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### **Citation**

Pieper, C. H. (2021). Tiberius aequatus Augusto: Augustan Intertexts for Tiberius' moderatio in Velleius Paterculus 2.94.1 and 2.122.1. *Philologus*, 165(2), 241-259. doi:10.1515/phil-2021-0103

Version: Publisher's Version

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Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3243980>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).



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## *Tiberius aequatus Augusto*

Augustan Intertexts for Tiberius' *moderatio* in Velleius Paterculus 2.94.1 and 2.122.1

<https://doi.org/10.1515/phil-2021-0103>

**Abstract:** This paper comments on the tension between constant *imitatio* and refused *aemulatio gloriae* in Tiberius' attitude towards Augustus in Velleius Paterculus' *History*. I argue that Tiberius is equalling and eventually even surpassing Augustus *precisely because* he refuses to compete with him, let alone surpass him. In order to do so, I focus on two hitherto neglected Augustan intertexts, which are referenced at very distinct moments of Velleius' portrayal of Tiberius. The first is the moment when Tiberius appears on the political stage at the age of 19 (2.94.1); the second is the last mentioned event of his life before he succeeds Augustus, namely his third triumph in AD 12 (2.122.1).

**Keywords:** Tiberius, Velleius Paterculus, *aemulatio*, Augustus, role models

## 1. Introduction

In Velleius Paterculus' *History*, there is not the slightest doubt about Tiberius' authority and his ability to govern Rome. He is the culmination and guarantee of the restoration that Augustus had initiated and which brought a long-lasting period of moral decline in Roman politics to an end. In the words of Martin Bloomer, Velleius Paterculus presents Rome's history as a teleological "*festinatio ad Tiberium*".<sup>1</sup> Tiberius is Augustus' ideal successor because he closely resembles him

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bloomer (2011) 97–98; on Tiberius in Velleius, see Hellegouarc'h (1974) 84–86; Woodman (1975) 290–291 and (1977) *passim*; Kuntze (1985); Schmitzer (2000) 293–306; Christ (2001); Gowing (2005) 37–41, (2007) 412–414 and (2010); Cowan (2009); Vout (2012); Balmaceda (2014).

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both in his character and political agenda.<sup>2</sup> Most importantly, his natural authority is so great that everyone can immediately see in him the future *princeps*, even though Tiberius willingly stands back in order not to disturb Augustus' position as long as his stepfather lives. Thereby Velleius' narrative compellingly excludes any alternative scenario according to which another member of the Augustan family (or even another Roman outside the inner Augustan circle) could have succeeded the founder of the Julian dynasty. In other words: Tiberius does not have to compete for his leadership, either with rivals or with the weight of Augustus' legacy.<sup>3</sup>

This, however, is not how most modern historians have described the difficult process of Augustus' succession, which in fact has been a contested issue for decades with many stakeholders involved. As Alison Cooley has recently argued, "one of the challenges faced by Tiberius was that there was no clearly defined Principate to which he could be the successor".<sup>4</sup> Instead, so she continues, the years of Augustus' authority and the belief in the divine predestination of his reign developed in such a way that at a certain stage it felt natural that someone had to be found to succeed him in this unique position. Ultimately, this successor turned out to be Tiberius; but he knew of course that the *princeps* had favoured other candidates (Marcellus, Agrippa, his grandchildren Lucius and Gaius) and only turned his eye to him when these favourites had died. And even towards the end of Augustus' life, when Tiberius had finally become the chosen successor, many people in Rome would have preferred Germanicus to his adoptive father Tiberius, and for a short time even Agrippa's son Postumus was his rival.<sup>5</sup> Thus, when the moment of succession approached, Tiberius was in need of legitimizing his new

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<sup>2</sup> The encomium at Vell. Pat. 126 is one of the first extant texts to mention the concept of *pax Augusta*, cf. Mutschler (2008) 136 (on coins the term seems to appear for the first time in Claudian times, according to a search in *Online Coins of the Roman Empire*, <http://numismatics.org/ocre/>, accessed 1 February 2021; of course, the concept was nevertheless central to Augustus' self-representation, famously on his *Ara pacis*, cf. Galinsky 2012, 84–109; Stern 2015). Cf. Woodman (1975) 290–291 (with reference to the concept of *revocare* in Vell. Pat. 2.89.3–4 and 2.126.2). See Gowing (2007) 412 on the combination of *virtus et fortuna* in the portrayal of both Augustus (2.74.4) and Tiberius (2.97.4). Cf. for Augustus and Tiberius in Velleius also Christ (2001) 181; Domainko (2018) 98–108, and for Tiberius' virtues Kuntze (1985) and Balmaceda (2014). The idea that Augustus' program of *restitutio rei publicae* is accomplished with Tiberius is expressed in the final prayer (2.131; see below n. 65), esp. *protegitte hunc statum, hanc pacem, hunc principem*, with Wiegand (2013) 142 and Domainko (2018) 70–71.

<sup>3</sup> Galimberti (2015) 298 rightly labels Velleius' over-enthusiastic portrayal of Augustus "un corretto all'immagine altrettanto deformata in *peius* che troviamo in Tacito, Suetonio e Cassio Dione".

<sup>4</sup> Cooley (2019) 72.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Levick (1976) 47–67 (on "Rehabilitation: The Final Struggle for the Succession"); Galimberti (2015) 303 points to the fact that Augustus adopted Tiberius only in AD 4.

position, all the more so because Augustus' claim that he had freed the state from oppression by a faction (cf. *Mon. Anc.* 1: *rem publicam a dominatione factionis oppressam in libertatem vindicavi*) – a claim that would make him nothing more than an ordinary citizen with exceptional *auctoritas* – was undermined by the *princeps'* overt dynastic attempts to order his succession within his own family.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, Augustus' shadow turned out to be an ambiguous legacy for Tiberius. While he needed to anchor his authority in his predecessor's principate, it was also important to keep a certain distance from Augustus and his restrictive regime of the last decade of his life, so that those Romans who still cherished wishful memories of the Republic would not oppose the politics of the new *princeps*. Tiberius therefore decided to choose *moderatio* as his “representative mode”<sup>7</sup> (which less favourable interpreters have chastised as *dissimulatio*) with the aim of inheriting his stepfather's *statio* (“position” in the state).<sup>8</sup> He showed himself respectful to the senate, avoided public representative events so as not to invite comparison with the oversized shadow of Augustus, and argued for harmonization between his own times and the Republican past. Andrew Pettinger has shown that, while this strategy was at first a reaction to the events around Tiberius' succession (that is to the years AD 14 and 15), “the benefits of the model advanced here extend well beyond AD 16”.<sup>9</sup>

