



## Eclogues

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As a translator of classical Greek and Latin texts, Davenport found great affinity with the classical concept of pastoralism as a way of creating and enacting an Edenic society. Davenport harked back to the classical pastoral poetry of Theocritus and Virgil and of English pastoral poets such as William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and John Milton. All the stories contain a shepherd figure who helps to keep order and direction within the group and who maintains the beauty and structure of Arcadian society. There are humorous stories about the Greek philosopher Diogenes, who respects no one, not even Alexander the Great, whom he chides for blocking “his” sunlight.

The most charming and intricately developed story, and the longest, is the concluding one, “On Some Lives of Virgil.” The setting, the southwestern French city of Bordeaux, is key to understanding the theme of how geography influences the imagination and produces local aesthetic geniuses. In this story, the shepherd is the classical scholar Tullio, who leads his charges, again French teenagers who constantly experiment with innocent sexual pleasures, to examine some ancient French caves just outside Bordeaux. He teaches his students that true history is actually “the history of attention” and that they must pay attention to all forms of narrative, both written and oral, to understand and appreciate the complete historical canvas. “The Death of Picasso” finds Adriaan van Hovendaal and a student, Sander, discussing the significance of the painter's death in light of the fact that Picasso helped to create “modernism” as an amalgamation of the ancient and the contemporary.

## Sources for Further Study

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