

**NOTES ON VELLEIUS BOOK I
(2, 1; 6, 1–2; 12, 7; 14, 2; 16, 5; 17, 2)***

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with six passages in the first book of Velleius Paterculus. In I, 2, 1, Scaliger's emendation of *atavus* to *abavus* is defended; in I, 6, 1–2, it is suggested to read *omnino DXX* instead of the received *†ooLXX†*; in I, 12, 7, a conjecture *neque quicquam* is suggested; precision of some Velleius' statements in I, 14, 2 is defended; a new interpretation of the mention of Isocrates in I, 16, 5 is offered; and a correction *historicos {et}* in I, 17, 2 is suggested.

Key words: Velleius Paterculus; textual criticism; Latin; Roman historiography; Greek history and the Romans; Middle East history and the Romans

The historical work written by Velleius Paterculus has always attracted much attention of textual critics, given a sad situation of its preservation.¹ Especially in the 19th century, much effort was made to emend the text, sometimes with results of rather curious nature.² Authors of the two most copious modern commentaries on Velleius have therefore expressly resigned on suggesting emendations of their own,³ and the only modern editor who adopted a more liberal attitude to Velleius' text was strongly criticised for his toying with the text.⁴

Nevertheless, I believe that any quantity of ink spilt on Velleius' text cannot exhaust all possibilities of its improvement. If I dare to come forward with few suggestions of my own, it is because I am convinced that the situation of the textual critic is today much

* This study came to light thanks to the longterm institutional support provided by the Institute of Philosophy (RVO: 67985955). This article could not have come to being without Prof. B. Mouchová, to whom I would like to dedicate the text in order to express my gratitude for her kind help and encouragement. The journal's referees and redactors have also been of much help. Needless to emphasise, any inconsistencies and errors are exclusively my own.

¹ All preserved sources of Velleius' text stem from a *codex Murbacensis* which was lost soon after a publication of *editio princeps* by Beatus Rhenanus; worse still, it was swarming with errors and partially illegible (as Rhenanus tells us), see, e.g., Woodman (1977: 1–27); Hellegouarc'h (1982: lxxiii–xciv); Watt (1988: v–x); Elefante (1997: 1–16).

² Stegmann von Pritzwald (1933: v) numbered some 1,500 emendations of Velleius' text suggested between 1873 and 1932. It inspires modesty in anyone who dares to come with their own ideas, but should not, I believe, deter them.

³ Hellegouarc'h (1982: lxxvii), with several exceptions listed (*ibidem* note 1), and Elefante (1997: 13), referred to as "the commentators" below.

⁴ See Elefante's remarks on the edition of Watt (Elefante 1997: 11–12).

easier than ever before thanks to electronic databases, and because I hope that my suggestions will not be perceived as an insult to my giant predecessors, whose work inspired my journey in the labyrinth of Velleian scholarship.

Below, I would like to present my comments on a few passages, not confining myself to textual criticism alone, but also making a few suggestions as to how we could understand Velleius' words, as the number of commentaries on Velleius is still much lower than the sum of publications concerned exclusively with his text. All the passages will be taken from the first book of Velleius' work. The book dealt with a history of mankind from an uncertain point in the mythological past⁵ up to 146 BCE, with two appendices on Roman colonies and on a tendency of important figures of arts and literature to flock together. The great majority of the first book has fallen victim to *lacunae*: besides the beginning from the proem to the return of the Homeric heroes to their homelands, anything from between the rape of the Sabine women and the battle of Pydna is also lost to us, apart from one brief sentence about Cimon preserved by Priscian. Now let us turn to the text in the quest for its better understanding.

I, 2, 1: *Pelopis progenies, quae omni hoc tempore pulsus Heraclidis Peloponnesi imperium obtinuerat, ab Herculis progenie expellitur. Duces recuperandi imperii fuere Temenus, Cresphontes, Aristodemus, quorum atavus fuerat.*

Thus the *editio princeps*. But since J. J. Scaliger⁶ it has been recognised that Heracles was not *atavus*, but *abavus* of the three Peloponnesian kings (sons as they were of Aristomachus, son of Cleodaeus, son of Hyllus, son of Heracles – cf. Paus. II, 6, 7; II, 18, 7; and III, 15, 10), and text was accordingly emended. The correction stood unshaken until Elefante⁷ protested it was unnecessary, because Velleius (we are told) had no interest in precise genealogy. She adduces the following evidence for his apparent negligence: *avus* at I, 8, 5 (on Romulus' relationship to Latinus, from whom he was of course separated by several generations);⁸ *nepos* (instead of *pronepos*) at II, 16, 2;⁹ and *avunculus* (instead of *magnus avunculus*) at II, 59, 5 and 60, 2.