Velleius Paterculus' *History* bears out Pettinger's claim: it shows the same interest in legitimizing Tiberius' principate with the help of his imitation of the Augustan model, while at the same time the work also presents his alleged reluctance to compete openly with it.<sup>10</sup> Tiberius' imitation of Augustan concepts in the

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6 Domainko (2018) 112–113. She reads Velleius' work as one that wants to offer the readers closure and stability, but also remind them of the openness of the historical process of transformation in which they are involved. I follow her especially in the first claim. Cf. also Pettinger (2012) 3 and, still very useful, Millar (1973). With regard to the widely used term *res publica restituta*, Millar (1973) 63–64 remarks that it is only attested twice for the Augustan era, and in both cases there are problems of transmission that make the readings not 100 % secure: in the *Laudatio Turiae* and the *Fasti Praenestini* (for 12 January).

7 Cf. Vout (2012) 73. Woodman (1977) 222–224 reviews the historical evidence. For Tiberian propaganda with regard to his *moderatio*, see Elefante (1997) 510 and, with regard to *Tac. Ann.* 3.50.2, Woodman/Martin (1996) 367–368 ad loc. (with reference to the term *moderatio* in Tiberius' “imperial correspondence ..., on official documents ... and on coinage”).

8 Cf. Cooley (2019) 75–76 with reference to Vell. Pat. 2.124.2. Cf. also Pettinger (2012) 162, who analyses Tiberius' conduct after Augustus' death not in terms of dissimulation, but of a reaction to concrete threats on his life in case the succession were to fail: “anything less than supreme power would have meant his assassination” (216).

9 Pettinger (2012) 216.

10 Cf. also Vout (2012) 69 on Tiberius being “measured in terms of similarity” with Augustus. Cowan (2009) 476–478 allows for more nuance in Velleius: Tiberius partly followed the Augustan mod-

*History* has been widely recognized, as has the presentation of Tiberius as a competent and authoritative, yet utterly “reluctant *princeps*”.<sup>11</sup> Velleius presents Tiberius as a politician who equals the virtues of his predecessor not through ambitious *aemulatio gloriae*, but through a process of natural, almost unintentional *imitatio*. Velleius conveys the impression that Tiberius’ predestination for his position is independent of the kind of striving that had been at the core of political careers in Republican times.

In what follows I will comment on this tension in the portrayal of Tiberius between imitation (which is based on natural predisposition as well as inborn virtue and authority) and refused emulation (which would aim at outdoing any rival in order to enhance one’s own reputation). I argue that Velleius’ Tiberius is equalling and eventually even surpassing Augustus *precisely because* he refuses to compete with him, let alone surpass him. I will focus on two hitherto neglected Augustan intertexts in the portrayal of Tiberius, which occur at very distinct moments of Velleius’ narrative. The first is the moment when Tiberius appears on the political stage at the age of 19 (2.94.1); the second is the last mentioned event of his life before he succeeds Augustus, namely his third triumph in AD 12 (2.122.1).<sup>12</sup> Before I turn to them, however, some remarks about Velleius’ conceptual use of Republican *aemulatio* might be helpful.

## 2. Velleius and *aemulatio*

Exemplarity is a driving force in Velleius’ work.<sup>13</sup> His narrative highlights the lives of exemplary men and uses them as an ordering principle of his chronological narrative.<sup>14</sup> Yet exemplarity comes with emulation. For the Republican

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el, but partly also deviated from it. According to her, this has to do with a second major paradigm of Velleius’ text: Tiberius is both an *alter Augustus* and an embodiment of the *optimus princeps* known from Hellenistic philosophy (479–484). Cf. also Domainko (2018) 112–113.

11 Thus the title of Hillard (2011).

12 For the allusive character of Velleius’ work, see Rich (2011) 86.

13 Cf. Bloomer (2011), esp. 114–119; cf. also Gowing (2007) 414 and Hillard (2011) 221. Cf. Langlands (2018), who powerfully argues that the discursive system of exemplarity of the Republic did not collapse in the first century AD, but continued to be a productive tool for evaluating politics far into the Imperial period.

14 The narrative regularly introduces great men (partly in pairs) with short biographical sketches: they represent the political development of Rome in their generation; cf. Tiberius Gracchus/Scipio Nasica (2.2–4), C. Gracchus (2.6–7), Marius/Sulla (2.11–28, with in between Drusus, 2.13–14), Pompey/Caesar (2.29–56, with in between Cicero/Cato, 2.34–36). Cf. e.g. Hellegouarc’h (1974) 76 (Republican history as “actions d’une série de personnages”); Cogitore (2009); Pelling (2011). Gowing

period, Velleius deals much with emulative competition between Roman politicians and generals, which was a crucial element of Rome's political system.<sup>15</sup> This potentially good *aemulatio*,<sup>16</sup> which incites virtuous behaviour and has allowed Rome to develop the military strength that helped it conquer the world, nevertheless carries in itself the danger of becoming harmful if Romans direct it, in an unproductive manner, against each other. In this case it no longer serves the well-being of the state, but rather the individuals' egoistic aims and forms a danger for the necessary *concordia* among the citizens.<sup>17</sup> Just as previous historians like Sallust had done,<sup>18</sup> Velleius posits that political decadence began in Rome after Carthage's fall in 146 bc: from this moment onwards competition for authority and renown, driven by destructive *invidia*, quickly developed into striving for personal motives like *luxuria* and *ambitio*.<sup>19</sup> In the *History*, Pompey is an extreme example of the consequences of such negative emulation: he is so ambitious that this character trait seriously affects other, potentially positive characteristics. Instead of becoming an *exemplum* of political virtue, his conduct arouses the jealousy of his contemporaries (*persona ut exemplo nocet, ita invidiam auget*, 2.31.4). From the moment he enters the political stage, his desire for dominion is so disproportional that it brings the system of Republican *aemulatio* almost to its breakdown. Velleius finds a striking formulation for this: instead of accepting that competition needs other competitors to function properly, Pompey wants to be in a category of his own and does not accept possible rivals (*in quibus rebus primus esse debebat, solus esse cupiebat*, 2.33.3).<sup>20</sup> Striving to be a *primus* among his fellow senators is what a Republi-

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(2007) 415 explains that the structure invites the reader “to think comparatively as well, to assess one character in terms of another”.

