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NERO IN POMPEIAN POLITICS. *EDICTA MUNERUM* AND IMPERIAL
FLAMINATES IN LATE POMPEII

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 87 (1991) 145–155

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NERO IN POMPEIAN POLITICS
EDICTA MUNERUM AND IMPERIAL FLAMINATES IN LATE POMPEII¹

This article deals with four inscriptions, the dating of which has remained a puzzle within Pompeian epigraphy for several generations. The problem may be described as a contradiction between internal and external dating criteria. Thus, the four *edicta munerum*, gladiatorial announcements, mentioning D.Lucretius Satrius Valens as *flamen Neronis Caesaris filii perpetuus*, i.e. *flamen* for Nero as crown prince, have been dated to the period 50-54, when Nero was Claudius' designated heir.² However, the preservation of four Claudian dipinti to the time of the Vesuvian eruption of 79 would seem highly remarkable. A later date has therefore also been propounded, and an attempt at developing this point of view is made in the following pages where an absolute dating of the inscriptions to the year 68 is suggested.³ While the first section enumerates the arguments against the traditional dating, the second attempts to clarify the meaning of D.Lucretius Satrius Valens' priestly title. The final section attempts to locate the inscriptions within their historical context.

I

There are three main arguments against a Claudian date of these inscriptions.

a) It seems highly improbable that four large inscriptions placed on house facades should have been left untouched for 25 years. Thus the two inscriptions from Via dell'Abbondanza, 7992 and 7995, the only ones photographically registered, were found in a very fine state of preservation (see note 2). Although by no means a decisive argument, the state of

¹ The theory presented here was conceived during the authors' stay at The Danish Academy in Rome, autumn 1989. Henrik Mouritsen has written the first and the third sections, Ittai Gradel the second section of the article. The authors would like to thank Henrik Tvarnø and Patrick Kragelund for their valuable criticism. Inscriptional references without indication of CIL vol. all refer to vol. IV.

² 1185: [-] Valentis flaminis Neronis Aug. f. perpetui/ D.Lucreti Valentis Fili[-]/ V k. april. venatio et vela erunt (found at VIII,7,16), 3884: D.Lucreti/ Satri Valentis flaminis Nerónis Caesaris Aug. fili/ perpetui gladiatorum paria XX et D.Lucretio Valentis fili/ glad. paria X pug. Pompeis VI V IV III pr. idus apr. venatio legitima/ et vela erunt (found by IX,8), 7992: D.Lucrétii Satri/ Valentis fláminis [[Nerónis]] Caésaris Aug. f. perpetui glad. par. XX et D.Lucrétii Valentis fili/ glad. par. X pug. Pompeis ex a. d. nonis apr. venatio et vela erunt (III,2,1), 7995: D.Lucreti Satri/ Valentis flaminis [[Nerónis]] Caesaris Aug. f. perpetui glad. par. XX et/ D.Lucreti Valentis fili [glad.] par. X/ ex a. d. V k. april. venatio et vela er[unt] (III,6,2). For illustrations see NS (1936), 318 and V.Spinazzola, Pompei alla luce degli scavi nuovi di Via dell'Abbondanza (1910-23), (Rome 1953), fig.VII.

³ Among the more recent adherents of the late Claudian date may be mentioned P.Castrén, *Ordo Populusque Pompeianus*, AIRF 8 (Rome 1975), 69, J.L.Franklin, "Notes on Pompeian Prosopography: Two non-existent Ancients and the DD.Lucretii Valentes", PP 34 (1979), 408-14, and P.Sabbatini Tumolesi, *Gladiatorum Paria, Tituli 1* (Rome 1980), 24-32, while a later dating has been suggested by A.W.Van Buren, "Gnaeus Alleius Nigidius Maius of Pompeii", *AJPh* 68 (1947), 385f, and W.O.Moeller, "Gnaeus Alleius Nigidius Maius, Princeps Coloniae", *Latomus* 32 (1973), 518, the latter, however, advocating an implausible theory of a Flavian date.

preservation becomes interesting in the light of the epigraphical context of the inscriptions. Thus, the two facades - on III,2,1 (Casa di Trebio Valente), and III,6,2 - do not as a whole appear to have been particularly old. They both feature a large amount of dipinti, but as is usual in these ephemeral sources, none of these seem datable to such a distant period as the Claudian reign. On the facade of Casa di Trebio Valente (III,2,1) 20 of the total 22 electoral inscriptions (*programmata*) can be dated to the last 10 years of Pompeii's existence.⁴ Only 7613 for Cn.Audius Bassus aed.cand. and 7620 for M.Satrius quinq.cand. may be older, but not even in this case a date prior to the earthquake seems likely.⁵ The facade of the other house, III,6,2, displays a similar pattern: 4 out of 5 dipinti belong to the last decade, only one may be late Neronian.⁶

