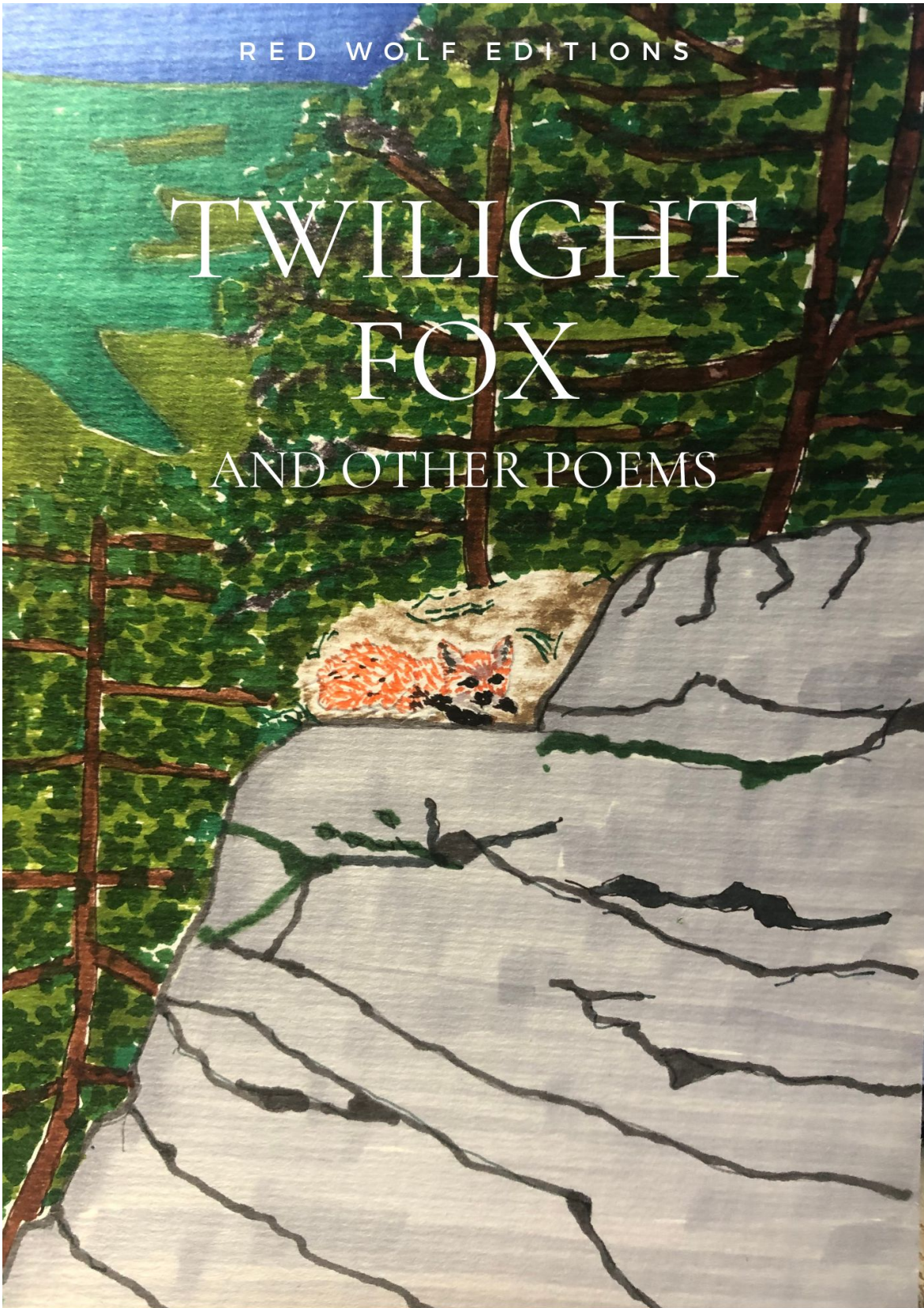


RED WOLF EDITIONS

TWILIGHT
FOX
AND OTHER POEMS



Robert Walton

TWILIGHT FOX and Other Poems

Robert Walton



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Twilight Fox

Hiking down from rock spires
As day ended,
A gray fox—
Muzzle drooped low,
Tongue dust red—
Crossed the trail
In front of me.

He stopped, trembling,
A loop of drool
Sagging from his mouth,
Touching dust.
He stared at it.

I kicked a pebble
And he saw me,
A wild star flashing in his eye.
Gray lightning streaked
One more time
Around the next bend.

