

MICHAEL BAZZETT

The Field Beyond the Wall

We walk to the edge of town: there
just beyond the wall we see clouds
of crows and ravens, also buzzards
teetering down to pick apart the flesh
that peeks from every flapping shirttail.

See that belly pale as risen dough?
The dark oaks creak with the dead
weight that hangs from their limbs—
ropes taut with bodies barely turning.

We gather on the wall, idly and in pairs,
looking out across the charred fields
and the smoking timbers of a farmhouse.

By noon, the hum of flies will lull our ears
into dreaming orchards thick with bees,
but now in the chill of morning it is mostly
the scrape and croak of birds just starting in.

Someone has knotted an enemy banner
to the tail of an ass to drag the muddy lanes.
But the ass stands rooted in a ditch,
shredding weeds with a ripping sound.

Up on the wall, a woman works the crowd,
making the rounds with a steaming sack of corn.
People buy a roasted ear for warmth,
holding it snug inside their hands for a long while
before peeling back the damp husk.