Repainting of the facades seems to have been the primary factor in the disintegration of the painted inscriptions. It is on the contrary the tombs, only rarely repainted, which habitually yield the greater sample of early dipinti.⁷ This would imply that facades not repainted for a long period would be expected to feature inscriptions for a considerable number of candidates otherwise sparsely documented. Since the above-mentioned houses, III,2,1 and III,6,2, would not have been repainted, it becomes problematic why these facades were not employed for electoral propaganda or other public announcements between the late Claudian and the early Flavian period. No plausible explanation of this peculiar epigraphical phenomenon has been given.⁸

⁴ 7610 (A.Trebius Valens aed.cand.), 7611 (Cn.Helvius Sabinus), 7612 (M.Holconius Priscus aed.cand.), 7614 (L.Popidius Secundus), 7615 (Popidius), 7616 (A.Suettius Verus), 7617 (L.Caecilius Capella dv.cand.) 7618 (L.Popidius Ampliatus), 7619 (C.Lollius Fuscus), 7621 (C.Julius Polybius aed.cand.), 7622 (M.Holconius Priscus dv.cand.), 7623 (Cn.Helvius Sabinus), 7624 (L.Popidius Ampliatus), 7626 (D.Lucretius Valens), 7627 (L.Ceius Secundus dv.cand.), 7628 (Cn.Helvius Sabinus), 7629 (Q.Postumius Modestus quinq.cand.), 7630 (C.Cuspius Pansa), 7631 (L.Albucius Celsus and M.Casellius Marcellus), 7632 (L.Popidius Ampliatus).

⁵ From an earlier stratigraphical level of the facade III,2,1 derives the *programma* 7633 for [-]bius quinq.cand.

⁶ 7757 (D.Lucretius Valens), 7758 (P.Paquius Proculus and A.Vettius Caprasius Felix), 7760 (L.Ceius Secundus dv.cand.), 7761 (N.Popidius Rufus dv.cand.) are Flavian, while 7759 (L.Nonius Severus) may be earlier.

⁷ Thus H.Mouritsen, *Elections, Magistrates and Municipal Elite. Studies in Pompeian Epigraphy*, ARID Suppl. 15 (Rome 1988), 32-37.

⁸ In Mouritsen (1988), 35, the argument was put forward that the two inscriptions of A.Trebius Valens quinq.candidate decisively excluded a date prior to the earthquake for 7992, since this is placed on a layer of plaster put on top of 7633 for [-]bius quinq.cand. and since 7488 for A.Trebius Valens quinq.cand. is found on a pillar rebuilt after the earthquake (Mouritsen (1988), 34 and n.128). However, new investigations show that Della Corte's claim - 7633 under 7992 - is only partly correct. 7633 was found close to 7993 (not 7992) under a layer of plaster covering the entire facade, thus predating all other inscriptions on III,2,1. As for 7488 this is a joint *programma* for A.Trebius Valens and Cn.Audius Bassus quinq.cand. and as the more recent layer of plaster on III,2,1 also features 7613 for Cn.Audius Bassus aed.cand., A.Trebius Valens in 7488 and [-]bius in 7633 cannot be identical. Instead, the candidate in 7488 should be identified with the well-known aedilician candidate of that name, the quinquennial designation only applying to the last-mentioned candidate, Cn.Audius Bassus. The omission of the office for which Trebius stood would hardly cause any misunderstandings, as he was new in Pompeian politics and therefore automatically an aedilician candidate. This solution means that he must have stood several times, because his joint candidature with C.Gavius

b) Another strong argument in favour of a post-Claudian dating is the connection between D.Lucretius Satrius Valens and D.Lucretius Valens filius, discernible both in the *edicta* and in the programmata of the latter. In the *edicta* D.Lucretius Satrius Valens appears with his son, who is explicitly mentioned in all of them. No parallels for such joint familial dedications are known in Pompeian *edicta*, where the *munerarii* with few exceptions act alone.⁹ Likewise, the son is repeatedly spoken of as "filius" in the programmata endorsing his aedilician candidature. Filiation in itself only very rarely occurs in the corpus of *programmata recentiora*, and "filius" as a fixed part of the candidate's denomination is not encountered elsewhere in the material. The remarkable emphasis on the parental relations indicates a chronological as well as a factual connection between the two types of inscriptions in question. This suggestion is, moreover, supported by palaeographical similarities between the edicts 7992 and 7995 and the *programma* 7626, clearly pointing to the same painter as responsible for all three dipinti. In other words, since not only internal criteria but also the outer appearance connects *munera* and candidature, the *munera* seem a measure to facilitate the son's entry into municipal politics.

