Dictynna

Revue de poétique latine

18 | 2021

Varia

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Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/dictynna/2515>

DOI: 10.4000/dictynna.2515

ISSN: 1765-3142

Publisher

Université de Lille

Electronic reference

Francis Cairns, "*Exsequiis* at Virgil *Aeneid* 7.5 and the Epitaph of Caieta (7.1-4)", *Dictynna* [Online], 18 | 2021, Online since 01 December 2021, connection on 18 December 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/dictynna/2515> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/dictynna.2515>

This text was automatically generated on 18 December 2021.

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Exsequiis at Virgil Aeneid 7.5 and the Epitaph of Caieta (7.1-4)

Francis Cairns

tu quoque litoribus nostris, Aeneia nutrix,
 aeternam moriens famam, Caieta, dedisti;
 et nunc servat honos sedem tuus, ossaque nomen
 Hesperia in magna, si qua est ea gloria, signat.
 at pius **exsequiis** Aeneas rite solutis, 5
 aggere composito tumuli, postquam alta quierunt
 aequora, tendit iter velis portumque relinquit. (*Aeneid* 7.1-7)

« You too, Caieta, nurse of Aeneas, in dying bestowed eternal fame on our shores, and even now your honour keeps its place,¹ and (if this is any glory) your name marks your bones in the great Western Land. But dutiful Aeneas, after conducting your funeral with due ceremony, and heaping up your tomb-mound, when the seas had calmed, set sail on his course and left the port. »

- 1 *Exsequiis* at *Aeneid* 7.5 has received its share of scholarly attention. Nicholas Horsfall opined that this was not the first appearance of *exsequiae* in epic/tragedy: “Unlikely that the noun (of notably convenient shape) was really introduced to high poetry as late as V.”² More recently *exsequiis* has been emended out of the Virgilian lexicon.³ The present paper proposes that the presence of *exsequiis* in the *Aeneid* can be explained and justified by the role of *exsequiae* in Roman elegy, and by the proximity of *exsequiis* to the epitaph of Caieta (*Aeneid* 7.1-4). Moreover, the history of *exsequiae* in elegy, once reconstructed, reveals both a hitherto unrecognised influence upon Virgil at this point in the epic, and a new possible implication of Caieta’s death and memorialising.

I. *Exsequiae* and its Gallan origin

- 2 *Exsequiis* is the right word at the right place in the *Aeneid*. When Virgil was composing the *Aeneid*, *ex(s)equiae* in Latin poetry was primarily an elegiac term. In contrast to its virtual absence from the *Aeneid*, it is found fairly frequently (16 times) in the elegies of

Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid, mostly (11 times) in pentameters. The statistics are: Tibullus 1 [in a pentameter]; Propertius 6 [4 in pentameters, 2 in hexameters]; Ovid⁴ 9 [6 in pentameters, 3 in hexameters].⁵ As an elegiac term *exsequiae* matches *Aeneid* 7.5's context (see §II), and its occurrences reveal its history within Roman elegy, which in turn illuminates the first lines of *Aeneid* 7. Four of the 11 pentameters from elegy which contain forms of *exsequiae* place them at their line-ends, thus creating polysyllabic pentameter endings:

nec qui det maestas munus in *exsequias* (Tibullus 2.4.44)

hic timor est ipsis durior *exsequiis* (Propertius 1.19.4)

plebei parvae funeris *exsequiae* (Propertius 2.13.24)

Dareique docent funeris *exsequiae* (Ovid *Tristia* 3.5.40)