Now the edge of the first two examples may, I believe, be blunted by understanding the words *avus* and *nepos* more generally, as “ancestor” and “descendant” respectively, as is common in Augustan poetry.¹⁰ As for *magnus avunculus*, Tacitus consistently avoids

⁵ The Trojan war was a popular suggestion – see Sumner (1970: 281); Brožek (1962: 125), who wavered between the Trojan war and the death of Heracles; Starr (1981: 166); or Hellegouarc'h (1982: xxii); Schmitzer (1997: 43–48) has suggested the creation of the world or Heracles' death; lastly, Wiseman (2010) opted for the battle of the Phlegrean plain. I agree with Kramer (2005: 144–148, 160) that the foundation of Niniveh, the earliest event mentioned (I, 6, 1), seems to be the most likely point of beginning.

⁶ Hellegouarc'h (1982: 2) and Elefante (1997: 58) credit Meurs with the emendation, but his work in question (Meursius 1687: 30) appeared 81 years after that of Scaliger (of whom I could see only the second edition: Scaliger 1658: 58). Watt (1988: 2) assigns the emendation rightly.

⁷ Elefante (1997: 158).

⁸ Hellegouarc'h (1982: 31) and Elefante (1997: 174) suggest that Velleius followed Dionysus of Chalcis (cited by D. H. I, 72, 6) in considering Romulus great-grandson of Latinus. I feel another explanation is possible, see below.

⁹ Sumner (1970: 259) suggested *pronepos*. I believe it is not necessary to emend the text, see below.

¹⁰ For *avus*, see ThLL II, 1611.73; for *nepos*, see e.g. Verg. *Aen.* VI, 864; Hor. *Carm.* II, 13, 3; and perhaps Ov. *Pont.* III, 3, 62, where the mss. vary between *fratre nepos* and *fratre tuus*. The first possibility would be the only Augustan example of singular *nepos* in this sense.

it;¹¹ the first instance of the expression in a historical work appears as late as at the beginning of Aurelius Victor's *Liber de Caesaribus*, so it perhaps was not a phrase used by historiographers of the 1st century. What is more, we find *maior avunculus* with the same meaning at II, 59, 3, which could influence the word choice in both II, 59, 5 and 60, 2 and ensures that readers will not be misled.¹² I would suggest, then, that Velleius was rather avoiding cumbersome genealogical terminology than uninterested in genealogy itself.

Now *abavus* may bear the less precise meaning of "remote ancestor";¹³ *atavus* can, too, but all surviving examples of this usage are in the plural.¹⁴ Therefore, I think that whatever was in the *Murbacensis*, *abavus* is marginally more likely and should be preferred, especially as it is a very easy correction.

I, 6, 1–2: *Insequenti tempore imperium Asiaticum ab Assyriis, qui id obtinuerant annis †ooLXX†, translatum est ad Medos, abhinc annos ferme DCC·C·LXX. (2) Quippe Sardanapalum eorum regem ... tertio et tricesimo loco ab Nino et Semiramide, qui Babylona condiderant, natum ... †Pharnaces† Medus imperio vitaque privavit.*

This, putting aside the *cruces* and the extended numeral, is the text of the *editio princeps*.¹⁵ The extension of the second numeral from *DCCLXX* to *DCC·C·LXX*, suggested by Lipsius, is guaranteed by the context. Had Velleius thought that the Assyrian Empire ended in 740 BCE, he would have put this notice after the founding of Rome and it would be lost in the great lacuna. The strange first numeral was emended to *M·CC·XXX* by Lipsius; to *M·CC·LXX* by Berndt; and to *M·CCC·{LXX}* by Potter, who deleted *LXX* as a dittography caused by the following numeral.¹⁶ Of all these corrections, only the last one is grounded on ancient evidence, as far as I can see.

