

# Three Academic Poems

by [Jeffrey Burghauer](#) (October 2019)



*Spring in the Gardens of the Villa Borghese, Sir Lawrence Alma Tadema*

## Villa Borghese Gardens

Since we were in Rome, of all places,  
John Keats was quite substantially  
On our minds, and Abe observed that  
The younger you die, the greater  
The mythic burden each increment  
Of time's expected to sustain.  
*Therefore, if you die in infancy,  
What sort of god do you become?*

## Rereading *Carmina Burana*[\[1\]](#)

Oh, the panoplies all sing & strut,  
Everything so real, devoid of rust!  
...saving, well, the raw, obscene disgust  
For the *archisynagogus*. But  
  
Then I read the *Times*. It breaks a seal,

Finding that I need reminding that  
There is sorrow found in finding that  
The Eternal is a package deal.

## Eternal Flame

“Of you, dear friend, what can one say in such dismal times? In the old days, you’d have had the fame of Aristarchus, say, or of Zenodotus, eminent men, those Alexandrine scholars.”—Ausonius, “Citarius, Sicilian of Syracuse, Greek Grammarian at Bordeaux” [\[2\]](#)

“I repeat: this firehouse will save  
Lives,” declares the mayor on the site.  
Festive bunting stapled to the height  
Points to what this building will have meant.  
In a random-seeming corner of  
Newly-sodded lawn: a disk of white,  
Lesion-patterned, plasticized cement.  
  
And surrounding it are pillars, three,  
Finished nearly like unfinished stone,  
Meant to seem not *placed*, but somehow *grown*.

And on each piazza-facing side  
Is a laser-perfect vacancy  
For a typographic megaphone  
Fit for names of those who will have died.

Oh, Ausonius, forgotten man,  
Kvetching that *another* man who's quite  
Equally forgotten won't delight  
In Eternal Glory like these two  
*Other* silly names who no one can  
Recognize at knifepoint. Anthracite  
Is the memory of meadow-rue.

Heaven's oscillating like a snake  
Over everything & everyone.  
"Take no thought," enjoined the careful Son,  
Engineering tungsten-perfect love,  
"For tomorrow. Let tomorrow take  
Thought of its own things. Sufficient un-  
To the day is the evil thereof."

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[1] From the *Encyclopædia Britannica*: “[A] 13th-century manuscript that contains songs [...] and six religious plays. The contents of the manuscript are attributed to the goliards (q.v.), wandering scholars and students in western Europe during the 10th to the 13th century who were known for their songs and poems in praise of revelry. [...] [T]here are drinking songs, serious and licentious love songs, religious poems, pastoral lyrics, and satires of church and government.”

[2] Slavitt, D.R. (trans.). (1998). *Ausonius: Three Amusements*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. (line and stanza breaks removed)

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