**Coyote Ponders the End of a World**

Gavin Van Horn

Coyote lopes wordlessly

empty streets

paws on pavement

tang of early sun crippling the frost

sparking the dawn chorus

He is curious how he didn’t see this coming

assures himself (after a moment of self-inventory) that he did

for didn’t they say he would bring the dams down?

didn’t they say he would return when he was most needed,

when people cried out from the soil, from the rocks themselves?

Yes, yes—he remembered something about that

in his patched together skull

in his pecan eye

He doesn’t smile—not any more than usual

he’s played a few pranks on his brothers and sisters

(this much is well known)

yet he had no wish to see them bumble

back into darkness

He had no wish to say I told you so—

*though they could have learned a lot from me*,

he barks into a bitter wind, left ear twitching,

*even I know you can’t build on straw*

Two big bright eyes speed by, worrying the air

tumbling dry leaves in their wake

the hum of tires receding

swallowed whole

*What a mess*, he thinks

*just the place for a messy fella*