According to Herodotus (I, 95, 2), the Assyrian hegemony lasted for 520 years, until it was crushed by a rebellion of the Medes. Yet Ctesias (FGrH 688 F 1b/28.8) knew thirty Assyrian kings from Ninus to Sardanapalus, who ruled over 1.300 years, until they were defeated by Arbaces the Mede. Ctesias' account was followed by Diodorus Siculus (II, 22, 2), Nicolaus of Damascus (FGrH 90 F 2–3), Duris of Samos (FGrH 76 F 14) and Pompeius Trogus (see Justin. I, 2, 12). Yet another tradition was preserved by Castor of Rhodes (FrGH 250 F 1a, d), according to whom the Assyrians ruled Asia for 1280 years from the accession of their first king Belus.¹⁷

Velleius' number of 33 Assyrian kings is, as far as I know, without parallel,¹⁸ so he probably drew on some chronological account lost to us, neither on Ctesias nor on Cas-

¹¹ See *Ann.* II, 43, 5; II, 53, 2; IV, 3, 4; IV, 75; XII, 64, 2.

¹² See ThLL II, 1609.14–55.

¹³ See ThLL I, 48.61.

¹⁴ See ThLL I, 1014.44

¹⁵ The strange numeral *ooLXX* appears only in Elefante's edition; every other edition I have seen has *MLXX*. Yet Elefante is, I believe, on right lines.

¹⁶ See Potter (1997).

¹⁷ Of course, the Jews had their own tradition regarding the Assyrians (see e.g. *Ios. AII*, 6, 4; I, 9 et al.), but it did not influence Velleius at all. Nor can any similarity be found with accounts of Christian chronographers: see Eusebius (p. 30, 2732, 15 Karst), who gives dates 2057–818 BCE (1239 years) for the first Assyrian Empire (the second one being destroyed in 623 BCE, that is 1434 years after its foundation, by Cyaxares the Mede), or Orosius (II, 3, 2), who gives 1164 years to the Assyrian Empire in order to correlate it with its Roman counterpart.

¹⁸ The somewhat similar number of 23 Assyrian kings can be found in Cephalion, a historian who lived under Emperor Hadrian – see Drews (1965: 135–136), from whose very useful article Velleius is sadly

tor. It does not seem impossible that this unknown source was somehow influenced by Herodotus.¹⁹ So, why could Velleius not have written *omnino DXX*? *Omnino* would be written *ōō* in the 8th century,²⁰ and it was not alien to Velleius, for it appears at II, 10, 2, admittedly unconnected with any date.²¹ Yet this use of *omnino* would not be without parallels in Velleius' time.²²

The name of the Mede who defeated Sardanapalus is commonly changed by the editors to *Arbaces* on the basis of Ctesias. It is quite bold emendation and has already been criticised as such.²³ Could not either a source of Velleius or the Roman historian himself have misunderstood Herodotus (I, 102–103), who records an unsuccessful attack on Assyria by *Phraortes* the Mede?²⁴ One can easily imagine a scribe who finds in a text such a strange name, which does not appear in preserved Latin literature, and mangles it to the better-known name of Caesar's enemy defeated in the battle of Zela (whose name, by the way, appears in II, 40, 1 and II, 55, 2).

I, 12, 7: *Neque se Roma iam terrarum orbi superato securam speravit fore, si nomen usquam stantis maneret Carthaginis: adeo odium certaminibus ortum ultra metum durat et ne in victis quidem deponitur, neque ante invisum esse desinit quam esse desiit.*

The end of this sentence is probably the most vexed passage of the whole first book. Iustus Lipsius, who believed that *nomen Carthaginis* could not be object of *desinit*, suggested *invisa*.²⁵ Gertz²⁶ suggested *neque ante invisum esse desinit <quid>, quam esse desiit* which, I believe, is on the right line, but the resulting word-order is exceedingly strange and surely without parallel in Velleius. One suggestion that has – in my book – received less attention than would be its due is that of Schöll, who understood *invisum esse* and *esse* as infinitives with substantive force (τὸ μισεῖσθαι πρὸ τοῦ εἶναι οὐ τελεῖ, might one be tempted to translate).²⁷ Yet if the text stands, the reader is theoretically free to understand it this way or to connect *invisum* with *odium* or *nomen*, which is in my opinion very confusing. Therefore, I find it rather surprising that both Hellegouarc'h and Elefante have found no fault with the text; Hellegouarc'h even called it a “*bel exemple de sententia*”. He was strongly criticised for it by Goodyear who wished to emend the ending boldly to *invisum, <quod semel fuit invisum>, esse desiit*. Watt followed Goodyear in putting a *lacuna* after *invisum*, but wished to complete the text by something like *id quod odimus*. Elefante suggested a brachyology as the solution,²⁸ but I have already noted why I think there is

absent. But according to Cephalion the Assyrian hegemony ended after 1.013 years, so he too does not represent the same tradition as Velleius.