- 3 In the past the standard view of such endings was that they are characteristic of earliness, and that, as time went on, they fell more and more out of favour.⁶ More recently I have argued that in early imperial elegy they are a sign of the influence of Cornelius Gallus upon his elegiac successors.⁷ *exsequiae* is a particularly plausible example of a term which can be identified as Gallan: it has no Catullan antecedent, and its use by all three Augustan elegiac successors of Gallus in polysyllabic pentameter endings is telling. Equally telling is the lack of any overlaps of content or context between the four examples, and likewise their employment of three different cases of *exsequiae*. Both factors suggest that imitation of any one of the three extant elegiac poets by another must be ruled out: that leaves Gallus as the source for all three. Again, while Propertius has many polysyllabic pentameter endings — a sign of the heavy influence on him of Gallus — Tibullus has notably fewer of them; this is in keeping with the relatively low amount of Gallan influence generally detectable in Tibullus, which gives greater prominence to those polysyllabic pentameter endings which he did employ. Ovid avoided polysyllabic pentameter endings completely in his earlier works; they appear only in the late works of his exile,⁸ when Ovid seems to have been reflecting on the parallel between his own fall from imperial grace and Gallus' falling-out with Augustus.
- 4 The notion that the elegiac use of *exsequiae* is Gallan in origin is further strengthened by the independently attested Gallan terms (emboldened)⁹ which accompany *exsequiae* in six pentameters of his successor elegists (including two of the line-end examples quoted above). Not all are equally impressive, but among them *nomen* is especially convincing since it is at the core of a group of related terms — *nomen*, *notus*, (and *ignotus*), *nota*, *nescio* and *nobilis* — which are especially diagnostic of Gallus.¹⁰

carmina: nuper ab *exsequiis* **carmina** rapta meis (Ovid *Tristia* 1.1.118, cf. 3.14.20)
durus: hic timor¹¹ est ipsis **durior** *exsequiis* (Propertius 1.19.4)
durus: **dure**, neque *exsequias* prosequere meas (Ovid *Tristia* 1.8.14)
munus: nec qui det maestas **munus** in *exsequias* (Tibullus 2.4.44)
nomen: maius ab *exsequiis* **nomen** in ora¹² venit (Propertius 3.1.24)
nomen: **nomen**, ab *exsequiis* quod dare fama¹³ solet (Ovid *Tristia* 4.10.122)
- 5 The SPTAE Gallan Index contains around 400 entries, a small but significant proportion of which are concepts, not Latin words. The fact that 6 of the 11 occurrences of *exsequiae* in Augustan elegy can readily be matched with items from the Index is an encouraging result. Gallan elegy as a whole must have had a larger vocabulary.
- 6 Even if the conclusion that *exsequiae* appeared in the works of Gallus seems plausible, there can still be no certainty about the phrase or phrases in which it was embedded; but a fair conjecture might identify one of them as *funeris exsequiae*, which is found as

the second hemistich of a pentameter at both Propertius 2.13.24 and Ovid *Tristia* 3.5.40 (above).¹⁴ The *Consolatio ad Liviam* provides further support; its author knew the works of Gallus,¹⁵ and he used this phrase in two pentameters, albeit in two different *sedes*:

funeris exsequiis adsumus omnis eques (202)
et sensi **exsequias funeris** ipse mei (460)

- 7 Neither of these lines looks to be derived from either of the comparable lines, viz.: Propertius 2.13.24 and Ovid *Tristia* 3.5.40 (both cited above); hence Gallus is the most likely source. Gallus may also have used *exsequiae* in the phrase *ab exsequiis* (cf. Propertius 3.1.24; 4.7.5 and Ovid *Tristia* 1.1.118).

