

ROBERT MILTNER

Three Poems

Ohio Wetlands, 1956

Dragonflies are winged buttons, hang like candlewax dripping down a tomcat's raised tail.

Cattails are fuzzy like bees, like hotdogs ready to cook over a fire at a picnic where we played tag.

Tug at a root and it might come loose.

Tightly hold onto a root, and you can reach into the pond and might catch a tadpole, a polliwog.

Wiggling in your wet fingers, a polliwog's like a backlogged frog which moves like mucus, like warm water jelly: it look like a two-eyed stone.

Rocks tilt, foot slips, gives me a soaker, a soggysock inside my sneakers.

Sneak home and hide the shoe under the bed.

Bad itch on my way back home where I was bit on my back by a dragonfly.

Storm over Lake Erie

After a painting by Alison Miltner

the horizon divides water from air
the triadic rhythm of waves rearing
like stallions white manes and tails

roiled by northeast winds the linear arches
blue as midnight black gray as day sky
whitecaps leap like nervous colts as waves

pound stone piers thunder of hooves
froth from the mouths of hard-run horses
washes ashore eye-white sheet-white

The Hunters: Avon, Ohio, 1973

Three men dressed in the orange-vested livery of hunters course a stand of woods.

No four-wheel drive pickup with a rifle rack advertises their love of the hunt; the rusty Plymouth Valiant parked along the berm implies that killing, like gambling, stealing from work, or fighting in bars, is its own kind of thrill.

Hard pellets of early snow sting the hunter's hands like flung handfuls of b-b's.

In a brown farm field a black dog is barking.

Stalking in surety, they try to avoid catching prey in a crossfire, avoid being more numbers added to the statistics of hunting accidents for this season.

Small thunder penetrates the unleafed trees.

A sudden burst of snow places a light sheet on the ground.

The black dog's silence echoes.