15 Among the countless publications on this aspect, see Wiseman (1985), Hölkeskamp (2004) and recently Bernard (2018).

16 For the ambivalent evaluation of *aemulatio* between “competition and co-operation” in antiquity, see Wiseman (1985) and the recent overview by Damon/Pieper (2018).

17 The terminology I use is partly indebted to the digression on cultural *aemulatio* in 1.17.5–6 (see below). According to some recent interpreters, what Velleius says in this passage is also applicable as a reflection on political development: cf. Wiegand (2013) 109–111; Bloomer (2011) 114 calls it “a lesson in historiographical method and explanation”.

18 Cf. for a brief overview Kierdorf (2003) 72–73, who suggests that Sallust follows C. Fannius in this.

19 Cf. Biesinger (2016) 305–309 on the negative effect of *privata luxuria* which is contrasted with previous *publica magnificentia* in Vell. Pat. 2.1.2. On *invidia* as a driving force, see the list of examples in Bloomer (2011) 115.

20 An anonymous reviewer reminds me of a parallel in Luc. 1.125–126 (*nec quemquam iam ferre potest Caesarve priorem / Pompeiusve parem*). For the ambivalent portrait of Pompey in Velleius, see Seager (2011), esp. 290–291 and 303; Domainko (2018) 100 sees him as a mostly negative figure.

can contest should aspire to; but the wish to be the only person worthy of honours is the attitude of a monarch.

Things change with the principate of Augustus. As *aemulatio* has proven to be disruptive for the state, the *princeps*, who allegedly ends moral decline and restores Rome's lost political culture,<sup>21</sup> also redefines the role of competition, and Tiberius follows him in this. In Velleius' view *aemulatio* has not become completely obsolete under the Julian rulers, but its stakes are slightly less elevated. Bloomer has argued convincingly that, as the highest authority in the state is now in the hands of the *principes* Augustus and Tiberius, there is no longer room for envy-driven competition: "wonder at the past and at the emperor is associated with, and by implication causes and strengthens, a *restrained* rivalry among the present generation".<sup>22</sup> The best examples of successful politicians in Augustan and Tiberian times are those who work hard for their career, but happily accept that they are subordinated to the *principes*.<sup>23</sup>

Bloomer's interpretation of how this changed attitude towards *aemulatio* in Velleius' Augustan narrative works is corroborated by Velleius' portrayal of Tiberius himself.<sup>24</sup> In contrast to the egoistic emulation of many of the main figures of the late Republic, Velleius depicts Tiberius as a "reluctant *princeps*", who prefers to be "an equal citizen [rather] than a distinguished citizen" (*potius aequalem civem quam eminentem*, Vell. Pat. 2.124.2) and accepts his new role of *princeps* only when persistently urged by all Romans.<sup>25</sup> The reason that he nevertheless is elevated to the highest authority without even showing any inclination of striving for it lies in his natural greatness, which is so overwhelming that it prevents any

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With regard to the role of competitors, see Damon/Pieper (2018) 7: "In the simplest scenario the other is much like oneself".

21 Cf. Domainko (2018) 70 on Vell. Pat. 2.89.3 with its many composita starting with the prefix *revocata*, *restituta*, *redactum*, *revocata*).

22 Bloomer (2011) 116 (my emphasis). As said above, it is obvious that Velleius' depiction is reductive in that it excludes references to competition for Augustus' succession. Cf. Judge (2019) for the historical Augustus' indecisiveness as to whether or not he should abandon Rome's tradition "to win power in open competition" and replace it with family heritage.

23 An anonymous reviewer reminds me that this attitude is reinforced by law, e.g. the new principle that the emperor holds the auspices, not the commander in the field. The prototype of this new exemplarity is Agrippa whom Velleius characterises as *parendi*, *sed uni*, *scientissimus* (2.79.1). The alternative Velleius suggests is to renounce competition for honour and to prefer *otium*; cf. Wiegand (2013) 136 (examples of Maecenas, Sentius Saturninus and Piso Pontifex).

24 Schmitzer (2000) 231 has called Velleius' extenuation of the historically problematic relationship between Augustus and Tiberius "vielleicht das eklatanteste ... Beispiel von Geschichtsklitterung in der gesamten *Historia Romana*".

25 Hillard (2011). His analysis of 2.124.2 is at 224.

potential rival from taking up arms (*tantaque unius viri maiestas fuit ut ne bonis \*\*\* neque contra malos opus armis fuerit*, 2.124.1).<sup>26</sup>

The paradox of Tiberius being elevated higher than all others even though he wants nothing more than to be equal is a recurrent feature in Velleius' "Tiberian narrative".<sup>27</sup> He had demonstrated the same uncompetitive attitude most noticeably when withdrawing from Rome and heading to Rhodes in 6 bc, as a reaction to Augustus' grandson Gaius taking up the *toga virilis* and Lucius "already showing his (future) strength". Whilst later sources like Tacitus and Suetonius speculate about less altruistic reasons,<sup>28</sup> Velleius motivates Tiberius' absence from Rome with his ineffable *pietas*, a feeling of responsibility for Augustus' family – he does not want his own light to overshadow the development of the two youngsters:

*brevi interiecto spatio Ti. Nero duobus consulatibus totidemque triumphis actis tribuniciae potestatis consortione aequatus Augusto, civium post unum, et hoc quia volebat, eminentissimus, ducum maximus, fama fortunaque celeberrimus et vere alterum rei publicae lumen et caput, mira quadam et incredibili atque inenarrabili pietate, cuius causae mox detectae sunt cum Gaius Caesar sumpsisset iam virilem togam, Lucius item maturus esset viribus, ne fulgor suus orientium iuvenum obstaret initiis, dissimulata causa consilii sui commeatum ab socio atque eodem vitrico adquiescendi a continuatione laborum petiit.*<sup>29</sup>

Soon afterwards Tiberius Nero, who had now held two consulships and celebrated two triumphs; who had been made the equal of Augustus by sharing with him the tribunician power; the most eminent of all Roman citizens save one (and that because he wished it so); the greatest of generals, attended alike by fame and fortune; veritably the second luminary and the second head of the state – this man, moved by some strangely incredible and inexpressible feeling of affection for Augustus, sought leave from him who was both his father-in-law and stepfather to rest from the unbroken succession of his labours. The real reasons for this were soon made plain. Inasmuch as Gaius Caesar had already assumed the toga of manhood, and Lucius was reaching maturity, he concealed his reason in order that his own glory might not stand in the way of the young men at the beginning of their careers.

<sup>26</sup> The lacuna has not yet been filled in a satisfying manner, see Woodman (1977) 221 ad loc. for due scepticism towards earlier emendations. One might think of *Mon. Anc.* 34.3 as a parallel: *auctoritate omnibus praestiti, potestatis autem nihilo amplius habui quam ceteri qui mihi quoque in magistratu conlegae fuerunt*. Cf. Rowe (2013): I am not fully convinced by his restrictive understanding of *auctoritas* as referring to the position of *princeps senatus* only.

<sup>27</sup> Terminology by Woodman (1977); the term has been relativized by Pelling (2011).

<sup>28</sup> E.g. because of the behaviour of his wife (and Augustus' daughter) Julia (Tac. *Ann.* 1.53.2); or out of fear for possible measures taken against him by the two grandsons (Cass. Dio 55.9.5). Suet. *Tib.* 10.2 says that the reason which we find in Velleius was the one Tiberius himself wanted to spread – *sed postea*. Cf. Herbert-Brown (1998) for a thorough treatment (and partial defence of Tiberius against Tacitus' charges).

<sup>29</sup> Vell. Pat. 2.99.1–2; the text is Woodman's with the exception of *maturus esset viribus* (conjecture of the edition Zweibrücken 1780) instead of *virile* (Withof's emendation, accepted by Woodman) for the transmitted *viris*. Tr. Shipley (1924).



The first part of this elaborate period makes Tiberius' modesty and loyalty towards Augustus (and his grandchildren) even more striking. After having mentioned Tiberius' second consulship and second triumph, Velleius emphasizes the conferment of the *tribunicia potestas* – the honour that Augustus held no fewer than 37 times until his death. It was part of his official title and thereby one of the most striking symbols of his extraordinary position, even if, or rather precisely because, “[t]ribunicia potestas signified the possession of official authority without the holding of office”.<sup>30</sup> With the conferral of the *tribunicia potestas* Tiberius' ascent to Augustus-like authority is visible for all: he is now equal to Augustus (*aequatus Augusto*).<sup>31</sup> If Augustus still holds a more eminent position, this is not because he is more virtuous or possesses higher authority, but because Tiberius willingly stands back (*post unum, et hoc quia volebat, eminentissimus*).<sup>32</sup> The last quotation seals Tiberius' non-competitive character. At the same time, he confirms an important element of his stepfather's self-representation: Augustus outdoes Tiberius not in essence, but in gradation; he therefore can truly be labelled a *primus inter pares*.<sup>33</sup>

### 3. *Tiberius imitator non aemulus*

I now turn to the two passages that form the core of my argument. Both present Tiberius as a thorough imitator of Augustus, yet one who does not want to emulate the venerated model. Furthermore, both are crucial for Velleius' portrayal of Tiberius in that they form the beginning and the end of his career under Augustus' auspices. Thirdly and similarly to what I have argued in discussing the last quota-

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<sup>30</sup> Gruen (2007) 40.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Pettinger (2012) 144: “Augustus was, in fact, organizing his powers over time into a defined totality; on each occasion that Tiberius received a form of power a new aspect of the Principate was established: *statio imperii*. ... Augustus was manufacturing a structure with which to guide succession”. Galimberti (2015) 305 suggests that the dominion (“regno”) of Tiberius began for Velleius with this moment, i.e. 12 bc. There are more parallels between Tiberius and Augustus in the narrative, of course; to mention just one: Tiberius' return to Rome in ad 4 leads to “incredible happiness in Rome” (2.103.1), as had Augustus' in 29 bc (2.89.1), cf. Bocchi (2015) 39–40.

<sup>32</sup> Woodman (1977) 116 ad loc. calls this “an essential feature of Tiberius' psychology” and links the passage to 2.124.2 as well.

<sup>33</sup> For the claim to be the *primus* cf. Roller (2009) 227: “Thus the actions of the *primus* can be taken as exemplary – because these actions may ultimately offer no new structures, no novel values or practices that might transform the *mos maiorum* itself and thereby render past actions and values incomprehensible. On the contrary, they re-affirm the validity of traditional values”. He quotes Alföldy (1986) 365: “Wer innerhalb der Gesellschaftsordnung Roms etwas Außergewöhnliches werden wollte, der mußte sich gewohnheitsmäßig verhalten”.

tion, both allude to Augustan intertexts in order to consolidate the link between the new *princeps* and his predecessor.