¹⁹ For instance, Velleius agrees with the Halicarnassian about the origin of the Etruscans (compare I, 1, 4 with Hdt. I, 94, 3–7), the return of the Heraclidae (I, 2, 1 ≈ Hdt. VI, 52, 1) or the ancestry of Thessalus (I, 3, 1 ≈ Hdt. VII, 176, 4).

²⁰ See Capelli (1967: 251).

²¹ Pluygers suggested to emend *omnino* in II, 10, 2 to *omnes*, unnecessarily, I believe.

²² See ThLL IX/2, 599.20–37, esp. 31–37.

²³ See Goodyear (1984: 197): “*How was Arbaces corrupted into Pharnaces? May not Velleius be in error?*”

²⁴ One is reminded of Velleius' misinterpretation of Cato the Elder in I, 7, 2–4, for which see Hellegouarc'h (1982: 29–30) and Elefante (1997: 171).

²⁵ Lipsius (1591: 24–25); he was followed by Ruhnken (1779: 50).

²⁶ Gertz (1874: 106). I did not know about this emendation when I invented the one suggested above.

²⁷ Schöll (1898: 519–522).

²⁸ Elefante (1997: 184). It seems to me that she was rather unfair to Watt in criticising him for posing the lacuna there by maintaining (Elefante 1997: 12) that concerning the soundness of the text of the

something more hiding in here. I would tentatively suggest inserting *quicquam* after *neque*. *Quicquam* appears nine times in the extant part of Velleius' work, all in the second book (16, 2; 22, 5; 24, 4; 52, 4; 55, 2; 71, 1; 80, 3; 95, 3; 123, 2), and comparable constructions appear at I, 13, 3 (*Neque enim quisquam hoc Scipione elegantius intervalla negotiorum otio dispunxit*) or II, 22, 5 (*Nec quicquam videretur turpe, quod esset quaestuosum*).

I, 14, 2: *Post septem annos quam Galli urbem ceperant, Sutrium deducta colonia est et post annum Setia. Novemque interiectis annis Nepe, deinde interpositis duobus et triginta Aricini in civitatem recepti.*

Livy (VI, 30, 9) dates the foundation of Setia in 379 BCE, so it appears that Velleius believed that Sutrium was founded in 380 BCE (its foundation is not recorded by Livy) and that the Gauls captured Rome in 387.²⁹ I fail to understand why both the commentators count with the Gallic invasion date of 390³⁰ – which, of course, would mean that the first two data given by Velleius are imprecise.³¹ But what about Nepe? According to Livy (VI, 27, 4), it was founded in 383 BCE, whereas the Velleian dates as interpreted above would lead to 370 BCE. I would tentatively suggest that Velleius (or his source) was misled by some similar names in the list of eponymous magistrates of the years in concern. The similarities can be seen in bold type in the table below:

383 BCE (Livy VI, 21, 1)	370 BCE (Livy VI, 36, 3)
L. Valerius Poplicola	P. Valerius Poplicola
A. Manlius Capitolinus	A. Manlius Vulso
Ser. Sulpicius Rufus	Ser. Sulpicius Praetextatus
L. Lucretius Flavus Tricipitinus	C. Valerius Potitus
L. Aemilius Mamercinus	Ser. Cornelius Maluginensis
M. Trebonius	

Even if the above suggestion may not seem quite decisive, I am led to believe that Velleius dated the Gallic invasion in 387 BCE by the following mention of Aricia, for if we subtract 32 years from the date of 370 BCE, we arrive at 338 BCE – the date given to the grant of Roman citizenship to the inhabitants of Aricia by Livy.³²

I, 16, 5: *Quid ante Isocraten, quid post eius auditores eorumque discipulos clarum in oratoribus fuit?*

Coming to the end of his excursus on how the brightest stars of the Greek literature appeared in a short period of time, Velleius picks up just one of the canon of ten Attic orators. Why did he do so? The commentators present us with two complementary

sentence, “*gli editori precedenti non avevano mai dubitato o che avevano emendato in maniera accettabile.*”

²⁹ That would agree with the date given e.g. by Pol. I, 6, 1–2 or D. H. I, 74, 4.