The candidature of D.Lucretius Valens *filius* is attested in 13 electoral inscriptions and this amount of preserved dipinti clearly rules out a date prior to the earthquake.¹⁰ With varying degrees of certainty 25 Pompeian magistrates known from *tabulae Jucundianae*, *tituli* and graffiti can be dated to the period ca. 50-61 and 7 of these are documented as candidates in electoral inscriptions. Altogether 12 *programmata* - out of a total of 2471 - are on this criterion datable to the period before the earthquake, only two of them predating 55 AD. The survival of 13 *programmata* for a single candidate standing in the first half of the fifties would therefore seem highly unlikely. In fact, this type of electoral propaganda seldom existed for more than ten years; about 85% of the inscriptions seem datable to the last decade of Pompeian elections, and also among very poorly documented candidates several may on archaeological criteria be dated after the earthquake.¹¹ Thus, in the light of the overall chronological distribution of the *programmata*, a pre-neronian date of D.Lucretius Valens' candidature seems very difficult to sustain.

Rufus did not take place in a quinquennial year. The identification of [-]bius quinq. as Trebius is no longer certain, but seems plausible firstly on account of the rarity of the ending -bius in Pompeian onomastics and secondly because of the location on III, 2,1 which apparently belonged to A.Trebius Valens aed.cand. in Flavian times.

⁹ The only exceptions are 9970 featuring A.Suettius [Par]tenio and his freedman Niger, and the *edictum* announcing the Capuan games given by "P.Furi et L.R...ami", A.D'Ambrosio, S. De Caro, "La necropoli di Porta Nocera. Campagna di scavo 1983", *Römische Gräberstrassen. Selbstdarstellung - Status - Standard* (München 1987), 206.

¹⁰ 3571, 7453, 7555, 7557, 7563, 7626, 7695, 7757, 7898, 9843, 9898, also 7750 is likely to refer to D.Lucretius Valens cf. Mouritsen (1988), 154.

¹¹ This dating of *programmata recentiora* is proposed in Mouritsen (1988), 32-44, where the epigraphical and archaeological evidence is presented.

c) Thirdly, D.Lucretius Valens stood for the aedilate, which probably had a lower age qualification at 25, and as a member of a distinguished and important family he can hardly have been much past this age when he declared his candidature. A late-Neronian date of this candidature implies that in 50-54 he would still have been a child. If no more than 7-11 years old when the dedications were made the inclusion of Lucretius *filius* in the *edicta* would be most peculiar. Moreover, in a number of painted inscriptions D.Lucretius Satrius Valens is greeted together with his wife and children. They have been found both in public places and in what presumably was his private house.¹² Such greetings of the type "NN feliciter" were sometimes put up for donators of games,¹³ and in 1084 Lucretius Satrius Valens is explicitly thanked for his munificence. However, a public expression of gratitude, whether authentic or not, to an important citizen in which his infant children occupy a prominent part would be an oddity. If, on the contrary, the purpose of the *munera* was the promotion of the oldest son into the *ordo*, the accentuation of the family in edicts and greetings would be easily comprehensible.

¹² 1084: Satrio Lucrétio Valenti múnifico/ IV sibi liberis feliciter pró Valente ex rog, (found at the large theater), 9888: Satrio/ feliciter/ Iustae feliciter/ Valentinae feliciter/ D L V F / feliciter, 9889: D. Iustae/ liberis feliciter, (both from the interior of II,3,3, that probably belonged to the Lucretii), 2993y: Satrio/ Valenti/ Augusto/ Ner(oni) felicit[er], (inscribed in greek letters in the famous wall painting showing the riots in the amphitheatre 59 AD.), 2993x: D.Lucretio felciter, (added to the same painting above 2993y), 7454: M.Satrio Iustae liberis/ feliciter digni/ LX D F D, (from the facade of I,13,1), 8497b: Decimo Lucre[tio]/ liberis feliciter (graffito from II,3,3). Franklin (1979) has reconstructed a stemma for this branch of the Lucretian family, in which the greetings play an important role for the chronology. According to his theory D.Lucretius Satrius Valens was the natural son of M.Satrius Valens, dv.cand. in 7371, quinq.cand. in 7556, 7564, 7620, 7704, cand. in 9900, and adopted by the aedile of 33 AD. D.Lucretius Valens, X 901 and 902. As he is still called M.Satrius in 7454, the adoption took place after he had married and fathered children, and at the latest in the forties, before he became *flamen* for the crown prince between 50 and 54. His son, D.Lucretius Valens, later stood for the aedilate in the seventies. Against this hypothesis numerable objections can be made: 1) There is no basis for regarding the aedile of 33 as the adoptive father of D.Lucretius Satrius Valens. They may be one and the same person. One of two *nomina* is often left out in *tituli* commemorating *ministri* dedications and that is likely to have been the case also in X 902. Thus, if he was aedile in 33 at the age of 25 he would have been 41 when he became *flamen* in 50. Our data therefore fit easily into a single career (cf. Mouritsen (1988), n.434). 2) If the supposed adoptive father was 25 in 33 and the son, already father of several children, was 30 in 45, the adopted would have about the same age as the adoptive father. 3) As the candidature of M.Satrius Valens could not possibly predate the earthquake he would, if the natural father of Lucretius *pater*, be well over 70 when at the earliest he stood for the quinquennialate in 65. 4) D.Lucretius Valens, aed.cand. would still have been a child when mentioned in the greetings and a boy when his father included him in gladiatorial dedications. 5) If D.Lucretius Valens *filius* was born before his father's adoption would he not himself have been an adoptive and also carried the name D.Lucretius Satrius Valens? 6) The survival of the greetings for 45-40 years would be quite unique in Pompeian epigraphy, and on account of their relative uniformity they do not seem to derive from scattered posting over a longer span of years but to commemorate a single event i.e. the dedications. 7) The whole theory is in fact based on a single letter, the praenominal M of 7454, and faced with these difficulties it seems reasonable to interpret it as a slip of the painter's pen, perhaps inspired by the existence of the prominent magistrate M.Satrius Valens.