Velleius suggests Tiberius' and Augustus' equality from the first moment when Tiberius enters the public stage of Roman politics, which in Velleius' text is during his *quaestura* in 23 bc.<sup>34</sup> In a grandiose period Velleius introduces his new protagonist<sup>35</sup> as follows:

*hoc tractu temporum Ti. Claudius Nero – quo trimo (ut praediximus) Livia, Drusi Claudiani filia, despondente Ti. Nerone (cui ante nupta fuerat), Caesari nupserat – innutritus caelestium praeceptorum disciplinis, iuvenis genere, forma, celsitudine corporis, optimis studiis maximoque ingenio instructissimus, qui protinus quantus est, sperari potuerat, visuque praetulerat principem, quaestor undevicesimum annum agens capessere coepit rem publicam, maximamque difficultatem annonae ac rei frumentariae inopiam ita Ostiae atque in urbe mandatu vitrici moderatus est ut per id quod agebat, quantus evasurus esset, eluceret.*<sup>36</sup>

At this period Tiberius Claudius Nero appeared: I have already told how, when he was three years of age, his mother Livia, the daughter of Drusus Claudianus, had become the wife of Caesar, her former husband, Tiberius Nero, himself giving her in marriage to him. Nurtured by the teaching of divine preceptors, a youth equipped in the highest degree with the advantages of birth, personal beauty, commanding presence, an excellent education combined with native talents, Tiberius gave early promise of becoming the great man he now is, and already by his look revealed the *princeps*. In his nineteenth year, he began his public life as quaestor; acting on the orders of his stepfather, he so skilfully regulated the difficulties of the grain supply and relieved the scarcity of corn at Ostia and in the city that it was apparent from his execution of this commission how great he was destined to become.

Immediately, so Velleius informs his readers, the young man's suitability for a leading role in the state is noted by all.<sup>37</sup> Among positive characteristics such as

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**34** For the historical events of Tiberius' early career see Levick (1971). Previously, Tiberius has been mentioned by Velleius when his mother Livia flees with him and his father, her first husband, during the Civil War; at this point, Velleius embarks on a meditation on the strange movements of fate, which would make Livia flee from her future husband, Octavian, while she has the future *vindex Romani imperii* in her arms (2.75.3). Schmitzer (2000) 146 interprets this as an elevation of Tiberius at the cost of Augustus, who would have been willing to sacrifice his future successor. In my view, this is an overinterpretation: the formulation itself does not offer evidence for such a critical view on Augustus. Rather, as Welch (2011) 309–311 has shown, it is one of the passages where Velleius depicts Livia in utterly positive terms. Cf. also Galimberti (2015) 300.

**35** Elefante (1997) 441 ad loc. (“protagonista dell’opera fino alla fine”), and *ibid.* for the “lungo, complesso periodo”.

**36** Vell. Pat. 2.94.1–3. Text: Woodman (1977); tr. Shipley (1924), slightly adapted.

**37** Elefante (1997) 441 ad loc. rightly links the passage to Greek descriptions of monarchs and notes “l’aspetto regale del giovane”; Woodman (1977) 97–98 ad loc. connects it among others to depictions of Alexander the Great.

family descent, outward appearance, talent and education, Velleius adds the striking detail that Tiberius “began to undertake affairs of the state as quaestor when he was in his 19<sup>th</sup> year” (*quaestor undevicesimum annum agens capessere coepit rem publicam*). This mentioning of his age immediately follows the remark that the young man already showed every sign of becoming a future *princeps*, which invites readers to make a connection between the two. And indeed, the formulation *undevicesimum annum agens* also suggests Tiberius’ destiny to be Augustus’ successor in the future, for it is a clear allusion to the beginning of Augustus’ political career. Velleius has mentioned that Octavian was the same age when he entered politics.<sup>38</sup> More prominently for the intended reader, however, a similar wording forms the incipit of Augustus’ *Res gestae* (*Annos undeviginti natus exercitum privato consilio et privata impensa comparavi*) – a text which Cowan has defined as a challenge and guideline for Tiberius and which Velleius’ readers must have known, not least because of its visibility in the Roman cityscape.<sup>39</sup> As Karl Christ has remarked, it is noteworthy that Velleius dates Tiberius’ first step towards his future dominion (*capessere coepit rem publicam*, marked by alliteration) to the year 23 and not already three years earlier when he was serving as military tribune, or even six years earlier, when he participated in Augustus’ *triplex triumphus* (given the emphasis on his military talents, these would have been plausible options).<sup>40</sup> I assume that the reason for being silent about these earlier moments is that the year 23 establishes the welcome intra- and intertextual link with Augustus’ first appearance on the political stage: via this link, Velleius depicts Tiberius as the equal of Augustus from the very beginning of his political career.<sup>41</sup>

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**38** Vell. Pat. 2.61.1: *cum C. Caesar undevicesimum annum ingressus mira ausus ac summa consecutus privato consilio maiorem senatu pro re publica animum habuit* (“until Gaius Caesar, who had just entered his nineteenth year, with marvellous daring and supreme success, showed by his individual sagacity a courage in the state’s behalf which exceeded that of the senate”, tr. Shipley 1924). Cf. Hellegouarc’h/Jodry (1980) 814 for *Mon. Anc.* 1 ~ Vell. Pat. 2.61.1, and passim for Velleius’ many allusions to the *Res gestae* (they do not mention 2.95.3, however). Cf. also Schmitzer (2000) 295.

**39** Cowan (2009) 475. The original inscription of the *Res gestae* was visible on bronze pillars in front of Augustus’ Mausoleum.

**40** Christ (2001) 182, who interprets the finding in the sense that Velleius wants to stress Tiberius’ role as eternal patron of the Roman people (cf. 2.100.1 *perpetuus patronus*) after the death of Marcellus. Cf. also Levick (1976) 19–20 for the historical evidence.

**41** The historically informed reader might consider the Augustan link even further, as Hillard (2011) 234 has suggested. Tiberius could immediately learn from his stepfather how to deal moderately with honours: he was still 19 when in 22 bc Augustus rejected the dictatorship that had been offered to him, thus showing the same reluctance to accept an officially eminent position that Tiberius would adopt in ad 14. Velleius, however, does not narrate the event.

