Four Poems by Herbert Woodward Martin

Herbert Woodward Martin

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“This Is the Bowery of 1938”

This is a collection of triplets, three men are sitting in the doorway of a closed department store. In the windows there are three ceiling lamps hung with light from various centuries. We shall assume, that they are brothers and not friends, otherwise why are they triplets and dressed alike with three caps, matching shirts and trousers and three sets of shoes, which are not terribly worn, and still must retain a modicum of warmth. Their trousers are unable to brace them from the troubling wind. They keep their white heads bowed in the presence of circumstance.
“Bahamian Migrant Worker”

He looks to be a braggart
in a time when such a
small attribute was
offensive and punishable
by some terrible death
depending on how deep
in the south you happened
to be buried, which would
have first resulted in your
disappearance and second
your death. Such a handsome
face might have been intriguing
to some white women, but for
the most part you were a minor
scream or maybe a mighty whimper
resulting in your untimely end no
matter how hard you were
willing to work.
Fallen Birds

I fed you doughnuts dry as dust
you cough, you munch drily.
I scramble eggs
I boil water
you eat unnatural problems;
you pucker your lips
with confection sugar
they remained dry
they confirm the taste of truth
as sweet and stoic
resting on a pink tongue.
Fallen Birds II

bodies unconventionally floating through a blue mist.

a biting stench gnaws at the nostrils. Icarus is falling, a whim of the sun.

his face juts forward his eyes are black fists his hair whips the air his thin lips are drawn a heavy tongue screams against the passing clouds
In The Early Forties,

the allure of the allies
Was to be up in arms
against the holocaust
Germans, and the death
March Japanese and
the Italians who always sang,
themselves towards death
in an intriguing way.
The women of my family
taught me to scavenge the
neighborhood soil for
stray nails, abandoned hinges,
metal rods and any suspect
piece of dormant iron that
could sustain its weight in silver.
Pennies and nickels could be
earned for by the industrious;
I hustled to gather enough pieces
in an old tin bucket that I would
soon sell so I could be richer
than all the other black children
in the neighborhood who sort
to collect nickels of cinematic
escape and dimes to feed our rare desires. I was the rich child who and counted my affordable movies that spurred our American heroes on to victory after conquest and never once did I see a black faced soldier set to liberate a downtrodden citizen incarcerated for his or her victorious beliefs. Commotion was all the rage when the war was over: white men kissing white women.