

JUST WALKING

for Tom Henner

Sahar Muradi

First snow under feet
father landing home again
everyday earthquake

Two deer raise their heads
lift their tails
morning, night

Raindrop on my hat
surprise!—I am
everywhere

Where is mother on the long, white road
eastward, westward
the snow is fresh

A tree with a raised skirt
a mouth in the shape
keep walking

Noise of snow
teeth at night, thinking jaw
sound without me

Here is a bridge I cross
something on either side
the birds flap their wings

Three mushrooms on the trunk
my sisters
I will find them again

Hands, everywhere hands
how small-minded of me
it is true

Grandfather is gone
and returns
light on a cheek of the mountain

Picking up a leaf
see a bigger, a brighter
keep walking

Passing my own footprints
measure the shape
better to be no one

Cross the same bridge twice
wake up mother, father, grandfather
three sisters

SOME WORDS GROW TAILS¹

Sahar Muradi

Between two hearts is a way. We
met once, we were friends;
we met again,

brothers. Spring came not
by one bloom. Said I am the year,
and the trees—

windless. I wished him open,
his being fully flower (never
his days). Begin at the river

born of a drop. A dog
lapped the water clear. He said
half of faith

being clean. Some words
grow tails—you could watch them
walk. A donkey

passed us by. It wasn't ours
to stop, nor the porcupine
stroking its velvet

child. Hunger was memory
crisping. I starved to ask the fox
who is your

(1) This poem is based on a generative translation of Afghan proverbs in Dari.

alibi. Crooked and straight,
half reach, I could swear
he answered

my tail. Two hands
being sovereign. Between
two brothers our accounts

should square. God said
eat and drink, said my brother.
He did not say

glut. A piece of bread, an onion
slice, a banquet—he opened
his hand—these five are brothers

but not equals. The same donkey
passed by us
wearing a new saddle.