³⁰ The date given, for instance, by Liv. V, 36, 11–38, 10.

³¹ See Hellegouarc’h (1982: 39) and Elefante (1997: 189): “*le indicazioni cronologiche sono imprecise.*”

³² Liv. VIII, 14, 3.

theorems: First, that of Della Corte, according to whom Velleius followed Apollodorus of Pergamum who declared Isocrates the best of orators; second, that of Gustin, that Velleius was led by his desire to achieve a strict parallel between Greek and Roman literature, Roman oratory being dominated by Cicero.³³ The commentators further argue that Isocrates could not see the *acme* of Antiphon, Andocides and Lysias, the last named being omitted because Velleius disproved of his Atticist style. I would like to present a different line of argument; but first we should look a bit closer to the birth dates of the abovementioned orators.

Isocrates, born in 436 BCE,³⁴ could well have been present at the famous trial where Antiphon was sentenced to death for his involvement in the 411 oligarchic *coup d'état* despite his brilliant defence speech.³⁵ Furthermore, Isocrates was the *younger* contemporary of both Andocides (who was over forty in 400/399)³⁶ and Lysias (whose birth date is uncertain and I hope to deal with it elsewhere, but his being Isocrates' elder is proved beyond reasonable doubt by comparing Plato's *Phaedrus* 227a with 278e–279a). Nor does it seem plausible that Velleius would omit Lysias because of his Atticism, since he does name Marcus Brutus among the greatest orators of Rome (II, 36, 2).³⁷

Why then does Velleius mention Isocrates only? I think it is because Isocrates, who lived to the age of 98 years, suits amazingly well Velleius' theory of important literary figures living to see each other. Sure, there is a good deal of parallelism between Greek and Roman literature in this passage of Velleius, but Cicero is by no means the only Roman *orator* mentioned here (see I, 17, 3), and had Velleius wished to create strict parallels, he could have adduced (say) three authors of tragedies and comedies, four orators and three historians from both the nations instead of making the parallels harder to find by mentioning six Greek comedigraphers and three philosophers for whom he obviously could find no adequate number of Roman counterparts.

I, 17, 2: *Historicos et, ut Livium quoque priorum aetati adstruas, praeter Catonem et quosdam veteres et obscuros minus LXXX annis circumdatum aevum tulit.*

Regrettably, the commentators say us nothing about text of this sentence. Hellegouarc'h follows Voss in emending *et* to *etiam*, as does Watt, among others, while Elefante retains the text of the tradition as printed above. Obviously, *et* could then only bear the sense of *etiam*, but its position would be very strange. I would suggest deleting it as dittography of the following *ut*. There begins a series of vexed passages: I, 17, 5, I, 18, 1 and I, 18, 3. It gives the impression that the copyist was quite tired and/or careless when writing the last lines of Book One. Such a minor slip is easily conceivable. As for the problems of the vexed passages cited just above, I prefer to leave them for greater scholars to solve.

³³ See Della Corte (1937: 154–155), Hellegouarc'h (1982: 45), Elefante (1997: 197). I regret being unable to see Gustin's 1944 dissertation *Les péripécies littéraires dans l'ouvrage de Velleius Paterculus*.

³⁴ See [Plut.] *Mor.* 836f.

³⁵ See Thuc. VIII, 68, 2.

³⁶ See [Lys.] VI, 46. The assertion of pseudo-Plutarch (*Mor.* 835a) that Andocides was born in 468/7, is manifestly false.

³⁷ For Brutus' Atticism, see e.g. Tac. *Dial.* 18, 5 or Plut. *Brut.* 2, 5–7.

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POZNÁMKY K PRVNÍ KNIZE VELLEIA PATERCULA

Shrnutí

Článek se věnuje šesti místům první knihy díla Velleia Patercula. V I, 2, 1 obhazuje Scaligerovu emendaci *atavus* na *abavus*, v I, 6, 1–2 doporučuje číst dochované †*ooLXX*† jako *omnino DXX*, v I, 12, 7 navrhuje konjekturu *neque quicquam*, dále obhazuje přesnost některých Velleiových údajů v I, 14, 2, přináší novou interpretaci zmínky o Isokratovi v I, 16, 5 a konečně navrhuje opravu *historicos* {et} v I, 17, 2.