

On the Dayton, Kentucky, Floodwall, May 9, 2009

by Robert K. Wallace

“Look at that perfect idyllic scene,”
I said to my wife,
As we walked the wall
After a quiet dinner
On our thirtieth anniversary.

Late evening light was slanting
Through clean, rain-washed air
Into the inland side of the floodwall,
Where, beneath sheltering trees,
A baseball game was underway,
Animating the sunken neck of land
Shaped by the curve of the wall.

“Look at that light on their legs,”
I said, as we slowed to a stop,
Bright sunlight gleaming red and white
Like old-time, high-top stockings.

Suddenly the pitcher charges the hitter.
“Get outta here, get on home,” he shouts,
Taking away the kid’s bat
And throwing it as far as he can.
The boy says something back.
The man shouts back in his face,
We too high above to hear the words.

The stand-off continues with mutual
Resistance until the man grabs the boy
By the throat, until he squeals, thinking,
I suppose, he’s taught him a good lesson.

The game is breaking up. We ask three boys
Watching from the bench on our floodwall path
If that’s a father and son
And they say, “Yes,”
Though they don’t know them.

We walk on, the flood of light unchanged.