

# Funding the Future

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As far as I can work out, this poem by C.P. Cavafy is out of copyright. It seemsed appropriate to share it today:

## **Waiting for the Barbarians**

What are we waiting for, assembled in the forum?

The barbarians are due here today.

Why isn't anything going on in the senate?  
Why are the senators sitting there without legislating?

Because the barbarians are coming today.  
What is the point of senators making laws now?  
Once the barbarians are here, they'll do the legislating.

Why did our emperor get up so early?  
And why is he sitting enthroned at the city's main gate,  
in state, wearing the crown?

Because the barbarians are coming today.  
And the emperor is waiting to receive their leader.  
He's even got a scroll to give them  
loaded with titles, with imposing names.

Why have our two consuls and praetors come out today?  
Wearing their emerald bracelets, their scarlet robes,  
Who's sparkling with magnificent emeralds,  
beautifully worked in silver and gold?

Because the barbarians are coming today.  
And things like that dazzle the barbarians.

Why don't our distinguished orators turn up as usual?  
To make their speeches, say what they have to say?

Because the barbarians are coming today.  
And they're bored by rhetoric and public speaking.

Why this sudden bewilderment, this confusion?  
How serious people's faces have become!  
Why are the streets and squares emptying so rapidly,  
everyone going home lost in thought?

Because night has fallen and the barbarians haven't come.  
And some of our men still from the border say  
there are no barbarians any longer.

Now what's going to happen to us without barbarians?  
Those people were a kind of solution.