¹³ 1094: Popidio Rufo invicto muner(ario), 7990: Cn.Alleio Maio/ principi munerarior[um]/ feliciter, 4999: M.Casellium Marcellum ... munerarium magnum.

II

The decisive - indeed the only - argument for dating the four *edicta munerum* to the years 50-54 is the title of D.Lucretius Satrius Valens as *flamen Neronis Caesaris Augusti filii perpetuus*. In the light of the redating of these inscriptions proposed above, the title and its use as a chronological straitjacket now call for further consideration.

It is obvious that Valens received the title between 50 and 54, since Nero's imperial adoption took place in the former year and Claudius died in the latter. If Valens used the title in 68 one would at first sight expect him to bring the titulature up to date, viz. as *flamen Neronis Augusti* or the like. Thus M.Holconius Celer had been *sacerdos Augusti* in an unknown year during the reign of Augustus (X 840, 943-4) and was called *sacerdos Divi Augusti* after the demise of that emperor (X 945-6).

In my view it is exactly the priesthood held by Celer which holds the key to the chronological problem of the Valensinscriptions. At an unknown time in the reign of Augustus the *ordo* of Pompeii decided to honour the emperor by instituting an office of *flamen/sacerdos (Caesaris) Augusti*. The earliest securely dated evidence for the priesthood is from 2 B.C.¹⁴ That such flamines were held for one year seems clear from: a) an otherwise inexplicably large number of roughly contemporary *flamines* in some Italian townships; b) the exceptional form *flamen perpetuus* which is attested in a few cases in Italy;¹⁵ c) the likewise one-yearly tenure attested with certainty for the *flamen augus[talis?]* of Narbonese Gaul (XII 6038).¹⁶ Finally, the prestige shed on the occupants of these flamines would be without interest for the *ordo* in Italian townships, if such a priesthood was held by one man for life.

In Pompeii we know of two different men holding the flamine under Augustus. Apart from these the only other instance known is Cn.Alleius Nigidius Maius, called *flamen Caesaris Augusti* in the Vespasianic IV 1180.¹⁷ (Caesar) Augustus should here be understood simply as the living emperor, as has long since been pointed out.¹⁸ The cult's existence in Pompeii's last years seems confirmed from yet another quarter: in the so-called "temple of Vespasian" the altar appears to have been restored after the earthquake in 62. The

¹⁴ Regardless of the historical difference between the titles *flamen* and *sacerdos* they were used indiscriminately in Pompeii; M.Holconius Rufus was in chronological order termed *Augusti sacerdos*, *flamen Caesaris Augusti* (X 837, 947 - contemporary), *Augusti Caesaris sacerdos* and *flamen Augusti* (X 830, 838 - contemporary but later than the two preceding). X 830 is dated 2 B.C.

¹⁵ Imperial *flamines perpetui* in Italy apart from Valens: V 6513, 7007, 7458, X 416, 7507, XIV 4674(?). For this term and the one-yearly tenure of non-perpetual flamines see R.Étienne, *Le culte impérial dans la péninsule ibérique* (Paris 1958), 236f, F.Geiger, *De sacerdotibus Augustorum municipalibus* (Diss. Halle 1913), 46.

¹⁶ For the inscription, now securely dated to the reign of Vespasian, see D.Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West* (Leiden 1987), 240ff.

¹⁷ See Sabbatini Tumolesi (1980), 42f.