II. Caieta's 'Gallan' epitaph

- 8 The four lines (quoted ad init.) which precede *Aeneid* 7.5 and begin Book 7 are in effect the epitaph of Aeneas' old nurse Caieta; the *pietas* which line 5's *pius ... Aeneas* attributes to him refers to his burial of Caieta and his implied epitaphic memorialising of her as a due return for her rearing of him. Hellenistic epigrams, both literary and epigraphic, survive which show other 'pious' nurslings performing the same service for other deceased nurses.¹⁶ Elegiac *exsequiae* at *Aeneid* 7.5 almost foot-notes the preceding four lines, which Virgil of necessity composed as hexameters, by characterising them as in spirit an elegiac funerary 'epigram'; in Virgil's day a funerary epigram on a tombstone could be called an *elogium* (supposedly derived from ἔλεγεῖον: see *OLD* s.v.) just as readily as an *epigramma*. All this would have been readily understood by Virgil's contemporaries: one of elegy's two primary functions was to lament and celebrate the dead, and elegiac couplets were for them the metre in which most epitaphs were composed. Line 5 would have been seen even more clearly as a genuflection to the canonical metre of epitaphs if the close association of *exsequiae* with Gallus, the pioneer of Roman elegy, proposed above is correct.
- 9 The Gallan ethos conveyed by *exsequiis* is even more extensive, if, as seems to be the case, the standard vocabulary of elegiac epitaphs long recognised in lines 1-4¹⁷ is supplemented by a Gallan colour. Given that very few lexemes are directly attested as Gallan, and that the number of those which (without reference to *Aeneid* 7.1-4) have been additionally advanced as plausibly Gallan is also limited, it is fairly striking that in these four lines five¹⁸ such lexemes surface, viz.:
1. **litoribus** (1) appears in the exact form independently identified as Gallan.¹⁹
 2. **nomen** (3) is one of the most iconic Gallan terms (*SPTAE* Gallan Index s.v.).
 3. **Hesperia** (4) is linked to Gallus' boasts of his world-wide reputation (*SPTAE* Gallan Index s.v.)
 4. **ossa** (3) is found in combination with Gallan *molliter*²⁰ at *Eclogue* 10.33: *o mihi tum quam molliter ossa quiescant*. These words are placed by Virgil in the mouth of his character 'Gallus', and they must reflect what Gallus himself had uttered (or what someone else had wished for him) in his own poetry. Ovid uses the phrase *molliter ossa cubent* as the second hemistich of three pentameters (*Amores* 1.8.108; *Heroides* 7.162;²¹ *Tristia* 3.3.76); in the third of these (*dicere Nasonis molliter ossa cubent*) he is anticipating his own death, perhaps using the same formula as Gallus had used of his own decease.
 5. **famam** (2) has a good claim to be Gallan: it rests on the close associations of *fama* with a number of other terms of certain or plausible Gallan pedigree. I begin with the Propertian examples.²²

a) *Famam, Roma, tuae non pudet historiae* (3.22.20)

This line links *fama* to that certain and influential Gallan term *historia* (cf. Gallus fr. 2.3 Courtney); for *non pudet* with *fama* cf. *occidit, Argivae fama pudicitiae*, 1.15.22.

b) *fallere te numquam, Galle, puella velit
dum tibi deceptis augetur fama puellis* (1.13.4-5)

Here Gallus himself appears.²³

c) *hic mihi conteritur vitae modus, haec mea famast,
hinc cupio nomen carminis ire mei* (1.7.9-10)
mendax fama, vaces: alius mihi nominis index (4.2.19)

- 10 These two Propertian loci unite *fama* with the key Gallan term *nomen*.²⁴ To counter the potential objection that *fama* and *nomen* are (near-)synonyms, and sit together for that reason, Ovid *Tristia* 5.12.39: *nominis et famae quondam fulgore trahebar* may be cited. Shortly before this juxtaposition Ovid makes his intent to allude to Gallus clear by reproducing with witty variations a signature Gallan phrase:

carmina nulla mihi veniunt aut qualia cernis,
digna sui *domini* tempore, *digna* loco (Ovid *Tristia* 5.12.35-36)
Cf.] tandem fecerunt c[ar]mina Musae
quae possem *domina* deicere *digna* mea. (Gallus fr. 2.6-7 Courtney).

Here Ovid is insisting that he, not the Muses, is the author of his own verses by replacing Gallus' *domina* with himself as (their) *dominus*.

