Fox
by Adrienne Rich

I needed fox  Badly I needed
a vixen for the long time none had come near me
I needed recognition from a
triangulated face  burnt-yellow eyes
fronting the long body the fierce and sacrificial tail
I needed history of fox  briars of legend it was said she
had run through
I was in want of fox

And the truth of briars she had to have run through
I craved to feel on her pelt  if my hands could even slide
past her body slide between them  sharp truth distressing
surfaces of fur
lacerated skin calling legend to account
a vixen’s courage in vixen terms

For a human animal to call for help
on another animal
is the most riven the most revolted cry on earth
come a long way down
Go back far enough it means tearing and torn  endless
and sudden
back far enough it blurts
into the birth-yell of the yet-to-be human child
pushed out of a female  the yet-to-be woman

From Fox (WW Norton & Co., 2001)