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A Streetcar Named Nostalgia

1903, great-grandfather then 30
came to this country
walked in a tweed blend coat
among the grey flannel,
a feather in his houndstooth hat,
slipped to work each winter day,
missed Christmas waiting for an
epiphany,
lived alone choking on tea and English
biscuits until the day
a streetcar named Nostalgia
almost clipped him there
flat on his back on the ice
vision of a red iron madonna
a great bell ringing in his wife's womb
across an ocean
a bell ringing alarm
relieving him of a vital decision
in his frigid paradise
and he jumped a steamer
back to where
my mother was born
married a man
and in 1954, my father, then 30
sailed to Canada's Toronto...

Mary di Michele
...from *Bread and Chocolate*
(Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1980).