- 11 Supplementary evidence that *fama* is Gallan comes from associations in the elegies of Propertius between it and other terms plausibly linked to Gallus: there are two linkages (3.9.33-34; 4.11.29) between *fama* and *tropaea* within a line or couplet, and there are single Propertian instances where *fama* is juxtaposed with other independently identified Gallan terms: with *luxuria* (1.16.11-12, cf. also *infamis* (9) and *nobilis* (10)); with *principiis* (2.6.15-16); with *labores* (2.23.7); and with *maxima* (4.2.42). These Propertian loci are only a selection: more could have been added, and yet more from Ovid; the Ovidian material often confirms the conclusions drawn from the Propertian examples.

- 12 Caieta's 'funeral epigram' now emerges as studded with (the emboldened) Gallan terms:

tu quoque **litoribus** nostris, Aeneia nutrix,
aeternam moriens **famam**, Caieta, dedisti;
et nunc servat honos sedem tuus, **ossa**que **nomen**
Hesperia in magna, si qua est ea gloria, signat. (*Aeneid* 7. 1-4)

III. A Possible Implication

- 13 Virgil was at work on the *Aeneid* in the 20s BC. Exactly when this particular portion of the epic was composed is unknown; but during that decade Gallus would still have been, in the minds of his contemporaries, the elegist par excellence; and Propertius and Ovid, and even to some extent Tibullus, would have been seen as his followers. Virgil was supremely conscious of the sources on which he drew, and he had enjoyed close personal contact with Gallus in the forties and thirties BC. Even if the assertion of Probus²⁵ that they had been fellow-pupils has no historical value, it is at least certain that Gallus was one of Virgil's two major patrons in the *Eclogues*, the other being Asinius Pollio. *Eclogues* 6 and 10 show that Virgil had a thorough knowledge of Gallus' works, and the two poems, especially 10, conduct, on behalf of hexameter bucolic, a literary 'polemic' with Gallan elegy. Although Virgil had moved into the patronage of

Maecenas by 37 BC, he will not have forgotten Gallus as one of his former patrons, any more than Propertius forgot Gallus as both his former patron and his literary model (2.34.91-92); even Ovid, who as far as we know had no personal contact with Gallus,²⁶ was unable to forget him as his model in elegy and (involuntarily) in life. The fall and suicide of Gallus must therefore have affected Virgil, as it did Propertius and Ovid.

- 14 Martin Dinter, expanding on the work of predecessors, has several times discussed the epigraphic and epitaphic aspects of *Aeneid* 7.1-4,²⁷ and how they might guide our understanding of them. Those of his observations which are relevant to this paper can be summarised most economically by selective quotation from his earliest contribution (of 2005):

“Caieta marks several transitions: the reader crosses a poetic border, a book division. But he progresses not only from one book roll to the next but also from the Odyssean half of the *Aeneid* (1-6) to the Iliadic (7-12)” (159).

“Caieta’s epigram forms part of an implicit programmatic discussion in the *Aeneid*: the four lines are marked out through their position, the presence of the poet’s person (at 7.5 distinguishes him from Aeneas), and the opening phrase *tu quoque*. Finally Caieta’s death demonstrates that Aeneas has truly grown up ... The alien coast has become *litoribus nostris*, a homeland (*Italia nutrix*). Aeneas ... has ‘come home’; he will need his nurse no more ... Virgil stresses that the Trojans’ arrival in Italy actually means a coming home. The epigrams are part of the undoing of Trojanness ...” (160).

