

MATTHEW HARDING

AL DEIDRAT

COLLINS LITERARY PRIZE FOR POETRY

Mahmoud wears delicate angels' wings;  
His feet flitter across mounds of broken waste.  
It isn't the sun that draws him  
But gleam of handlebars, hubcaps, shiny things.

In this land, time is fixed in place  
By the shattered watch,  
By the silent remnants of clocks.

Below, boys gather behind garbage trucks.  
In fraying suit jackets worn over ill-fitting sweaters  
They eagerly push their arms into the falling trash;  
Scavenging through the shards of debris  
For the not quite broken harmonica,  
The still usable umbrella,  
The slightly bent sunglasses.

Across from the crowd a slender boy squats.  
He pulls a cracker from crinkled cellophane.  
His baseball cap reads HAMAS,  
But his only allegiance is to the Party of Bread.  
As deft fingers shove the cracker into his mouth  
The sleeve of his jacket falls back  
Revealing scars splayed out across dirty flesh.

In the distance, across the mangled heaps, Mahmoud dances,  
His wings fluttering beneath the desert sun.