

Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts

from *The Hummingbird Blesses the Day: A Bestiary*

F Fox

The Red Fox

Cougar, coyote, raccoon and possum—
These I know. I know the marsh hawk gliding
Low over the scrub brush; the blue heron
Standing on the tor, yellow eyes ablaze.
What loss will I grieve, the way, this morning,
Never having known it wandered woods so
Close to home, I grieve for this red fox lying
Dead on the highway. This is not the loss
Of a father who leaves a son bearing
All his shame and fear, his anger and pain.
This is not the loss of a mother whom
The son lost like a house key dropped on a
Mountain trail, never to be found again,
No matter how many times he retraced
His steps. There is hidden in each of us
A red fox that travels by the stars.
Early one morning, as we make our way
Down the highway, we discover its sleek
And soft body lying at the road's edge,
Its muzzle in a pool of blood. Even
Before we have driven past that still form,
Grief has placed its cold fingers on our chest.

S Snail

Just Like the Snail

just like the snail
at home wherever we are
unbelievable the sex

Y Yellow-rumped Warbler/Yeti

Just You

All the creatures we create, like the Yeti,
that wander the wilderness—the highest mountain
peaks of the Himalayas in Tibet and Nepal—
and the dark places of our minds;

when right here, right in front of us, the common
yellow-rumped warbler, the wonder of it,
that flash of sunlight on its rump as it
defies gravity, the sweet music of its song.

All those images I've carried with me
since I was young, so many creatures
inhabiting the far regions of my mind,
how much suffering they caused;

when right here, walking next to me,
sharing my joy at seeing a pair of dolphins
skirt the kelp beds, their dorsal fins
and sleek backs gliding in and out of the water;

and the joy of watching pelicans sweep
low over the ocean, inches above the water;
and the joy of simply walking on these two feet,
my hand in yours, on this path by the ocean;

just you, the miracle of flesh and bone and hair,
like the yellow-rumped warbler, bringing me
to this present moment, where no cryptid
creeps in the murky silence. Just you,

your tangible, solid presence.

Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts is author of *White Fire*, a collection of poems, published in 2017 by Ping-Pong Free Press of the Henry Miller Memorial Library. He is co-editor/co-translator of two works from the Telugu, *Sudha (Nectar)* by Chalam and *The Selected Verses of Vemana*; and is co-author of *Bowing to Receive the Mountain: Essays by Lin Jensen and Poetry by Elliot Roberts*. He is working on the final draft of *The Hummingbird Blesses the Day: A Bestiary*, a collection of poems featuring animals from ant to zebra. His poetry has appeared in various journals and anthologies.

First Vice President of the Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation, he coordinates the Foundation's annual Prize for Poetry and its annual reading series. Poet-in-the-Schools for the Carl Cherry Center for the Arts, Ruchowitz-Roberts presents poetry writing workshops in high schools throughout Monterey County and coordinates the annual Monterey County High School Poetry Awards.