The Grand Silos of the Sacramento

By Lawson Fusao Inada
From a distance, at night, they seem to be
industries—all lit up but not on the map;
or, in this scientific age, they could be
installations for launching rocket ships—
so solid, and with such security, are they...
Ah, but up close, by the light of day,
we see, not “pads” but actual paddies—
for these are simply silos in ricefields,
structures to hold the harvested grain.
Still, they’re the tallest things around,
and, by night or day, you’d have to say
they’re ample for what they do: storage.
And, if you amble around from your car,
you can lean up against one in the sun,
feeling warmth on your cheek as you spread
out your arms, holding on to the whole world
around you, to the shores of other lands
where the laborers launched their lives
to arrive and plant and harvest this grain
of history—as you hold and look, look
up, up, up, and whisper: “Grandfather!”


Source: Drawing the Line (Coffee House Press, 1997)