

LAUDES ITALIAE (GEORGICS 2.136-175):  
VIRGIL AS A CAESARIAN HESIOD

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This paper argues that the celebrated *laudes Italiae* passage at Virgil (*georg.* 2.136-176) is metaliterary and refers to the *Georgics* themselves: the statements made about the Italian landscape itself also apply to the poem being written about the Italian landscape, and the *Georgics* itself is a *laudes Italiae* on a larger scale. It also argues that the passage is metageneric, negotiating the space for the *Georgics* within the broader context of the epic tradition: contrasts are drawn here between Virgil's poetic enterprise and previous hexameter poems with which the *Georgics* has connections and which were prominent through Latin translations in the 30's BCE – the *Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes, and the didactic poems of Nicander who supplies both some content (e.g. on snakes) and the title (*Georgika*) of Virgil's poem. One of the main functions of the passage is thus to map out the literary space within *epos* which the poem will occupy.

The episode of the *laudes Italiae* is also, I contend, much more firmly rooted than scholars have thought in the anti-Oriental and pro-Italian propaganda of the period surrounding the battle of Actium. The references to Media and the East are partly echoes of the triumphant career of Alexander the Great (and perhaps of the poems written about him), but they also recall the continuing danger from Parthia and the contemporary victories of the young Caesar in the aftermath of Actium, the period of 31-29 BC, a date clearly pointed to by 2.170-172. The superiority of the Italian landscape over the inferior regions of the East in flora, fauna and natural advantages is a clear symbol of Caesarian Italy's victory over the Antonian East. The poet adds a personal element to this, in that two of the regions mentioned (Lake Benacus and Avernus) are drawn from the two parts of Italy connected with his personal life, where he was born and where he was residing at the time of the *Georgics* – Mantua and the Bay of Naples.

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All this contemporary allusion helps to present Virgil in the *laudes Italiae* (and hence in the *Georgics* as a whole) as a Caesarian Hesiod, a didactic poet in an established literary tradition but with modern political and nationalist commitment. In the climax to the passage at 2.176 the Hesiodic tradition of agricultural epos is explicitly reframed in a new and living Italian context, just as Homeric heroic epos is reworked for the poet's own time in the *Aeneid*. In what follows, I will analyse *Georgics* 2.136-176 closely from this perspective<sup>1</sup>.

### 1. *Georgics* 2.136-139. *Italy, The East and Alexander*

*sed neque Medorum silvae, ditissima terra,  
nec pulcher Ganges atque auro turbidus Hermus  
laudibus Italiae certent, non Bactra neque Indi  
totaque turiferis Panchaia pinguis harenis.*

But let not the woods of the Medes, the richest of lands, nor the fair Ganges, nor the Hermus, murky with gold, vie with the praises of Italy, no, not Bactra or the Indians, or the whole of Panchaia rich with its incense-bearing sands.

This passage which introduces the episode lays immediate emphasis on contrast with the East. *Medorum* picks up the preceding discussion of the Median citrus-tree (2.126-135), but to a reader of contemporary Roman poetry the somewhat antiquarian term 'Medes' (like 'Persians')<sup>2</sup> was becoming a familiar way of referring to the contemporary hostile state of Parthia: we may compare Horace *carm.* 1.2.51-52: *neu sinas Medos equitare inultos / te duce, Caesar*; 1.29.4-5: *horribilique Medo / nectis catenas*; 2.9.21-22: *Medumque flumen gentibus additum / victis minores volvere vertices*; 3.3.43-44: *triumphatisque possit / Roma ferox dare iura Medis*; 4.14.41-43: *te Cantaber non ante domabilis / Medusque et Indus, te profugus Scythes / miratur*; *carm. saec.* 53-54: *manus potentis / Medus Albanasque timet securis*; Propertius 3.9.25: *Medorum pugnacis ire per hastas*; 3.12.11: *neve tua Medae laetentur caede sagittae*. From the disaster of Carrhae in 53 and the failure of Antony's expedition in 36 until the diplomatic settlement of 21/20, the Parthians constituted Rome's main unsubjugated Eastern enemy, and these references are clearly made against this background. Italy's natural resources are made to outclass those of her political foes.

<sup>1</sup> For some recent accounts of the passage which set the context, see e.g. ROSS 1987, 115-119; JENKYNs 1998, 352-371; CRAMER 1998, 70-114; NAPPA 2005, 78-85, and the standard commentaries of THOMAS 1988 and MYNORS 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Horace *carm.* 1.2.22; 3.5.4, with NISBET - RUDD 2004, 84.

