Recent scholarship explores the influence of Vergil on Statius, for example, the ways the Thebaid engages with the Aeneid generally, more specifically the reformulation of Nisus and Euryalus, the interplay of the funeral games, and the pervasive allusions to female figures such as Creusa. Heinen shows how select poems of the Silvae recast the moral questions about the human need to control nature that are at the heart of the Georgics. The Georgics are echoed at the end of the Thebaid, in the envoi (Theb. 12.810–19) that allegorizes the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice (especially the backward glance, G. 4.485–91); however, a hitherto unnoticed allusion to the Georgics in the proem suggests that in addition to the epic Aeneid, the Georgics may also have inspired not only the end but the entire enterprise of the Thebaid.

The Georgics is a reticent poem that beckons continuators and invites amplification. For instance, in the epyllion, Vergil demurs to compose Orpheus’

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1 G. W. Williams (1986) on Statius’ anxious imitation of Vergil; with attention to structure, Pollmann (2001) explores the differences and similarities between the two epics; Ganiban (2007) is the first book-length study of the influence of the Aeneid to argue that “Statius’ Thebaid offers a critical reinterpretation of the politics and moral virtues of kingship in the Aeneid.”


3 Lovatt (2005) examines the relationship of the funeral games in book 6 to the rest of the poem and to funeral games in epic predecessors.

4 In her study of the relationship between Lucan’s De Bello Civili and the Thebaid, Malamud (1995) 25–6 observes the ways that the Thebaid is gendered and “takes on a life of her own” by which “Statius appears to be casting his poem as a Creusa or Eurydice.” Nugent (1996) takes the Hypsipyle episode as emblematic of the relationship between Statius and Vergil; on Creusa, see Nugent (1996) 70.

5 Heinen (2011) examines Silv. 1.1, 1.3, 2.2, 3.1, 4.2, and 4.3 in light of the first two books of the Georgics.

speech that convinced the rulers of the underworld to allow him entrance. In the words of Anderson, “Vergil prudently avoided the challenge of reproducing the ineffable song by which Orpheus conquered death.”\(^7\) Ovid, however, could not resist, and in his account of the myth he contrives twenty-three lines of oratio recta that insert precisely what Vergil omits (Met. 10.17–39).\(^8\) Likewise in Georgics 4, Vergil declines to write about the garden: \textit{uerum haec ipse equidem spatiis exclusus iniquis / praetereo atque aliis post me memoranda relinquo} (“but these topics, I myself, prevented by limited space, pass over and leave for others to recount after me,” G. 4.147–8).\(^9\) Columella takes his cue from these lines and composes 436 hexameters on the garden, his \textit{De Agricultura} 10.\(^10\) I submit that the beatitude of the farmer in the Georgics likewise extends an invitation to fulfillment that Statius cannot resist:

\begin{quote}
\begin{verse}
\textit{felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas}
\textit{atque metus omnis et inexorabile fatum}
\textit{subiecit pedibus strepitumque Acherontis auari.}
\textit{fortunatus et ille deos qui nouit agrestis}
\textit{Panaque Siluanumque senem Nymphaeae sorores.}
\textit{illum non populi fasces, non purpura regum}
\textit{flexit et infidos agitans discordia fratres,}
\textit{aut coniurato descendens Dacus ab Histro,}
\textit{non res Romanae perituraque regna; neque ille}
\textit{aut doluit miserans inopem aut inuidit habenti.}
\end{verse}
\textit{Verg. G. 2.490–9}
\end{quote}

Blessed is he who has been able to learn the causes of things and cast all fears and unyielding fate and the howls of greedy Acheron beneath his feet. Happy the man who knows the woodland gods and Pan and old Silvanus and sister nymphs.

\(^7\) Anderson (1972) 475.
\(^8\) For Perutelli (1995), Ovid corrects Vergil; for Pagán (2004), he supplements Vergil.
\(^9\) Citations of the Georgics are from Thomas (1988).
\(^10\) \textit{ut poeticis numeris explerem Georgici carminis omissas partes, quas tamen et ipse Vergilius significaverat, posteris se memorandas relinquere} (“\ldots so that I might complete, in verse, the omitted parts of the Georgics which nevertheless even Vergil himself said he would leave to posterity to recount,” De Agricultura 10 praef. 3). On references to Vergil throughout Columella’s treatise, see Cossarini (1977); Noè (2002) 163; on G. 4.147–8 and De Agricultura 10, see Pagán (2006) 30–36.