The second passage I wish to discuss brings us from Tiberius' first steps in Roman politics to the moment when he is about to succeed Augustus. The year is AD 12;<sup>42</sup> Tiberius has just returned from Germania, where he has secured order after Varus' defeat, and can finally celebrate the triumph in Rome that he deserved for suppressing the Pannonian and Dalmatian revolt (AD 6–9, described in Vell. Pat. 2.110–116). The triumph is the last episode Velleius depicts before Augustus' death (2.123) and Tiberius taking over his public position (*ut stationi paternae succederet*, 124.2). I therefore read it as Velleius' final demonstration that Tiberius is the only worthy successor: for a last time Tiberius imitates the still living Augustus. Velleius invites his readers to think in these terms, not only through the chronology of the event, but also by adding an intertextual link to Augustus' self-presentation. After the description of the splendid triumph, the historian adds a digression in which he reflects on Tiberius' modesty regarding official honours (*honorum [sc. modum] temperavit*, 2.122.2). It is astonishing, so Velleius writes, that the future *princeps* did not want to receive more than three triumphs in his life:

*quis non inter reliqua, quibus singularis moderatio Ti. Caesaris elucet atque eminet, hoc quoque non miretur quod, cum sine ulla dubitatione septem triumphos meruerit, tribus contentus fuit?*<sup>43</sup>

Among the other acts of Tiberius Caesar, wherein his remarkable moderation shines forth conspicuously, who does not wonder at this also, that, although he unquestionably earned seven triumphs, he was satisfied with three?

Velleius uses the triumph of AD 12 for reflecting on Tiberius' *moderatio*, whereas at the time it was probably not seen as modest, as Harriet Flower has recently argued.<sup>44</sup> Her arguments basically run as follows: triumphs had been drastically reduced in number since the early years of the Augustan age, partly because Augustus himself had reduced the number of triumphs during his reign.<sup>45</sup> The evidence of how this process took shape is scarce, but what we know is that at a

<sup>42</sup> There is discussion whether the triumph was held in AD 12 or 13; Woodman (1977) 212 argues for AD 12.

<sup>43</sup> Vell. Pat. 2.122.1. Text: Woodman (1977); tr. Shipley (1924).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Flower (2020) 20.

<sup>45</sup> Additionally, he no longer allowed Romans who were not members of the imperial family to celebrate a triumph. The last Roman to be mentioned in the *Fasti consulares* is L. Cornelius Balbus in 19 BC (see Beard 2007, 302). On the abolishment of the traditional Republican triumph see Itgenshorst (2005) 219–227; Beard (2007) 68–69 and 295–305; Lange (2016b) 106–113. Flower (2020) 9 sees the turning point in the year 27 BC when Octavian received the name Augustus and started to control public life in Rome.

certain stage the triumph was substituted with the awarding of *ornamenta triumphalia*.<sup>46</sup> This might first have happened on the instigation of Agrippa, who according to Cass. Dio 54.24.7–8 rejected the honour of a triumph in 12 BC; according to Cassius Dio, from that moment onwards “no one else of his peers was given the opportunity to do so any longer” (καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐδ’ ἄλλω τινὶ ἔτι τῶν ὁμοίων αὐτῷ ... ποιῆσαι τοῦτο ἐδόθη).<sup>47</sup> If Agrippa’s role in the definitive abolishment of triumphs is plausible, then the historical Tiberius, when celebrating his triumph in 7 BC, would have refused to imitate the example of modesty set by Agrippa.<sup>48</sup> When in AD 12 he insisted on celebrating a triumph again, the Romans could easily interpret this as a sign of ambition, and possibly as part of his strategy to secure for himself the succession of the by then old and invalid Augustus.

Velleius therefore has good reasons to exclude this disturbing aspect of Tiberius’ character from his narrative; he simply does not mention the reduction of regular triumphs at all.<sup>49</sup> Instead of problematizing the historical Tiberius’ striving after triumphs (which would have resembled the problematic attitude of the Republican generals), Velleius’ digression stresses that Tiberius was offered many more *by others*, but that he himself decided to be content with those he actually received. The narrative thereby turns competitive striving for honour into uncompetitive *moderatio*. It is not incidental that Velleius stresses the number of Tiberius’ triumphs, especially when one connects the passage with the subsequent one about Augustus’ succession. I assume that for a reader in the early Empire it is Augustus’ *triplex triumphus* of 29 BC that first springs to mind as a model, because the event was celebrated in art and literature and monumentalized in Augustus’ *Res gestae*, as well (*tris egi curulis triumphos*, *Mon. Anc.* 4; cf. Suet. *Aug.* 22).<sup>50</sup> We see a similar pattern as in the passage discussed above. Again Velleius uses a reference to Augustan propaganda and especially to his *Res gestae* in order to stress that Tiberius equals Augustus. And again, in order to be able to make this

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Syme (1939) 404 n. 6. I owe the following remarks to a thought-provoking suggestion of an anonymous peer reviewer.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. recently Tan (2019) 195–196 and Flower (2020) 16: “If Agrippa had survived beyond 12 BC, the break in triumphal culture would surely have been cleaner, more definitive, and probably much easier for us to read”.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Flower (2020) 18.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Galimberti (2015) 306 (my emphasis): “la costruzione del personaggio (perché di ciò si tratta) di Tiberio prima del suo avvento al principato in rapporto agli altri attori – Augusto e la sua discendenza – prevede un *calcolato impiego di accenni e silenzi*”.

<sup>50</sup> For example, Flower (2020) 13 interprets the statue of Augustus on his triumphal chariot in the centre of the Forum Augustum as a visual marker for the end and culmination of the Republican tradition of triumphs.

claim, Velleius has to cheat a bit, for officially Tiberius did not celebrate three full curule triumphs. The first one of 9 bc was only an *ovatio* (as Velleius himself admits at 2.96.3, *ovans triumphavit*)<sup>51</sup> rather than a curule triumph, but at 2.122.1 Velleius treats it as such,<sup>52</sup> just as he had already counted it as a triumph when referring to Tiberius' second (i.e., strictly speaking *first* curule) triumph of 7 bc as *alter triumphus* (2.97.4).