These lines outlining the superiority of Italy to the East also present some echoes of the career of Alexander the Great. Bactria (138) had been a key part of Alexander's conquests, India (138) his final stopping-place, the river Ganges (137) his supposed ultimate destination, while the Hermus (137) as river of Sardis points to that city's surrender to Alexander in 334 BCE<sup>3</sup>. This can be closely linked with the young Caesar's self-presentation as a new Alexander in the years 31-29, a comparison which had also attracted Antony before Actium<sup>4</sup>: at *georg.* 4.560-562 we see Caesar conquering at the Euphrates, taking over Alexander's traditional title of *magnus* (4.560) and his historical role as subjugator of the East, while the description of Antony as leader of the Orient in the account of Actium on the shield of Aeneas (*Aen.* 8.685-688) likewise presents him as marshalling the forces once overcome by Alexander and soon to be mastered by the young Caesar<sup>5</sup>. Recall of Alexander's mastery of the East here thus has a lively contemporary reference at the period of Actium.

These references to the regions of Alexander's conquests also suggest allusion to literary history and to literary self-positioning. Augustan poets were fully aware that Alexander was the subject of epic by his contemporaries, and that these poets (notoriously Choerilus of Iasus) were deemed to have been inadequate to the task (cf. Horace *epist.* 2.1.232-237)<sup>6</sup>. As already noted, Virgil's praise of Italy and of the young Caesar in the *Georgics* as a whole can itself be seen as a *laudes Italiae*, and these lines can be read as setting Vergil's Italian great poem against the turgid Alexander epics: poems in which Bactria, India and the Hermus played a role cannot compete with the modern *laudibus Italiae* (138) in the *Georgics* itself. The Hermus 'eddying with gold' (137: *auro turbidus Hermus*) is a neat symbol for such turgid poetry: the symbolic language of large and disturbed Eastern rivers surely recalls the famous characterisation of the Euphrates as a large and muddy stream in Callimachus's *Hymn to Apollo* (107-112), a passage echoed elsewhere in Virgil<sup>7</sup>:

τὸν Φθόνον ὀπόλλων ποδί τ' ἤλασεν ὃδὲ τ' ἔειπεν·  
 “Ἀσσυρίου ποταμοῦ μέγας ῥόος, ἀλλὰ τὰ πολλά

<sup>3</sup> For these items in Alexander's career see conveniently LANE FOX 1973, 292-300 [Bactria]; 331-402 [India]; 128 [Sardis]; for the Ganges as Alexander's supposed ultimate objective see Curtius 9.2.1; Diodorus 17.93; Plutarch *Alex.* 62; Arrian *Anab.* 5.26.1 (Lucan 3.229-234 even claims that Alexander reached the Ganges).

<sup>4</sup> For Augustus and Alexander see KIENAST 1969; on Antony and Alexander in the 30's BC (and the Roman passion for Alexander-imitation in general) see SPENCER 2002, 24-26.

<sup>5</sup> Note especially *Bactra* (8.688), the only other mention of this region in Virgil.

<sup>6</sup> With the useful discussion of SPENCER 2002, 128-134.

<sup>7</sup> See THOMAS - SCODEL 1984.

λύματα γῆς καὶ πολλὸν ἐφ' ὕδατι συρφετὸν ἔλκει.  
 Δηοῖ δ' οὐκ ἀπὸ παντὸς ὕδωρ φορέουσι μέλισσαι,  
 ἀλλ' ἥτις καθαρὴ τε καὶ ἀχράαντος ἀνέρπει  
 πίδακος ἐξ ἱερῆς ὀλίγη λιβάς ἄκρον ἄωτον”.

Apollo kicked Envy with his foot and spoke as follows: “Great is the stream of the Assyrian river, but it drags along many off-scourings of the land and much rubbish on its waters. The water which the bees carry to Demeter is not from every source, but is whatever comes pure and uncontaminated from the holy spring, a small trickle, the very best”.

As in Callimachus, the *Georgics* can here be seen as using water-symbolism to set out its own literary qualities, defining itself as superior to the turbid and turgid tradition of Alexander-epic, and as equivalent to the pure spring-water offered to Deo (Demeter); here it is interesting to note that Ceres / Demeter is prominent in the opening catalogue of rural gods invoked in support of the poem at *georg.* 1.5-28 (1.7: *alma Ceres*), and that the bees of Callimachus who haunt clear water might find some echo in those of *georg.* 4<sup>8</sup>. This metapoetic stance fits well with the general Hellenistic and Callimachean aesthetic of the poem.