I found him stretched on golden grass
A little farther on,
Last steps taken,
That wild star
Still burning free.

I spoke,
Though words couldn't soothe him
Or even me:
Buddy
I'd like to give you a hand.

But the wild star faded with my words
And dusk's dry cloak,
soft and cool,
Folded around us both.

Balconies Belay

Blossoms leap
Up sunlight cascades
Like salmon returning home
To Machete's cliffs
As swallows swoop
Past our nest of ropes.
A falcon cries trespass
From the summit spire—
And we do,
And we'll leave,
Though it seems a shame
To climb away
From this blossom-drenched ledge.

Tenaya Moods Shared

Does freeze in dawn's light,
Backlit, poised to leap away
Should sunlight strike
Amber shards
From lions' eyes.

Jade eddies bow
Above obsidian deeps
As noontime wavelets
Roll across hot sands
Like children's laughter

Owls drift above pines at dusk,
Their wings silent as moonlight;
Sweet sage burns yellow,
Lifting slender arms of smoke
To stars just risen.

Boxing at Mar a Lago

Morning shaves grown to blue bristles,
Cigarettes in the corners of their mouths,
Hard arms dangling from hard tattoos—
Uncles taught me out back
Where the trashcans squat
And the women don't look.

You can beat a big guy, Kid,
But you got to take a punch,
And another,
And another.
Keep your elbows together;
Keep your gloves up.

Take the punches,
The ones you block,
The ones that get through,
Take the pain — wait,
Wait until he opens up
Then hit him with all you got.

The uncles took punches for years
Until the last punches came along,
Corona virus came along,
And plugged their lungs with
Covid snot
That even the choking
Respirator
Failed to move.

I still keep my gloves up,
My elbows together,
But the Mar a Lago people—
Louis Vuitton shod,
Helmut Lang scented,
Will never open up.

Hummingbird

You take a break
In first sunshine,
A grass stem
Barely bending
Beneath your weight—
The dried flames
Of Indian paintbrush
Are slim pickings—
Gone.

Climbers Homeward Bound

Like friends parting
For uncertain journeys,
Clouds clasp hands on
An autumn moon.

The lake below muses,
On snow's return,
Its black waters
Deeper than space.

What games we play
With mute mountains,
With moonlit clouds,
With puckish stars.

Check the anchor,
Clip to the rope,
And step into
Night's granite belly.

Process notes: I've been caught by night up high a number of times. I try in this poem to convey the mixed feelings this predicament inspires.

Laoshi

Nameless stream,
Smooth and ancient
As a master's tomb,
Your black jade whispers
Fall too quickly into rapids' laughter
For me to catch the
Jest.
But cliffs above,
Robed
In Confucian silks of alpenglow
Glimmer
Like an old man's smile.
The day's last light on snow
Must be Li.

Note:

'Laoshi' means 'teacher' in Mandarin.

'Li' – Li is both a concept and a process in Confucian philosophy. It begins with proper social behavior, especially good manners and respect for elders. If practiced, it leads to wider perceptions of nature and harmony with the universe.

Was it a breeze

That nudged my study door,
Or a kitten
Busy making things its own,
Or my imagination's
Ghosts
All pushing together
To remind me that you died
Last April,
Leaving me with creaks and whispers
Only old houses make?
Was it a kitten,
Or a breeze?

Tuolumne Solitaire

This river slips slantwise
Over snowy granite,
Flows smooth as smoke
Over hidden edges.
Ripples at my feet
Wear capricious jewels,
Mischievous in moonlight,
Like you.

The current's curves
And star-polished boulders
Blend with the ease
Of long acquaintance—
So our friendship
Has flowed years long,

Though you are a girl to me,
Still a girl.

Tuolumne Dawn

Breeze off morning rapids
Is a gift trailing scents
Of pine, of lupine,
Of sweet woodsmoke,
But its first touch
Is a blue blade
Pulled by dawn from its sheath of
Ice.

About the Author



Robert Walton retired from teaching after thirty-six years of service at San Lorenzo Middle School. Walton's novel *Dawn Drums* won the 2014 New Mexico Book Awards Tony Hillerman Prize for best fiction. "Sockdologizer", his dramatization of Abraham Lincoln's assassination, won the Saturday Writers 2020 Everything Children contest. Most recently, his award winning collection of stories, *Joaquin's Gold*, was published on Kindle.
website : <http://chaosgatebook.wordpress.com/>