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## Gray Figure

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Gray figure in the distance,  
nose raised high in cold wind,  
barks and howls, barks and howls:  
Canis latrans, barking dog—  
just coyote to us now.  
Out west, chased by wolves,  
they keep their distance  
from the wily predator,  
hiding on hillsides' steep terrain,  
avoiding open meadows to survive.  
Cougars hunt coyotes, bold  
coyotes kill bobcats and foxes.  
Curious, restless, coyotes moved  
slowly eastward to the Midwest:  
fields, farmlands and prairies,  
now parks and nature trails  
behind homes in Chicago's  
suburbs. Behind the homes  
they sniff and hunt for voles,  
squirrels, rabbits, mice,  
where they've discovered  
cats and little dogs belonging  
to children, darling little  
Yorkshire Terriers, like the one  
the hungry "prairie wolf"  
snatched from Tim's backyard  
too quick for his son racing  
for the baseball bat.