In these opening lines, therefore, a key complex of themes is established for the episode. The Eastern locations recall both the contemporary political contest with the Parthians and the historic conquests of Alexander. Both this episode and the whole of the *Georgics* are then presented as praise of Italy as superior to rival Eastern attractions, mirroring the political confrontations of the 30's BC where Rome had faced first Parthia under Antony's leadership and then the East joined with Antony under the leadership of the young Caesar at Actium. The young Caesar's victory thus replays and improves on Alexander's subjugation of the East; this is mirrored on the literary level in the way that Virgil's Caesarian poem, the *Georgics*, overcomes traditionally turgid epic praises of Alexander by adopting a refined Callimachean poetic stance.

## 2. *Georgics* 2.140-148. *Not the Argonautica*

*haec loca non tauri spirantes naribus ignem  
 inuertere satis immanis dentibus hydri,  
 nec galeis densisque uirum seges horruit bastis;  
 sed gravidae fruges et Bacchi Massicus umor  
 impleuere; tenent oleae armentaue laeta.  
 hinc bellator equus campo sese arduus infert,*

<sup>8</sup> Note especially *Georgics* 4.18 (*liquidi fontes* as a good habitat for bees) and 4.17 (bees ferry food, *ferunt* ~ φορέουσι).

*hinc albi, Clitumne, greges et maxima taurus  
uictima, saepe tuo perfusi flumine sacro,  
Romanos ad templa deum duxere triumphos.*

These regions were not ploughed by bulls breathing fire from their nostrils for the sowing of the teeth of the monstrous dragon, nor did the crop there bristle with shields or the dense-packed spears of warriors; but heavy ears of corn and the Masic juice of Bacchus have filled them up, and they are occupied by olive-trees and happy herds. From here the war-horse carries itself loftily across the plain, from here, Clitumnus, the flocks and the bull, the largest victim, often washed in your sacred waters, have drawn the triumphs of Romans to the temples of the gods.

The comparison of the *Georgics* with other forms of epos has now been firmly established as a reading strategy for the *laudes Italiae*. The lines that follow can also be interpreted metapoetically: *haec loca* at 140 can refer to literary passages as well as topographical locations (Horace *epist.* 2.1.223: *loca iam recitata*), and both the physical features here excluded from Italy and those claimed for its own may thus be read as symbolizing the subjects of poetry. The literary tradition referred to in 140-142 is clearly the ploughing with fire-breathing bulls and planting of dragons' teeth by Jason in the Argonaut story (Apollonius Rhodius 3.1278-1407; Valerius Flaccus 7.559-643), as scholars have recognised. Reading this metapoetically, the resulting claim that Virgil's Callimachean poem contains material different from that of the Argonautic saga is likely to evoke contemporary literary history from the 30's BCE. One product of that decade seems to have been the *Argonautae* of Varro Atacinus, probably echoed at *georg.* 2.404<sup>9</sup>; Virgil's Callimachean epos may here be differentiating itself from a recent version of the more Homerically inspired poem of Apollonius.

The Italian subject-matter of lines 143-148 (corn, wine, olives, flocks) plainly gives 'the subject-matter of Books 1-3 in order' (Mynors *ad loc.*). This kind of summary is repeated at the end of the poem at *georg.* 4.559-560 (*haec super arborum cultu pecorumque canebam / et super arboribus*), but here in the *laudes Italiae* must be a further suggestion that the episode is a symbolic summary or representation of the poem as a whole – a *mise en abyme* in narratological terms<sup>10</sup>. Virgil's Caesarian praise of Italy in 2.136-176 reflects the themes and structure of the *Georgics* as a whole: we note that both the whole poem (at *georg.* 4.560-567) and the *laudes Italiae* (at *georg.* 2.170-176) have a climax in a sequence which follows encomium of Caesar with a reference to the poet's own work.

<sup>9</sup> See HOLLIS 2007, 196-214.

<sup>10</sup> For *mise en abyme* see DÄLLENBACH 1989.

3. *Georgics* 2.149-154. *Paradise without pests*

*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.*

Here spring is incessant, and summer in the other months; the herds are twice yearly with young, the tree is twice productive of apples. But raging tigers and the savage seeds of lions are absent, nor do aconites take in their unfortunate gatherers, nor does the scaly snake drag its measureless rings along the ground or gather itself into a coil in such great length.