¹⁸ J.Toutain, *Les cultes païens dans l'empire romain I* (Paris 1905-7, facs. Rome 1967), 45ff, Étienne (1958), 287ff, Geiger (1913), 14ff.

temple itself may in fact be post-quake, although its dating has aroused considerable debate in recent years (this point is not of vital importance in the present context - the cult does not presuppose a temple, only an altar).¹⁹

The very fact that the Flavian title was the same as the Augustan one indicates that the priesthood had existed without interruption throughout the whole period. The existence of this imperial priesthood in Pompeii is highly significant for the priestly title of Valens. Had he updated his title after 54 to *flamen Neronis Augusti* or the like he would have violated the prerogative of the *flamen Augusti*, thus claiming for himself this priesthood, which he in fact never held. Pompeii's cult of the living emperor was the exclusive privilege of this long-established priesthood. This does not of course apply to M.Holconius Celer's updating of his title at Augustus' death, for there was no separate flamine of Divus Augustus (as opposed to the living emperor) in Pompeii.

The flamine to Nero Augusti filius is unique among the Italian priesthoods, being the only known example dedicated to the cult of an emperor's son and "crown prince". This fact can illuminate other peculiarities in Valens' title. At some time between 50 and 54 (probably very shortly after Nero's adoption) the *ordo* of Pompeii decided to honour the prince by instituting a priesthood in his honour. This singular honour might be explained by the fact that Nero was "legitimate", being descended from Augustus, whereas Claudius was not.²⁰ It would no doubt be an overinterpretation to claim this as the reason for Claudius' personal name not appearing in the title of Nero's *flamen*. This is better explained by influence from the long-established parallel priesthood of the *flamen Augusti*, where Augustus is simply the living emperor, at that time Claudius.

Another oddity: why was Valens made *flamen* of Nero Caesar for life (*perpetuus*)? The alternative would have been to institute a "normal" flamine to Nero to be filled each year with a new occupant. But the imminent death of Claudius (or Nero) would have made such an institution extremely awkward. By abolishing the flamine at Nero's accession the new emperor would be deprived of his singular honour, thus being left only with the worship accorded to all previous emperors, that of the *flamen Augusti*. This could seem insulting. Furthermore, regular flamines tend to display a remarkable degree of permanency;²¹

¹⁹ For the altar see V.Kockel, *Funde und Forschungen in den Vesuvstädten*, AA (1986), 457 with litt.; for the temple see H.Hänlein-Schäfer, *Veneratio Augusti* (Rome 1985), 133ff, L.Richardson, jr., *Pompeii* (1988), 191f, P.Zanker, *Pompeji. Stadtbilder als Spiegel von Gesellschaft und Herrschaftsform*, *Trierer Winckelmannsprogramm* 9 (1987), 28ff, V.Kockel, *ibid*.

²⁰ For Claudius as a usurper (= non-Julian) see T.P.Wiseman, "Calpurnius Siculus and the Claudian Civil War", *JRS* 72 (1982), 57ff.

²¹ This certainly holds true of the state cult in Rome. It might, however, be less relevant for municipal worship where the maintenance of imperial cults could be explained by continued interest as well as by conservatism. Thus *flamines* to *Divi* generally appear only in the generation after the rule of the relevant emperor; rather than arguing for their limited durability one could, however, see most of them as *flamines Augusti* (the living emperor) updating their title after the death and deification of "their" emperor. The early *Divi*, Augustus and Claudius, are exceptional in having *flamines* in some Italian townships long after their death: thus for *Divus Augustus* V 5266 (dated after 98), 5267 (dated about 65 - Tacitus Ann. 16,8), 7007

conservatism alone would make it awkward to abolish a cult - with its priesthood - once established. However, to maintain by yearly appointments the cult of a crown prince, who had in the meantime become emperor (and who was besides worshipped in that capacity by the *flamen Augusti*) would have been absurd, to say the least.

One could perhaps think of another alternative open to the *ordo* after Nero's adoption: a priesthood of Nero to be renewed by the decuriones year by year until Claudius (or Nero) had died. Yet such a patently temporary option was impossible, since it crudely anticipated the emperor's death, always an awkward subject.

The problem was apparently solved by making the contemplated flamine an honorary title linked to an individual instead of a potentially embarrassing priestly institution: *flamen Neronis Caesaris Augusti filii perpetuus*. This title of Valens was probably purely honorary, involving no cultic functions (certainly not after 54) and therefore not straining the town's finances.²² Furthermore, by the adjective "perpetuus" it was stressed that Nero Caesar was worthy of continuous honouring and at the same time that Claudius would (wishfully) never die. A tactful evasion indeed. "Perpetuus" even shed added lustre on Valens as compared to "normal" *flamines*, who functioned for one year only. Lastly, the *ordo* would not have to worry about abolishing the priesthood when it was outdated by events in Rome: the title would vanish automatically at Valens' death.²³

It now appears that the internal criterion for dating the four *edicta munerum* to 50-54 should not bother us unduly. The priestly title of D. Lucretius Satrius Valens could for formalistic reasons not be updated after 54; in terms of chronology it therefore only gives us a *terminus post quem* for dating the inscriptions.