One might object that the mere number of three triumphs is not enough evidence to link the passage to Augustus' *triplex triumphus*. Other Romans had celebrated multiple triumphs, too – and Pompey also celebrated *three* triumphs during his lifetime (on which see below). Yet there is another aspect to the story that corroborates the Augustan link: the *modestia*-motive that three triumphs are enough and that one rejects others. We do not actually know of any other proposed and declined triumphs of Tiberius.<sup>53</sup> Why, then, did Velleius find it useful to add this piece of invented history? The reason might again be the model of Augustus. Readers who know their Roman history well were aware of the fact that Octavian/Augustus could have celebrated additional triumphs, if he had wished to do so.<sup>54</sup> In 36 bc he renounced a triumph after his victory against Sextus Pompeius, and he equally renounced triumphs that were offered to him in 25, 20, 7 bc and ad 9. As Mary Beard has argued, after the *triplex triumphus* of 29 bc, the brilliance of which not even Augustus could outrival, he might have realized that the refusal of a triumph was a similarly strong “signal of power” as its actual celebration would have been.<sup>55</sup> On only one occasion Augustus probably would have liked to celebrate an additional triumph: when the Roman standards were given back by King

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51 The formulation, at first sight a contradiction (either one is granted an *ovatio* or a *triumphus*), is more often used in a “grandiose way of saying ‘celebrate an *ovatio*’” (Woodman 1977, 109 ad loc., with references to parallels in *Mon. Anc.* 4.1 and Val. Max. 2.8.7).

52 Woodman (1977) 213 ad loc.

53 The four occasions that according to Velleius would have deserved a triumph are: his victory in Armenia, in the East and against the Vindelici and Raeti, and his handling of the affairs in Germania. But no ancient source hints at an official motion of the senate actually to propose a triumph for one of these victories.

54 Elefante (1997) 510 ad loc. shows that the theme of Augustus' *recusatio* of further triumphs had become a *topos* in Augustan literature, and that Tacitus reacts to it by having Tiberius explicitly refer to it in *Ann.* 3.47.4. Livy, however, seems to have also narrated a less favourable moment from Octavian's youth: when the senate granted a triumph to Decimus Brutus, but not to Octavian after the siege of Mutina in 43 (*parum gratus senatus fuit*), he decided to form the triumvirate and to march on Rome (Liv. *Per.* 119).

55 Cf. Beard (2007) 301 (describing Dio's analysis of Augustus' refusals). Flower (2020) 13 even contests that Augustus wanted to “get rid of the triumph completely” as a symbol for the harmful competition among the Roman nobility of the previous generations. She sees this as part of his politics of imperial(istic) self-containment.

Phraates IV of Parthia.<sup>56</sup> But because no actual fighting for this achievement was involved, the success could not be celebrated as a curule triumph. This did not prevent Augustus from having a triumphal arch erected on the Forum Romanum, thus casting the affair as an achievement that would have deserved a full triumph.<sup>57</sup>

But apart from this event, Augustus did not want to associate himself with further triumphal honours. Velleius uses this reluctance to construct a parallel between Augustus and Tiberius. And it is with regard to their *moderatio* concerning triumphs that the parallel between the two is very distinct from how matters are depicted in the Republican period. Triumphs and more specifically clusters of triumphs are a recurrent feature in Velleius' text. In the Republican narrative, it is noteworthy that the number of triumphs granted to the most conspicuous military leaders augments with time. Whereas Scipio Aemilianus could celebrate two (Vell. Pat. 2.4.5), Pompey was granted three (2.40.4/2.53.2), and his rival Caesar five (2.56.2).<sup>58</sup> The case of Pompey, the only other person in Velleius' text to celebrate three triumphs, is instructive here.<sup>59</sup> After having described his third triumph, Velleius mentions that Fortuna elevated him to the highest position by granting him three triumphs, but that "envy is never absent from extraordinary things".<sup>60</sup> This comment hints at a disagreement between Pompey, Lucullus and

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**56** On Augustus declining to hold a triumph at this occasion, see Rich (1998) 77. Cass. Dio 54.8.3 suggests the possibility of an *ovatio* (erroneously, cf. Rich 1998, 78; Lange 2016a, 166; Lange 2016b, 106). On Augustus' general tendency to decline triumphs that were offered to him, see Itgenshorst (2008) 36–44.

**57** The location of the 'Parthian Arch' is a vexed archaeological conundrum and has led to fierce debates; cf. Coarelli (1985) 258–308; Nedergard (1993); Freyberger (2015) 167. The main question is whether there were two Augustan arches (the Actian and the Parthian) in close proximity of the Aedes Divi Iulii. Rich (1998) 97–115 offers a thorough treatment of the evidence and the previous debate; he suggests on p. 114 that the triple arch, erected on the occasion of the *triplex triumphus* in 29 BC, was remodelled afterwards to include the commemoration of the Parthian victory (following Kähler 1939, 379–381). Simpson (1992) 841–842 even goes so far as to posit that "the so-called Parthian arch was [n]ever built", but this seems highly unlikely given its representation on Augustan coinage (for which see Nedergard 1993, 82) and the reference of Cass. Dio 54.8.3 (ἀψίδι τροπαιοφόρω ἐτιμήθη).

**58** Other interesting clusters are the brothers M. and C. Metellus who triumph both on the same day (2.8.2); the seven generations of successful Domitii who almost all triumph (2.10.2); and the twelve members of the Metelli who were consuls, censors or *triumphatores* within twelve years (2.11.3).

**59** Cf. also Domainko (2018) 99–101 for the contrast with regard to virtue between Pompey on the one hand and Augustus and Tiberius on the other.

**60** Vell. Pat. 2.40.4: *huius viri fastigium tantis auctibus fortuna extulit, ut primum ex Africa, iterum ex Europa, tertio ex Asia triumpharet et, quot partes terrarum orbis sunt, totidem faceret monumenta victoriae suae. numquam eminentia invidia carent* ("This man was raised by fortune to the pinnacle

Metellus Creticus about who actually deserved this triumph of 62 BC. Velleius thus shows that the triumph (traditionally one of the rarest honours the Roman state could bestow on an individual and thus *per se* one of the most noteworthy awards one could gain within upper-class *aemulatio*) has become a battlefield of highly ambitious politicians.<sup>61</sup> Individuals strive to outrival their contemporaries (and predecessors) not only with respect to their deeds, but also through the sheer number of honours they receive.<sup>62</sup> Against this background the praise for Tiberius' moderation concerning triumphs nicely fits into the broader picture. Already Augustus had taken a step back in that he had celebrated three triumphs instead of the five his adoptive father Caesar had been granted. Tiberius, too, does not wish to indulge in the emulative striving that characterised the Republican period, but instead seals his non-rivalling *imitatio* of Augustus by only equalling his stepfather's number of triumphs. Thus equipped with honours equal to those of Augustus, but, even more importantly, displaying *moderatio* commensurate with that practiced by Augustus, he is ready to take over his position.