These lines continue the literary symbolism. Italy and the *Georgics* are the location of a paradisiacal climate: the claim to continual spring and double fertility is an encomiastic topos rather than a serious agricultural observation, a rhetorical exaggeration, but once again the themes are treated metapoetically and pick up elements from the *Georgics* itself: spring is the subject of a famous description in this same book (2.319-345), while the care of sheep (*pecudes*) is dealt with at 3.295-299 and the cultivation of fruit-trees (*arbos*) has just been dealt with at 2.9-108. The absence of tigers and lions is likewise not just a zoological observation: lions and tigers belong to the exotic Eastern world of Alexander's conquests (Curtius 9.8.2) and lions to the world of Homeric similes<sup>11</sup>: this surely reflects the alternative epic traditions of Alexander-style conquest (see above) and Homeric heroes which the *Georgics* seeks to avoid.

The absence of both poisonous aconite and poisonous snakes is another encomiastic rhetorical exaggeration openly contradicted by the account of snakes at 3.414-449, a passage which indeed echoes several verbal details from 2.153-154<sup>12</sup>, but again the point is not just to over-emphasise the paradisiacal landscape of Italy<sup>13</sup>. Here once more there is metapoetical allusion to poetic models from which the *Georgics* diverge: the conjunction of poisons and snakes irresistibly recalls the extant poetic output of the late Hellenistic poet Nicander, who in the opening of his *Alexipharmaka* dedicates a considerable section to aconite (12-73) and who spends a third of his *The-*

<sup>11</sup> For a convenient discussion of Homeric lion-similes see MUELLER 1984, 116-120.

<sup>12</sup> 2.153 *immensos orbis* ~ 3.424 *tardosque ... orbis*; 2.153 *per humum* ~ 3.420 *fovit humum*; 2.154 *tractu* ~ 3.424 *trahit*; 2.154 *anguis* ~ 3.425 *anguis* [both at line-end].

<sup>13</sup> Here and elsewhere I disagree with the pessimistic interpretations of ROSS 1987 and THOMAS 1988.

*riaca* dealing with poisonous snakes (115-482); when Manilius later comes to summarise Nicander's two poems, he uses words close to Virgil's here (2.44: *venenatos angues aconitaque*). Given that Virgil probably took from Nicander's lost *Georgika* the title of his poem but not much else (since that poem seems to have concerned horticulture rather than agriculture)<sup>14</sup>, this can be taken as another programmatic statement about Virgil's epos. Though in some sense in the tradition of Nicander, the *Georgics* will avoid his relentlessly gloomy subject-matter<sup>15</sup> and perhaps his lack of poetic sparkle<sup>16</sup> by engagement with Italian landscape and Caesarian ideology. Once again, there is also a contemporary reference here. Aemilius Macer's Latin versions of Nicander's poems may have been written as early as the forties BC and are likely to have been available to Virgil in the *Georgics*<sup>17</sup>. Like the mythic *Argonautae* of Varro Atacinus, Macer's versions of the arid Nicander are a contemporary road not taken in the *Georgics*.

#### 4. Georgics 2.155-164. *Caesarian projects*

*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?*

Add to this so many outstanding cities and the labour of building, so many towns piled by hand on sheer rocks, and the rivers flowing below their ancient walls. Or should I mention the sea that washes the land to the east, or that to the west, or the great lakes – you, mighty Larius, and you, Benacus, surging with waves and a roar like that of the sea? Or should I mention the harbours and the barriers added to the Lucrine lake, and the sea indignant with its great murmurings at the point where the Julian waters resound far and wide with their waves flowing back and the tide from the Etruscan sea is sent into the channels of Avernus?

<sup>14</sup> See HARRISON 2004 for an argument that the 'Old Man of Corycus' episode in *georg.* 4.116-148 alludes extensively to Nicander's *Georgika*.

<sup>15</sup> For a similar recent assessment of Nicander see GUTZWILLER 2007, 103-106.

<sup>16</sup> Though it is worth noting that ancient critics had a high view of Nicander as a poet: Cicero *de orat.* 1.69; Quintilian *inst.* 10.1.56.

<sup>17</sup> See HOLLIS 2007, 101.