III

In 59 AD the amphitheater at Pompeii was the scene of serious fights between Pompeian and Nucernian spectators. Tacitus relates that the central powers in Rome punished the

(dated after 79), XIV 2922 (dated 180-92), 2972 (dated 243), for *Divus* Claudius V 875 (dated 105), 5126 (dated after 117), 534-5 (dated 98-102). In these instances conservatism seems the most likely explanation of durability since it is difficult to believe in much municipal "enthusiasm" for these emperors so long after their demise. In the Italian townships the focus certainly seems to have been on the living emperor, not on the *Divi*. In some cases several flamines to different *Divi* were united into one priesthood (thus V 6513, 6797, 7458), even resulting in *flamines Divorum omnium* (IX 5357, XIV 444(?)). Hardly a symptom of much enthusiasm for the individual *Divi* but the fact that downright abolition of priesthoods was avoided is illuminating. See further n.23.

²² According to Étienne (1958), 237 the title of *flamen perpetuus* was always purely honorary, but the evidence is really too scanty for such a conclusion.

²³ This could be the *raison d'être* of the title *flamen perpetuus* in Italian imperial cults generally, for it is otherwise encountered only in flamines for *Divi*, never for the living emperor (see n.15, the only possible exception being XIV 4674-5). Since the municipal relevance of a *Divus* apparently waned with the passage of time (see n.21) the perpetual flamine seems generally in this context to have been a convenient way of getting rid of outdated cults and their priesthoods.

Pompeians with a ten year ban of such games.²⁴ This statement does not easily accord with the late Neronian date for the candidature and dedications of the Lucretii, since the ban would have lasted till the end of Nero's reign in 68. There are, however, indications that the prohibition of games was prematurely lifted before the end of the period.²⁵ Thus, in 1190 the aedile A.Suettius Certus donates a game, applauding "omnibus Nero[n]mun]eribus feliciter".²⁶ The meaning of this cannot be determined with certainty but it probably refers to some benefactions of Nero's.²⁷ In any case it implies that 1190 derives from the reign of Nero. The aedilician candidature of A.Suettius Cetus is attested in 5 inscriptions and hardly predates the Pompeian earthquake.²⁸ His games must therefore be dated to the ten-year period in which, according to Tacitus, they were officially banned.²⁹

A group of painted inscriptions praise the *iudicia* of the emperor, who is explicitly mentioned as Nero in 671a/b, and on account of their uniformity it seems safe to attribute them all to some decrees of Nero's.³⁰ Moreover, in 3726 he appears together with the

²⁴ Tac. Ann. 14,17: Sub idem tempus levi initio atrox caedes orta inter colonos Nuceros Pompeianosque gladiatorio spectaculo quod Livineius Regulus, quem motum senatu rettuli, edebat. quippe oppidana lascivia in vicem incessantes probra, dein saxa, postremo ferrum sumpsere, validiore Pompeianorum plebe, apud quos spectaculum edebatur. ergo deportati sunt in urbem multi e Nucerinis trunco per vulnera corpore, ac plerique liberorum aut parentum mortis deflebant. cuius rei iudicium princeps senatui, senatus consulibus permisit. et rursus re ad patres relata, prohibiti publice in decem annos eius modi coetu Pompeiani collegiaque quae contra leges instituerant dissoluta; Livineius et qui alii seditionem conciverant exilio multati sunt.

²⁵ This idea is not new. On the basis of the fragmentary *edictum* 3822: Pro salute Ner[onis]/ in terr[ae]motu], it has been suggested that the ban was lifted before 64. As it would hardly make any sense to dedicate for Nero's safety in the local Pompeian earthquake of 62 the inscription cannot be referring to this event. It therefore seems reasonable to connect the *edictum* with the earthquake that struck Neapolis in 64. Suetonius relates that Nero was performing in the theatre when the tremors began and had a narrow escape from the trembling building, Suet. Nero 20,3. Thus, some kind of performance must have taken place in the ten-year period following 59. The ban may, however, as proposed by Sabbatini Tumolesi (1980), 45, have affected only proper gladiatorial games, allowing *venationes* and athletics to be held, and 3822 therefore does not constitute a proof of the lifting of the ban before 64. E.Magaldi, "Echi di Roma a Pompei II", *Rivista di studi pompeiani* 2 (1936), 82-100, M.Della Corte, *Case ed abitanti* (Naples 1965), 114.

²⁶ Sabbatini Tumolesi (1980), 52, proposes three possible restitutions: Nero[n]ianorum mun]eribus, Nero[n]is mun]eribus and Nero[n]ianis mun]eribus, of which she prefers the first. However, taking into account the extent of the lacuna Zangemeister published the inscription as "Nero[n. mun]eribus", which means that "Neron." is an abbreviation, most plausibly interpreted as "Neron(is)".

