differences. Oral legend has it that these Aboriginal peoples have lived at the foot of the Rocky Mountains since the beginning of time, but were part of the Lakota/Dakota nation on the Prairies (Source: *Canadian Encyclopaedia On-line*).

## Slemish

When St. Patrick, the Patron Saint of Ireland, was sixteen he was allegedly captured by raiding Irish pirates, brought across the sea to Ireland and sold as a slave to Miliucc. As a slave, he tended Miliucc's sheep and pigs on Slemish mountain in County Antrim. While a slave in Ireland, Patrick had an epiphany and became much more spiritual than he had been prior to his capture: rising before dawn and learning to pray in hail, rain or snow.

## TerraTransport

An autonomous division of Canadian National created in 1979.

## Waiting for Godot

A tragicomedy in two Acts written by Samuel Beckett. The plot revolves around two tramps who are waiting by a sickly looking tree for the arrival of M. Godot. They quarrel, make up, contemplate suicide, try to sleep, eat a carrot and gnaw on some chicken bones. Two other characters appear, a master and a slave. A young boy arrives to say that M. Godot will not come today, but that he will come tomorrow. In fact, he does not come and the two tramps resume their vigil by the tree, which between the first and second day has sprouted a few leaves, the only symbol of some possible order in a thoroughly alienated world.

Whiteway

Sir William V. Whiteway, Prime Minister of Newfoundland(1878-1885; 1889-1894; 1895-1897. One of the movers and shakers in the building of the railway across Newfoundland.

