



coins
in the
dust

BART
MESOTTEN

coins in the dust

a posthumous collection of the haiku of
Bart Mesotten

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Driving 50 mph.
Floating quietly in my car
some willow fluff.

*Ik rijd negentig.
In mijn auto zweeft rustig
een wilgenpluisje.*

Summer rain:
the first fat drops
like coins in the dust.

*Zomerregen:
de eerste dikke druppels
als muntstukken in het stof.*

Suddenly one leaf
of the apple tree begins
to tremble fiercely.

*Plots begint één blad
van de appelboom
hevig te trillen.*

Rigidly forward and up
the big plane takes off,
like an erection.

*Strak voorwaarts omhoog
stijgt het grote vliegtuig op, —
als een erectie.*

Retreat home:
mosquito blood and graffiti
on my cell's wall.

*Het retraitehuis:
muggenbloed en graffiti
op de muur van mijn cel.*

The morning presses
its hot fist against the window:
the fight starts.

*De ochtend drukt
zijn hete vuist tegen het raam:
het gevecht begint.*

The silent discussion
between the color of his shirt
and that of his tie.

*Het stille gesprek
tussen de kleur van zijn hemd
en die van zijn das.*

They're kissing.
Their glasses engage
like two sets of antlers.

*Ze kussen elkaar.
Hun brillen raken in strijd
als twee geweien.*

In the subway station;—
across the tracks a friend,
beyond reach.

*In het metro-station;—
aan de overkant een vriend,
onbereikbaar ver.*

A howling dog:
that's how the mean sea wind
rants and raves at the window.

*Een builende hond:
zo gaat de nijldige zeewind
tegen het raam tekeer.*

Deep down below
the tunnel slurps up the train
like a string of spaghetti.

*Ginds diep beneden
slurpt een tunnel de trein op
als een sliertje spaghetti.*

This is a silence
that wants to be filled only
with organ music.

*Dit is een stilte
die slechts met orgelmuziek
gevuld wil worden.*

Vegetable market.
While the ladies muster the fruit,
I muster the ladies.

*Op de groentemarkt.
Terwijl de dames het fruit keuren,
keur ik de dames.*

Build a church tower
and hang some bells in it—
you'll get jackdaws for free.

*Bouw een kerktoeren
en hang er wat klokken in; —
kauwen krijg je erbij.*

Early December.
Hesitating on the park pond
a hint of ice.

*Begin december.
Op de parkvijver schuchtert
een zweempje ijs.*

The old cabinetmaker:
craftsmanship galore,
but three fingers gone.

*De oude schrijnwerker:
vakkundigheid te over,
maar drie vingers kwijt.*

The candle put out.
In the lingering smoke's scent:
my altar boy days.

*De kaars is gedoofd.
In de geur van de nawalm:
mijn misdienaartijd.*

Whatever my age:
if there's a pine cone in my way,
I kick it.

*Hoe oud ik ook ben:
ligt op mijn pad een denappel,
ik geef hem een trap.*

Letters and photos:
half a life burned—
it didn't take an hour.

*Brieven en foto's:
een half leven opgestookt —
't heeft geen uur geduurd.*

Acknowledgements

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“Driving 50 mph.,” “Summer rain,” “Suddenly one leaf,” “Rigidly forward and up,” “Retreat home,” “The morning presses” and “The silent discussion”: *Haikoe-boek (Haiku Book)*, 1986; “They’re kissing,” “In the subway station,” “A howling dog,” “Deep down below,” “This is a silence,” “Vegetable market” and “Build a church tower”: *Een vis die opspringt (A Fish Jumping Up)*, 1989; “Early December,” “The old cabinetmaker” and “The candle put out”: *Oog in oog (Eye to Eye)*, 1991; “Whatever my age” and “Letters and photos”: *Een verre vogel (A Distant Bird)*, 1998.

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BART MESOTTEN (1923-2012) was a Norbertine priest, also working as a teacher. Doing a school radio series about poetry, haiku caught his enduring attention. In the 1970s he published some collections of his own haiku as well as articles about the genre, thus arousing the interest of others. With a few of these he founded in 1976 the Haiku Centre Flanders. Its newsletter evolved into the journal *Vuursteen* (*Flint*) in 1980, published jointly with the Netherlands Haiku Circle. Mesotten was its first editor in chief. Within the Dutch language area (Netherlands and Flanders) the journal—that still exists—as well as Mesotten's later books were highly influential in promoting both interest and active involvement in haiku. His achievements resulted in his being selected as a recipient of the Masaoka Shiki International Haiku Award in 2000, presented in Shiki's home town Matsuyama.



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