

## Les Animaux

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## *Les Animaux*

*This summer I planted ten acres in potatoes and barley. The ferry gave me more work than I wanted. We lived pretty good without the hunting. In 1880 or 1881, I led the last Saskatchewan hunts, but les animaux were gone and our ancient ways went with them.*

— Jordan Zinovich, *Gabriel Dumont in Paris*

gone, uncle they're gone  
and something in us goes too      following after  
les animaux, those who you "called" as if they were your brother  
les animaux, those that you called mon frere and herded with their great beards  
les animaux, the brothers that have left us      they have moved to another plain,  
uncle, on the last hunt    instead of seeing a moving sea of brown backs, a  
rippling ground  
now, you see only a few stumps feeding on grasses  
now, their great size is swallowed by the bigger prairie  
prairie that once seemed like it couldn't hold all  
les animaux their sound like distant thunder will never reach your ears again  
uncle, how sad that day      when no one spoke of them  
as if speaking their name  
could slice an arm from one's own body  
because they were you  
   were you less of a man because of them?  
les animaux made you captain of the hunt  
now you are the captain of fighting men standing ground  
against the settlers rolling in by the thousands  
now **they** are the new herds,  
but they are not les animaux  
the brothers that fed and clothed us  
and gave us reason to dance  
gone, and now the prairie is mute

*Marilyn Dumont*