

Alberta Wheat Pool

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