



Photo by Robert K. Wallace

## Overcast Beauty, June 10, 2012

by Robert K. Wallace

Crystal clear and deep blue this morning,  
 the sky clouded over before  
 my evening walk, no shafts  
 of light or even soft shadows  
 on the way to the wall.  
 Across O'Fallon I saw  
 what seemed to be the new owner  
 of the house on the corner  
 across from the church  
 out sweeping his sidewalk,  
 and when I asked him,  
 yes, indeed, he just moved  
 from Fort Thomas to take  
 a job with the Bellevue Police  
 department, having worked at NKU  
 until six days ago.

Without sunlight on the grass  
 the path out to the wall  
 was inviting in a different way  
 tonight, harmonious green  
 uniting the entire mound  
 of the wall with the equally  
 uniform green of trees across  
 the river as I turn upstream.

Looking out at the water  
 over the stack of tractors  
 I notice the beautiful sliver glints  
 behind any passing boat,  
 not nearly so brilliant  
 when the sun directly shines.

From the tractor park all  
 is smooth and brown up to,  
 and over, the former dirt pile,  
 no sign of action now,  
 although earlier today  
 trucks were running both ways  
 up and down the Avenue.  
 Also missing was the standing water  
 always on the side of the pile,  
 a week of very warm weather  
 having dried it up as  
 the cavalcade of trucks  
 came heavy and left light.  
 Beyond the former pile  
 all is spread out a little wider,  
 my imagined golf tee maybe  
 higher but not looking so,  
 as the former drop off  
 on the right is now filled  
 level and smooth to where  
 the height of the mound meets the wall.

Continuing the length of the imagined  
 dogleg, the analogy is stronger  
 than before, a nicely plateaued  
 fairway of just the right width  
 stretching from the mound for the tee  
 all the way to the cottonwood green,  
 with two portable floodlights  
 there for nighttime sport  
 as the trucks come and go,  
 the way they are spreading  
 the new debris out being  
 very impressive, as skeptical  
 as I am about the actual project.

On the way upstream I'd stopped  
 to frame a B&B Riverboat  
 as it cruised downstream  
 past the former dirt pile  
 and then the tractors.  
 On the way back from the turnaround

bench I saw something even better,  
 a few moments after having noticed  
 the silvery tracks where  
 the more recent trucks  
 had backed and jolted around  
 to dump their weighty loads.  
 Abstractly, these imprinted  
 tire tracks reminded me  
 of Frank Stella's Circuit prints,  
 whose incised lines were made  
 by the routing tool in the backing  
 board as he cut the metallic  
 shapes for his painted reliefs,  
 the pattern there below me  
 on the expanding base of this  
 waterfront development  
 the same casual result  
 of active work unconscious  
 of the marks it makes.

As I was savoring the pattern  
 of tractor marks on bank  
 a white boat passed upstream  
 far enough beyond the river's edge  
 to leave a spreading silver wake  
 toward the near Kentucky shore  
 and the far Ohio one, too,  
 as a slightly larger white boat  
 cruised downstream, its wake  
 overlaying that of the other  
 in a complex intersection  
 of shifting light and motion  
 which I hope my camera caught  
 more permanently than my eye  
 saw it, there only for one  
 evanescent snap to catch  
 the liquid pattern in the water  
 against the tractor marks on the shore,  
 the overcast light equalizing  
 the shallow ruts and ridges  
 with the shallow waves and troughs  
 in what I hope will be  
 a blending of land and water,  
 of shoreside occupation  
 and mid-river recreation  
 that marks a moment  
 of rare revelation amidst  
 the unsettling development  
 along the shore, the rising

foundation along the bank  
 surprisingly smooth given  
 all that's been trucked in,  
 the middle of the river  
 absolutely dancing now  
 in a complex silvery pattern  
 worthy of Escher, those  
 lines of his that seem to be  
 going backward and forward  
 at the same time, now  
 pulsing like a strobe light  
 in the ongoing dance  
 of light and motion,  
 a Bach-like fugal melodic  
 intersection over the solid  
 ground base of the tractor tracks.

By now one wave of dog-walkers  
 after another was out, a short  
 rotund man unable to manage  
 his two tiny dogs; two hefty  
 young couples with two large dogs  
 and a small child; a family  
 group whose composition  
 from afar made me hope  
 for Laura with her daughters  
 and husband but who turned  
 out to be a new family  
 I'd not seen; a mother  
 and her daughters with large  
 beagles that could be mother  
 and daughter too; a cavalcade  
 of walkers on a sunless eve,  
 hot but not yet humid;  
 overhead the ESPN blimp  
 over the Great American Ballpark  
 as the Reds play the Tigers  
 in a national broadcast  
 from this curving river shore,  
 a steady red light along  
 the control capsule beneath  
 the swollen, suspended airship  
 too far away to tell,  
 as it turned on and off  
 from time to time, if it was  
 an advertiser's message board  
 or a warming light to mark its presence  
 in the dark of the night sky,  
 echoed for me as I walk up O'Fallon

by the first fireflies of the year,  
flashing their lights as I passed  
in a random aleatory pattern  
John Cage would have savored.

Thirty years ago I dipped into  
a new book called *Gödel*,  
*Escher, Bach*. I never did get  
the Gödel part, but I imagine  
he too might have seen  
something in the patterns  
I saw tonight on what I expected  
to be a walk lacking in beauty.