

# Four Poems

## Meredith Quartermain

Semans, Saskatchewan

paint peeling  
clapboard elevator. *Fermes de bison*  
*à gauche et à droite* (factoid happy bartender  
on PA), tho only hayrolls graze  
*à gauche et à droite* in pond-sprinkled land  
growing 54 percent of wheat Canadians eat.

Only bare crumbling markers  
of Otherwise and Once Upon  
at Kelliher elevator:  
little peak-roof funnel house  
on bigger grain-bin storehouse,  
engine house, wagon house.

Faded sentinels  
swift-flowing social alloy  
paid to heedless heroes  
cannibals and sun gods  
gobble.

Melville paint-chipped grain-hoist,  
nowhere. Yeswhere. Waswhere  
and Rushnak Bros. weathered  
sky-pointing finger

pooling hoofless  
china loaves  
of holy nothing.

*That I may be a perfect offering to divine Majesty*<sup>1</sup>

may I multiply  
may the great forests come down  
may the cedars give us brooms  
may the puncheons of wheat and barley

peas, may they choir of France  
the oxen forage and the cart  
and plow the butter and girls  
the husbandry  
traffic in perch and porpoise oil  
river to the China sea

may I multiply  
meat and cheese  
and tillage beaver  
steeple traffic  
snowshoes and arquebuses

here we have a tannery  
where skins are cured  
for two years and afterward  
put to uses

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1 *Word From New France: the Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation*. Founder of the Ursuline Convent in Quebec City, 1639.

## Frère Jacques<sup>1</sup>

the merchants gaining money  
Reverend Fathers gaining souls  
that the Fathers judge suitable  
till the Fathers take her away  
Fathers possessed  
especially Reverend Fathers  
the Fathers recite their Offices  
their reverend saintly blindness

are they sleeping  
in the confessional  
are they sleeping  
when they forget  
Thursday after Pentecost  
Monseigneur sent the Fathers  
and Messieurs Ecclesiastics

are they sleeping  
is it elastic  
are they sleeping  
when they forget

Fathers in recto tono  
chant such loving crosses  
the earth holds exhausted  
earth holds in the snow

are they sleeping  
are they ringing  
our martyr our very own  
sacrifice to divvy  
*Te Deum Te Deum*  
how they ring, oh  
what ringing

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1 Inspired by *Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation*, founder of the Ursuline Convent in Quebec City, 1639.

## July 1, Titanic Day

George's Fort, Halifax  
let's bedeck ourselves in history kilts  
beaver hats musketry  
count barrels of gunpowder  
heft a soldier's backpack  
polish buttons  
breech-load bayonets

captain to boiler room:  
full speed ahead

let's sail our history ship  
to Georges Island and Benjamin Bridge  
with Theodore, Hank, Emily the Vigorous  
and Foduck the Vigilant,  
Pearl and Petra the pilot boats  
Digby the cable ship  
and Guysborough the Garbage Barge

ice cream on Donald Dock  
with Human the Harbour Master  
keeping Big Harbour the friendliest  
in the whole world

serious young waiter  
at the Five Fishermen  
not actually haunted  
chandelier hooks lifted the coffins  
history philosophy  
alone setting tables  
overcome with panic