## 4. Conclusion

As we have seen above, Pompey's personality stands in the way of his own exemplarity: *persona exemplo nocet*. His glory and subsequent fall serve as a symbol for the crisis of late Republican competition. Tiberius, on the other hand, can be defined as the total reversal of this *exemplum*. He does not diminish his exemplarity with his deeds, but becomes greater through the *exemplum* he himself sets (*cumque sit imperio maximus, exemplo maior est*, "while being the greatest

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of his career by great leaps, first triumphing over Africa, then over Europe, then over Asia, and the three divisions of the world thus became so many monuments of his victory. Greatness is never without envy", tr. Shipley 1924).

**61** Cf. Lange (2016b) 99, mentioning the passage in Velleius as a parallel for Cassius Dio, who also depicts the decadence of Republican political ethos via the describing of increasingly luxurious and contested triumphs; and Flower (2020) 2–4 (with other relevant literature in the notes): on p. 4 she labels the triumph "a truly singular honor". See also the discussion by Chaplin (2000) 140–156 on Livy's 'triumph debates' after the Second Punic War: also in Livy, "right to triumph becomes particularly controversial" (145); differently from Velleius' narrator, however, Livy's historical characters mostly argue for its legitimization through historical precedents.

**62** A fundamental article for the historical development of triumphs in the Roman Republic is Rich (2014). Cf. Lange (2016a) 79–83 for competitive "triumph-hunting" in the late Republic; cf. also Itgenshorst (2005) 193–206. I therefore disagree with the general claim by Domainko (2018) 80 that Velleius history does not show "any indication of a break between Republic and Principate" – while indeed there is no radical constitutional change, Velleius clearly stages one of political morality.



through his power, he is even greater through his exemplarity”, 2.126.5).<sup>63</sup> An important aspect of his exemplarity is his moderate refusal to engage in ambitious or even envy-driven *aemulatio* that had been characteristic of Republican politicians. As a consequence, *invidia* (a core concept for the Republican era, used three times in the fragments of book 1 and seventeen times in book 2) literally disappears after Tiberius has entered politics: the last occurrence of the word is in 2.92.5, shortly before Tiberius appears on Rome’s political stage.

Tiberius’ *moderatio* expresses itself especially with regard to his stepfather, whose superiority he willingly accepts. If he nevertheless equals Augustus, it is due to his character, not because he wishes to outdo Augustus, the guarantor of Rome’s success and, ultimately, of Tiberius’ authority.<sup>64</sup> This makes sense if we take into account what Velleius has asserted in his first literary excursus: *alit aemulatio ingenia, et nunc invidia, nunc admiratio imitationem accendit, naturaque quod summo studio petitum est, ascendit in summum* (“genius is fostered by emulation, and it is now envy, now admiration, which enkindles imitation, and, in the nature of things, that which is cultivated with the highest zeal advances to the highest perfection”, 1.17.6, tr. Shipley). As traditional *aemulatio*, driven by envy and admiration, is directed towards becoming greater, once the highest point has been reached the necessity for emulation disappears. But whereas this lack of competition in literature will ultimately lead to decline and thus eventually initiate a new circle of *aemulatio*, in politics Tiberius has found a way to stabilize the achieved perfection. In order to safeguard Augustus’ highest authority and legitimacy, he recurs to a non-competitive form of *imitatio*, driven by *admiratio* alone and free from any *invidia*. By neatly replicating the Augustan standard without ever trying to outdo him, he guarantees political stability. In Velleius’ perspective, Tiberius thereby also guarantees that the previous story of rise and decline is over. The future will be a continuous life on the “high plateau” to which Roman history has elevated itself.<sup>65</sup> One could say that it is precisely this

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63 I read *exemplo* as instrumental ablative (parallel with *imperio*); Gowing (2007) 414 suggests taking it as *ablativus comparationis* and translates “he is greater than an *exemplum*”, i.e. than all possible *exempla* taken together. Note that Velleius stresses the greatness of Tiberius by calling him greater, *maior*, having already used the superlative earlier in the sentence.

64 Cf. Vout (2012) 73: “manipulate an image of Tiberius and Augustus is unaffected; manipulate Augustus and the whole series shifts with him”.

65 Cf. Velleius’ final prayer: *Iuppiter Capitoline, et auctor ac stator Romani nominis Gradive Mars, perpetuorumque custos Vesta ignium, et quidquid numinum hanc Romani imperii molem in amplissimum terrarum orbis fastigium extulit, vos publica voce obtestor atque precor: custodite, servate, protegite hunc statum, hanc pacem, <hunc principem>* (“O Jupiter Capitolinus, and Mars Gradivus, author and stay of the Roman name, Vesta, guardian of the eternal fire, and all other divinities who have exalted this great Empire of Rome to the highest point yet reached on earth! On you I call, and

prevention of decline after Augustus' death that allows Tiberius, the *princeps optimus* (2.126.5), to ultimately, yet unwillingly surpass even his predecessor.

**Acknowledgements:** I thank the audience of the Leiden Forum antiquum lecture series for their helpful criticism. I am similarly grateful to the anonymous reviewers' many useful suggestions and corrections and to the editors of *Philologus* for their editorial care. Laura Napran has kindly corrected my English idiom. Research for this article has been made possible by a VIDÍ grant of the Dutch Research Council (NWO), funding no. 276–30–013.

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to you I pray in the name of this people: guard, preserve, protect the present state of things, the peace which we enjoy, the present emperor”, 2.131.1, tr. Shipley 1924; Lipsius’ conjecture at the end is defended by Woodman 1977, 281 ad loc.). Cf. Mutschler (2008) 133; Wiegand (2013) 142 speaks of Tiberius’ era as a “Hochplateau”.

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