²⁷ According to P.Sabbatini Tumolesi, loc.cit., the *munera* should be perceived as gladiatorial games, either held to Nero's honour or during his reign. The theory is hardly plausible, and it seems more likely that we are dealing with imperial gifts presented to Pompeii, cf. the gift by Poppaea referred to in the graffito published in C.Giordano, "Iscrizioni graffite e dipinte nella casa di C.Giulio Polibio", *RAAN* 49 (1974), 22.

²⁸ 821, 7361, 7677, 7823a, 7823b (cf. Mouritsen (1988), 152f).

²⁹ Theoretically Nero might be mentioned during the reigns of Otho and Vitellius, but as it will be argued below, the anti-Neronian propaganda promoted by Galba in 68 left traces in Pompeii that makes this dating unlikely.

³⁰ 528: iudicis Aug felic, 670: iudicis Aug (cf. Mouritsen (1988), 126), 671a/b: Neronis iud[-], 1612: iudicis Aug felic (graffito), 3525: iudicis Aug felic Puteolos Antium Tegeano Pompeios hae sunt verae/ colonia[e] (cf. L.Keppie, *PBSR* 52 (1984), 89f), 1074: iudicis Augusti Augustae feliciter/ vobis salvis felices sumus/ perpetuo, 3726: iudicis Augusti p.p. et Poppaeae Aug feliciter, 7625: iudicis Aug felic. To this group probably belong also 820a: [-]saris Augusti felicit[-].

empress Poppaea, who may have had some distant family connections with Pompeii.³¹ Poppaea was married to Nero in 62 and at the beginning of 63 she received the title *Augusta*, which occurs in 1074, 3225 and 7625. This title, therefore, provides a *terminus post quem*, while her death in 65 gives a *terminus ante quem* for the dating of these inscriptions. Several scholars have connected the praise of Nero's *iudicia* with the rescinding of the decree forbidding gladiatorial games, and it would certainly be difficult to indicate other imperial decisions of similar popular appeal. This implies that the ban was lifted between 63 and 65, which agrees with the proposed dating of the Lucretian *munera* to the period 62-68. Further confirmation for this conclusion is furnished by 7625: "iudiciis Augc (sic!) felic", found on III,2,1 below the *edictum* 7992, as the relative position of these two inscriptions clearly demonstrates that 7625 had already been painted on the wall when 7992 was placed above it.

In some of the Lucretian *edicta* Nero's name has been overpainted at a later juncture, and this phenomenon has been perceived as the logical consequence of the *damnatio memoriae* declared by the Senate in 68.³² However, the overpainting of Nero's name, far from being a general rule, is only very rarely encountered in Pompeian dipinti. In fact, a substantial number of inscriptions have been handed down containing the name of the fallen emperor, without any trace of deliberate attempts to obliterate it. Thus, on this point the *edicta* display a unique feature within Pompeian epigraphy, and the fact that it is found in only two of the four inscriptions may furnish a clue to an interpretation.

The electoral inscriptions for individual candidates were mostly concentrated in certain streets and quarters, frequently in the vicinity of the private house of the candidate or those of his relatives. The 13 *programmata* supporting D.Lucretius Valens *filius* are all found on the Via dell'Abbondanza and the neighbouring streets, and members of his family seem to have lived in II,3,3, thus explaining the topographical distribution. Two of the Lucretian *edicta munerum* were located in the campaign area of Lucretius *filius*, 7992 and 7995, namely the two featuring the damnation of Nero. Moreover, they were both found very close to *programmata* supporting Lucretius *filius*.³³ This coincidence between the location of *edicta* and *programmata* and the subsequent overpainting is striking and cannot be fortuitous. It seems likely that the overpainting of Nero's name was carried out in connection with the electoral campaign when painters were hired again.

³¹ For this theory see M.Della Corte (1965), 72, A.W. Van Buren, "Pompeii - Nero - Poppaea", Studies presented to David Moore Robinson (St.Louis 1953), 970-4, Giordano (1974). Della Corte seems to exaggerate Poppaea's intimacy with Pompeii, but since the *gens* Poppaea is well documented in Pompeii some familial connections cannot be excluded, cf. Castrèn (1975), 209. As the only empress she appears in graffiti with some frequency (1545 add. p.208, 1744, 3038a?, 6817?, 7756c, 9137), and not least the existence of a group called *Poppaeenses* attracts attention (259, 1499 add. p.704, 2413i, 6682). Also the dedication mentioned in n.27 might support the hypothesis.

³² Thus e.g. Sabbatini Tumolesi (1980), 26 and 29.

³³ 7626 was placed below 7992 on III,2,1 and 7757 above 7995 on III,6,2. See note 2.