Here the *laudes* turn to the towns of Italy and to contemporary building projects. *Operumque laborem* perhaps suggests an analogy between Caesarian architectural constructions and their poetic counterparts: *laborem* not only compares the labours of builder and farmer (for agricultural *labor* cf. e.g. *georg.* 1.118; 1.145; 2.61) but also evokes the effort of Callimachean poetic enterprises (for *labor* in this sense cf. *georg.* 2.39; *ecl.* 10.1). The relationship between the physical landscape of Italy and the *Georgics* as the poem which celebrates it is clearly marked by the link between the *oppida* of 2.156 and the *oppida* through which the *Georgics* is sung at 2.176 (see below).

One key aspect of the Italian landscape in these lines is its great lakes of Como (*Lari*) and Garda (*Benace*): like the Italian river Clitumnus at 2.146, these clearly contrast favourably with the exotic, Eastern streams of the Ganges and Hermus. To these is added Lake Avernus and the Portus Iulius naval complex with connecting tunnels and waterways. The political significance of Agrippa's works there is clear, for the whole complex was created as preparation for the Naulochus naval campaign in 37/36 BCE (Suetonius *Aug.* 16.1; Dio 48.50.1-4); in this passage we are now after Actium in the period 31-29 (see below), and the naval battle hinted at here is Actium not Naulochus. The technique of associating the two victories at sea is deployed again at *Aen.* 8.682-684, where Agrippa is shown at Actium but wearing the naval crown awarded for Naulochus. There is a clear analogy between Agrippa's service to the Caesarian cause at the Portus Iulius and the poetic achievement of the *Georgics*: Virgil's poetic *labores* encompass and contain the landscape poetically from a Caesarian point of view, just as Agrippa's feats of engineering in 37/36 B.C. had mastered the landscape for Caesar in a more practical sense. Both Agrippa and Vergil thus contribute to the Caesarian project.

Finally, it is worth noting that these lines combine two landscapes fundamentally linked with the poet. Lakes Como and Garda look to the poet's nearby birthplace in the region of Mantua (cf. *georg.* 2.198; 3.11)<sup>18</sup>, while the Portus Iulius is close to Naples, the area where the poet locates himself at the end of the *Georgics* itself (4.563-564). This also combines the north and the south of the Italian peninsula: matching the Caesarian slogan *tota Italia*, the poet, his poem and the power of Caesar are presented as covering the whole of Italy<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Compare the similar link of Mantua and Como at *Aeneid* 10.205.

<sup>19</sup> For this idea in the Caesarian propaganda of the 30s BCE see still SYME 1939, 276-293.



5. Georgics 2.165-176. *Hesiod updated for Caesarian Rome*

*haec eadem argenti riuos aerisque metalla  
ostendit uenis atque auro plurima fluxit.  
haec genus acre uirum, Marsos pubemque Sabellam  
adsuetumque malo Ligurem Volcosque 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.  
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.*

This land can show streams of silver and mines of bronze in its veins and has flowed rich in gold. This land has borne a fierce race of men, the Marsi, the Sabine host, the Ligurian inured to suffering and the Volsci armed with javelins, and the Decii, the Marii and great men such as Camillus, the Scipios tough in war and you, greatest of Caesars, who now already victorious on the farthest shores of Asia divert the unwarlike Indian from the citadels of Rome. Hail, great mother of crops, land of Saturn, great mother of men: it is for you that I embark on these matters of ancient renown and my art, daring to open up the holy springs, and that I sing the song of Ascræ through the towns of Rome.

As already noted (see 2 above), the climax of the *laudes Italiae* matches the climax of the *Georgics* itself in presenting a sequence which follows encomium of Caesar in the East with a reference to the poet's own work. Here at last we approach the territory of Hesiod: the co-presence in the Italian landscape of silver, bronze and gold, clearly not a metallurgical observation<sup>20</sup>, picks up the use of these metals in the Hesiodic Myth of Ages (Hesiod *WD* 106-201)<sup>21</sup>. It seems that Hesiod's symbolic sequence of metallic decline (gold - silver - bronze - heroes - iron) is both truncated and deliberately mixed up: the first three metals are all present together in the paradisiacal landscape of Italy, decline seems out of the question, and it may even be suggested that a second age of heroes has now arrived, matching the 'new age' rhetoric of *ecl.* 4.35-36 (*erunt etiam altera bella / atque iterum ad Troiam magnus mittetur Achilles*)<sup>22</sup>. Here at least a key Hesiodic idea is being rewrit-

<sup>20</sup> I take it as rhetorically exaggerated encomium rather than the pessimistic lie argued by ROSS 1987, 118.

