The *Laudes Italiae* (*G.* 2.136-176)[[1]](#footnote--1)

Sed neque Medorum siluae, ditissima terra,

nec pulcher Ganges atque auro turbidus Hermus

laudibus Italiae certent, non Bactra neque Indi

totaque turiferis Panchaia pinguis harenis. (2.136-139)

haec loca non tauri spirantes naribus ignem

inuertere satis immanis dentibus hydri,

nec galeis densisque uirum seges horruit hastis;

sed grauidae fruges et Bacchi Massicus umor

impleuere; tenent oleae armentaque laeta. (140-144)

hinc bellator equus campo sese arduus infert,

hinc albi, Clitumne, greges et maxima taurus

uictima, saepe tuo perfusi flumine sacro,

Romanos ad templa deum duxere triumphos. (145-148)

hic uer adsiduum atque alienis mensibus aestas:

bis grauidae pecudes, bis pomis utilis arbos.

At rabidae tigres absunt et saeua leonum

semina, nec miseros fallunt aconita legentis,

nec rapit immensos orbis per humum neque tanto

squameus in spiram tractu se colligit anguis. (149-154)

adde tot egregias urbes operumque laborem,

tot congesta manu praeruptis oppida saxis

fluminaque antiquos subter labentia muros.

An mare quod supra memorem, quodque adluit infra?

Anne lacus tantos? Te, Lari maxime, teque,

fluctibus et fremitu adsurgens Benace marino?

An memorem portus Lucrinoque addita claustra

atque indignatum magnis stridoribus aequor,

Iulia qua ponto longe sonat unda refuso

Tyrrhenusque fretis immittitur aestus Auernis? (158-164)

haec eadem argenti riuos aerisque metalla

ostendit uenis atque auro plurima fluxit.

Haec genus acre uirum, Marsos pubemque Sabellam

adsuetumque malo Ligurem Volscosque uerutos

extulit, haec Decios Marios magnosque Camillos,

Scipiadas duros bello et te, maxime Caesar,

qui nunc extremis Asiae iam uictor in oris

imbellem auertis Romanis arcibus Indum. (165-172)

salue, magna parens frugum, Saturnia tellus,

magna uirum: tibi res antiquae laudis et artem

ingredior sanctos ausus recludere fontis,

Ascraeumque cano Romana per oppida carmen. (173-176)

Summary of Interpretation

*G.* 2. 136-139: Italy’s wealth, present and potential, exceeds

the rewards of even the most lucrative conquests. A

movement from real to fantastic further dissaudes

that conquest.

140-144: Non-authochthonous peoples of Italy chose to

settle there and the land produces abundant flora

and fauna.

145-148: Rome’s military prowess has subdued

foreign threats and secured an end of conflict.

149-154: Italy needs much labor to thrive, but the land,

at least, is hospitable. A knowledgable person has

nothing to fear of Italy’s poisons, beasts, or

serpents.

155-164: Man cooperated with nature for mutual

benefit, even reinforcing natural bodies to secure

their integrity and to make better use of their

advantages.

165-172: Wealth eliminates the need for conquest, and

the many sacrifices made by great Italians have

secured Italy from foreign enemies.

173-176: Hesiod’s Ascrean song gains an optimism

when adopted by Vergil. The many benisons

provided in exchange for *labor* make Italy

exceptional.

Thomas 1982, 39: “Either we ignore what seems to be less than laudatory, or we are required to conclude that Virgil, rather than simply praising the Italian landscape, has suggested that it exhibits serious deficiencies.”

Johnston 1977, 58: When Vergil calls Italy *Saturnia tellus*, “he appears to mean that this is the land where a golden age has occurred in the past and has the potential of recurring… as an agricultural golden age.

Nappa 2003, 53: The ethical quality of *labor* is determined by “correctness of action and attention to detail and even the coordination of one’s efforts with those of others.”

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1. Text of Vergil’s *Georgics* is Mynors 1972 [↑](#footnote-ref--1)