

from Vertical Poetry · Roberto Juarroz

The smoke of death
has turned the path into a moving stone.
What floor or twisting or frame
can give it rest now
or simply hold it up?
What skin can give it its wound
so that it can fulfill its impulse
or intention or gesture?

Or is the smoke of death
only a mirage,
the misleading refraction of a stone that never moves?

* * *

Words fall from the clouds.
They fall for the sake of falling,
not for anyone to pick them up.
They fall to recover strength
in the quietest tension.

Suddenly one of these words stops
as though suspended in the air.
Then I give it my own fall.

translated by W. S. Merwin