

The Wolves Outside the Walls

by [Thomas Banks](#) (December 2020)



A

pocalyptic Landscape, Ludwig Meidner, 1912

The reverend augurs mumble in debate
About the meaning of a cancerous liver,
While compost piles seem to pullulate
With inconvenient infants by the river.

Enjoying their vineyards and their lakeside views,
Senators graze among the grapes and figs,
Chatting about apocalyptic news,

Wearing still more apocalyptic wigs.

Dives complains about his recent bust
To which the idiot sculptor gave three chins.
Skeletal Lazarus chews a moldy crust
Among the refuse and the rubbish bins.

Rumors spread from the north, to the effect
That Visigoths have crossed the unmanned border.
The unpaid legions threaten to defect.
Svelte Messalina joins the Vestal Order.

Fair girls and fairer boys strip off their fear
And in the marketplaces change apparel.
Gossip and games are all that matters here.
Commerce and letters and most wombs grow sterile.

The past has no more credit to its name,
Detached from us as by a bridgeless gulf.
The patient wolves outside wait to reclaim
The city of the children of the wolf.

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