- 15 These observations help to tease out a possible implication of the Gallan colour of Caieta’s epitaph. The episode of Caieta’s death and burial has long been seen as a transitional moment in Aeneas’ journey from Troy to Italy; as Dinter noted, Caieta’s epitaph is thus liminal, standing as it does at the centre point of the *Aeneid*, and marking the move from *Odyssey* to *Iliad* as the epic’s primary model,²⁸ and from Troy to Italy as Aeneas’ *patria*. The epitaph could also be seen as reflecting Virgil’s own literary journey: Dinter’s remark about the presence of “the poet’s person” in 7.5 (above) points the way here. Virgil, like some other Roman poets,²⁹ was interested in the ongoing phases of his own career.³⁰ I suggest that he may have been analogising himself in *Aeneid* 7.1-7 with Aeneas, and recalling his former association with Gallus, and his own literary progression from that point on. It started with the *Eclogues* — composed in part under the patronage of Gallus, and adhering to a literary type with many overlaps with Gallan elegy³¹ — and it moved on first to the intermediate *Georgics* (dedicated to Maecenas, but possibly initially intended also for Gallus?), and finally to his *Aeneid* commissioned by Augustus and in progress. Whether a patron could be called a *nutrix* in Latin is unclear. Domitius Marsus (fr. 3 Courtney; fr. 176 Hollis) described Caecilius Epirota as *tenellorum nutricula vatum*, either as a teacher or commentator³² or both, but not as a patron.³³ Nevertheless, the term *nutrix* is at least suggestive: might one aspect³⁴ of Caieta’s Gallan epitaph be that in it Virgil, as Gallus’ ‘*pius*’ *alumnus*, was paying a quiet implied tribute to his dead former patron³⁵ now that he had reached his true home in the ongoing *Aeneid*.

IV. Conclusions

- 16 I hope to have shown in §I that *exsequiis* is at home in *Aeneid* 7.5 as an elegiac and Gallan term which footnotes the elegiac ethos and content of Caieta’s preceding epitaph (1-4). In §II I have argued that Caieta’s epitaph too is linguistically Gallan, which makes

exsequiis doubly in place. Finally, in §III I have suggested, as an explanation of the Gallan language of *Aeneid* 7.1-5, that there is perhaps an additional, hitherto unobserved, element of liminality in Caieta's epigram: that Virgil saw Aeneas' move from Troy to Italy as analogous to his own literary move from the Gallan, and Gallus-sponsored, *Eclogues* via the *Georgics* to his own final destination, the *Aeneid*, sponsored by Augustus. Caieta's epitaph will thus also have functioned as a discreet tribute to Virgil's former patron, Cornelius Gallus.

