Alberta Wheat Pool

Jim Walker

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Grain elevators rise  
Against vast prairie sky  
Like Royal Grenadiers on watch.  
Yet peeling paint, some aging sentinels  
Seem rustbound as a dustbowl plow,  
Stand single aside weed-filled railways as if forgotten.

In sprouting towns near grainfields thick as porridge  
The few new melt pastels into landscape—  
Pale green, brilliant orange,  
As if a circus or a midway sideshow.

I have spent half a lifetime  
Reading their messages,  
Measuring journeys by their passing towers,  
Longing for their landmarks in the dying dusk.

Such meditations bring to mind  
A child’s pride in four elevators  
Beside our railroad tracks  
And endless games of run-sheep-run  
Among the boxcars’ shadows.

This afternoon, touched by warm Hawaiian rain,  
I span the Pacific in an eye blink  
To walk once more those rutted roads  
And feel the gusting prairie wind  
Blow warm mellow of memory  
Through my head of half-grey hair.

—Jim Walker

Jim Walker is chairman of the Communications and Language Arts Division at BYU-Hawaii, Laie, Hawaii.