<sup>21</sup> It is also likely to recall the three declining ages (gold - silver - bronze) of Aratus *Phaen.* 114-136, modelled on Hesiod's, but the primacy of Hesiod here is suggested by 2.176 (*Ascraeumque ... carmen*).

<sup>22</sup> On the political context of this poem see HARRISON 2007, 36-44.

ten for its new ideological and poetical context: the poet of the *Georgics* is a new Caesarian Hesiod for contemporary Rome.

The list of great Italian tribes and heroes in 2.167-170 raises another literary source. The Marsians, Sabellians (Samnites), Ligurians and Volscians all belong to the early history of Rome, and all would have been found in the *Annales* of Ennius, the key poetic repository of that history for readers of the first century BCE<sup>23</sup>. A reference to the *Annales* is confirmed by the use here of the rare adjective *verutus*, 'javelin-bearing' (168), found before Virgil only in Lucretius (4.404) and Ennius (*ann.* 351 Skutsch), and the archaic form *Scipiadas*, found in Lucilius and Lucretius, is very likely to have been Ennian in origin<sup>24</sup>. The list of great Roman heroes climaxes in the presentation of the young Caesar, clearly engaged in his post-Actium Eastern campaigns (171: *iam victor*) as at *georg.* 4.560-561. The suggestion seems to be that just as the modern Caesar follows and surpasses (*maxime*) the legendary figures of early Rome, so Virgil in the *Georgics* is a new Ennius for a new Caesarian age<sup>25</sup>.

Caesar himself is also here presented as outdoing a great figure from the Hellenic past as well as the heroes of Ennius. As in the Eastern locations set out at the beginning of the *laudes Italiae* (2.136-139), now recalled in a neat element of ring-composition at its conclusion, the suggestion is that Caesar and his poet are surpassing the achievements of Alexander and his poets. Caesar is hailed as *maxime* (170), greater than *magnosque Camillos* (169) but also greater than *Alexander Magnus*, and his Eastern theatre of operations recalls and encompasses the furthest penetration of Alexander into Asia (171: *extremis Asiae ... in oris*) and even to India, famed scene of Alexander's operations but reached only diplomatically by the young Caesar<sup>26</sup>. Greatness is the quality of Caesar, but it is also the quality of Italy itself (173-174: *magna ... magna*) as set out in Virgil's poem which reflects and matches the landscape it describes: the *oppida* of 176 (as already noted) look back to those of 156, while the 'holy springs' of poetic inspiration (175: *sanctos ... fontis*) echo the 'holy stream' of the Italian river Clitumnus (147: *flumine sacro*). Suitably enough, given the prominent reference to Hesiod's birthplace in 176 Ascræum, the *sanctos ... fontis* also recall the evocation of the springs of the Muses at the beginning of Hesiod's *Theogony* (5-6: *καί τε λοεσσάμεναι*

<sup>23</sup> There is clear evidence of this for two of the four tribes in the fragments of the poem: cf. *Annales* 229 Skutsch (*Marsa manus*); 152 (*Volsculus*).

<sup>24</sup> SKUTSCH 1968, 148.

<sup>25</sup> This fittingly replays a move made by Virgil's didactic predecessor Lucretius, if the arguments of HARRISON 2002 are sound.

<sup>26</sup> For India and Augustus see ANDRE 1986.

τέρενα χροά Περμησοῦ ἢ Ἰππου κρήνης ἢ Ὀλμειοῦ ζαθέοιο), from which κρήνης seems to be echoed in *fontis* and ζαθέοιο in *sanctos*. Precisely as claimed at *georg.* 3.10-11 (*in patriam mecum / Aonio ... deducam vertice Musas*) in Virgil's poem the Hesiodic Muses are translated from the mountains of Boeotia to the lush landscape of Italy, and their Greek location is turned to the praise of Virgil's *patria* and its leader.

Thus the *Georgics* are presented as a new form of Hesiodic epos for a new location and a new political era. The troubled context of the *Works and Days*, where trickery and injustice seem to have affected Hesiod's property and situation, is replaced by the mighty conquests and just rule of a great leader. So too the genre of hexameter epos is optimistically renewed, tied closely to Italy and its regeneration: overcoming the mythological fancies of the Argonaut epics and the dry manuals of Nicander, whether in Hellenistic or contemporary Latin form, surpassing the frigid panegyrics of Alexander and even the great narratives of republican heroism in Ennius' *Annales*, the *laudes Italiae*, mirroring the *Georgics* as a whole, combine a revival of Hesiodic didactic epos with the contemporary encomium of Caesar and his re-nascent Rome.

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