The gladiatorial games announced in the four *edicta* were to be held in March and April, and on account of the homogenous palaeographical appearance and almost uniform disposition and wording, they presumably date to one and the same year.³⁴ The new municipal magistrates in Pompeii took over the first of July and the inscriptional campaigns that preceded their election the first of March were not initiated before the autumn.³⁵ The overpainting evidently followed the damnation of Nero, who committed suicide on the 9th of June 68. Thus, while the *edicta* are datable to the period between 63 and spring 68, the candidature of Lucretius jun. must be dated after the 9th of June 68. Moreover, since an intimate connection between the family's donation and the son's candidature can be ascertained, it seems plausible that they took place within the same year. This in turn enables us to date them precisely to 68, the first to the early spring and the latter to the autumn.

What the evidence suggests is in other words the following scenario. At the beginning of 68 it was decided that the latest offspring of the prominent *gens* Lucretia, D.Lucretius Valens, should make his entry into municipal politics and apply for the aedileship. In order to facilitate the son's access to the *ordo decurionum* D.Lucretius Satrius Valens in the spring made several gladiatorial dedications with the double purpose of gaining popular support among the electorate and of demonstrating the munificence and economic standing of the family. The games were announced in large, professionally executed inscriptions that emphasized the father's prestigious name, also mentioning the son who aspired for a municipal career. D.Lucretius Satrius Valens had in the period 50-54 acquired the title *flamen Neronis Caesaris Augusti filii perpetuus*, and although this priesthood had since become purely honorary it could still be used to strengthen the family's public reputation, especially after Nero had lifted the ban and gained new local popularity. A few months later, however, Nero was dethroned and replaced by Galba, who declared him a public enemy and damned his memory. These events must have meant a setback for the Lucretian campaign, when the anti-Neronian propaganda sponsored by the new regime reached the provincial town of Pompeii. The imperial distinctions recently claimed by Lucretius senior in support of his son no longer had the intended effect. When in the autumn painters were again hired to carry out the electoral campaign of Lucretius *filius* they therefore tried to exploit the popular favour gained by the *ludi*, by attaching *programmata* to the *edicta* in the campaign

³⁴ The *edicta* announce games from the 28th of March (1185 and 7995), 4th of April (7992) and the five days from the 8th to the 12th of April (3884).

³⁵ Thus, the year of 80 was a quinquennial one in Pompeii, and in the copious inscriptional material from the last years very few quinquennial inscriptions occur. This means that the campaign for the following year had not yet begun when Pompeii was buried on the 24th of August. This reconstruction, implying a four-month period of designation, is at variance with the example of M.Holconius Celer who was designated *duumvir* for about one year. Already before the demise of Augustus the 19th of August 14 AD he was appointed *duumvir* for the quinquennial year beginning the 1st of July 15 AD (X 840, 944, 945, 946). He cannot, therefore, have been ordinarily elected on the *comitium*, but must quite exceptionally have been appointed by the *ordo decurionum* long before the annual election, probably as a special honour to the son of M.Holconius Rufus, the leading citizen of the Augustan age.

area, while at the same time discreetly over-painting Nero's name. This measure, though limited in its extent, had wide implications that would not go unnoticed by the Pompeian public. Therefore, the responsibility for this cannot have been the painters' but must be traced to directives given by members of the Lucretian family who thus disavowed their previous connections with Nero.

This step should not be perceived as the inevitable result of the damnation instituted by Galba, since there is no parallel example in the entire Pompeian inscriptional corpus to the effacing of Nero's name. Thus, for example, Ti.Claudius Verus, who had dedicated in honour of Nero (7989), seems to have made no effort to carry out the damnation. It is also remarkable that the late emperor's name has been painted over in only two of the four preserved Lucretian *edicta*. Only in the two cases where Lucretius *filius* wished to exploit the *munera* directly in his posting campaign did the family feel the necessity to conform with the propaganda campaign against Nero conducted by the new government.³⁶

The effect of this persistent campaign could even be felt in a minor town like Pompeii, where a prestigious imperial priesthood within a few months became an embarrassment instead of a recommendation. Thus, when the young Lucretius, running for the aedileship, could not bear to put his name next to Nero's, it was not because Nero had become particularly unpopular in Pompeii, but because a change in public opinion in Rome had occurred. In short, this example seems to demonstrate a considerable attentiveness in a small-town upper-class to the current views of the capital, which may in effect have served the central powers in Rome as well as any directly exerted control.³⁷

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³⁶ For the *damnatio* of Nero see for example P.Kragelund, CQ 38 (1988), 507 with litt.

³⁷ For a similar local eagerness to adapt to the urban patterns and endorse the imperial propaganda of the Augustan age see P.Zanker, *Augustus und die Macht der Bilder* (München 1987), 264-328.