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NOTES

1. I take this cryptic clause (on which see Horsfall (2000) 48) to mean that the honour given to Caieta (i.e. the naming of the port after her) persists to this day, since the place is still called 'Caieta'. The logic of lines 1-4, then, will be that Caieta gave the shores eternal fame, and the port gave her the lasting honour of being named after her.
2. Horsfall (2000) 51.
3. Gervais (2019-2020), impugning it as "prosaic" and an "intrusive gloss" (150), and proposing that Virgil actually wrote *at pius Aeneas sacris iam rite solutis* (148), but also pointing out vulnerabilities in two of his most prominent arguments for this: the unusual separation of *pius* and *Aeneas* in *Aen.* 5.7 is paralleled at *Aen.* 5.418 (151); and the incorrect order *Aeneas exequiis* in some MSS is explicable as a "banalizing scribal error" (149).
4. There is one example in the *Metamorphoses* (*ante urbem exequiae tumulique ignesque rogique*, 13.687) — as a tribute to Virgil?
5. There are also 4 examples (168, 202, 218, 460), all in pentameters, in the elegiac *Consolatio ad Liviam* (almost certainly of later date).
6. See SPTAE 146 n.6.
7. SPTAE 146-183 = Ch.5 'Gallan Metrics I: Polysyllabic Pentameter Endings'.
8. For a list of them see SPTAE 181-182.
9. Their Gallan credentials can be accessed at SPTAE 483-487: 'II. Index of Gallan Words and Concepts' (henceforth abbreviated to 'SPTAE Gallan Index') s.vv.
10. SPTAE Gallan Index s.vv.
11. *timor* (Prop. 1.19.4) does not appear in SPTAE Gallan Index, but *metuo* and *vereor* do.
12. *ora* (shore) features in SPTAE Gallan Index, but not *os* (mouth).
13. *fama* is not listed in SPTAE Gallan Index, but arguments are advanced below (§II) for its Gallan provenance; cf. also the thought-provoking *exsequiae tantum famam nomenque volentem* (Sil. Pun. 12.473).
14. The phrase appears at Digest 35.1.91pr (*illa autem 'si ad exsequias funeris mei uenerit' nisi post mortem impleri non possit*) in a discussion of conditions imposed (e.g.) by a testator; whether this gives it a legal flavour is unclear.
15. SPTAE 85-6, 415, 434-436, 439.
16. E.g. Callim. AP 7.458 = 49 HE; Dioscor. AP 7.456 = 29 HE; CEG nos 534; 571.
17. For *tu quoque* (1), which is, if not exclusively, at least strongly evocative of epitymbic epigrams, see (e.g.) Barchiesi (1979) 10; Dinter (2011) 12-18; (2013) 308-314 (with earlier bibliography).
18. The last two (*ossa* and *fama*) are not included in the SPTAE Gallan Index, but are first argued for here.
19. SPTAE Gallan Index s.v. *litus* etc.; SPTAE esp. 154-155, 172-175, 200.
20. SPTAE Gallan Index s.v., and s.v. *mollis*.
21. Knox (1995) 228 recognised that Gallus was Ovid's source.
22. For evidence of the Gallan origin of the terms emboldened in the remainder of this section see SPTAE Gallan Index s.vv.
23. Add also the combined appearance of *fama* and *pudor* at Sulpicia [Tib.] 3.13.1-2, observed and discussed as Gallan by Fabre-Serris (2017).
24. A third (*nec minus haec nostri notescet fama sepulcri*, Prop. 2.13.37) involves a cognate.
25. *Commentarius in Vergili Bucolica et Georgica* 328.2 Hagen.
26. Hollis (2007) 309.
27. Dinter (2005) 159-160; (2011) 12-13; (2013) 308-310.
28. See, however, Cairns (1989) 177-214 = Ch. 8: 'The Aeneid as Odyssey', redefining the roles of the two Homeric epics in the Aeneid.

29. E.g. Prop. 3.5.19-47; Hor. *Epist.* 1.1.1-11; Ov. *Tr.* 4.8.1-14; Ciris 1-9; cf. Philod. *AP* 11.41 = 17 *GPh.*; *AP* 5.112 (= 18 *GPh.*).
30. Verg. *Ecl.* 6.1-8; Verg. *Georg.* 4.559-566; Kayachev (2013). Virgil's supposed epitaph (*Mantua me genuit ... cecini pascua, rura, duces*, *VSD* 36) and the false *ille ego qui incipit* of the *Aeneid* incorporate this theme retrospectively.
31. Hence the literary 'polemic' over bucolic and elegy between Virgil and Gallus in *Ecl.* 10, and between Propertius and Virgil at Prop. 2.34.67-76.
32. See Suet. *De Gram. et Rhet.* 16.3.
33. For various opinions on the fragment of Domitius Marsus, and on Caecilius Epirota, see Courtney (1993) 302; Kaster (1995) 188-190; Hollis (2007) 309.
34. For recent suggestions about further/alternative aspects see Skempis (2010) and Seider (2012).
35. Virgil's other major patron of the *Eclogues*, Asinius Pollio, was alive and flourishing at the time of Virgil's death.
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ABSTRACTS

This paper argues that, contrary to what has recently been proposed, *exsequiis* is at home in *Aeneid* 7.5 as an elegiac and Gallan term which footnotes the elegiac ethos and Gallan language of Caieta's preceding epitaph (1-4). The paper also suggests that, in addition to its other recognised liminal aspects, the Gallan epitaph may show Virgil reflecting on his move from the Gallus-sponsored *Eclogues* via the *Georgics* to the *Aeneid*, sponsored by Augustus, and thus pay a discreet tribute to his former patron.

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Keywords: Virgil, Aeneid, Caieta, ex(s)equiae, Cornelius Gallus

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