

Sulla and the Gods: Religion, Politics,
and Propaganda in the *Autobiography*
of Lucius Cornelius Sulla

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Abstract

Lucius Cornelius Sulla wrote an autobiographical account of his controversial career which, although it was left incomplete on his death in 78 BC, nonetheless had an incalculably significant influence on writers during the subsequent centuries. The *Autobiography* has not survived intact, but the twenty-three remaining fragments reveal a great deal about the original structure and contents of the work. Through the medium of commentaries on each of the fragments, this thesis considers the function and role of this lost text in Sulla's self-representation strategy. Sulla was a man who was intensely interested in and concerned with managing the ways in which he was perceived both by his contemporaries and by posterity; although the evidence for this strategy is diverse and problematic, it is nevertheless possible to reconstruct the most important ways in which Sulla engaged with different groups. Through coinage, inscriptions, monuments, and nomenclature, Sulla exerted great effort in establishing a public image of himself as a man favoured by the gods, justified in his actions, and whose actions had brought great prosperity to Rome; this was so intricate and thorough that it can be termed 'propaganda'. It was in the *Autobiography*, however, that Sulla was able to develop these themes. By presenting a comprehensive reconsideration of his life and career, Sulla was able to create a complex character portrait of himself, and engaged in self-justification, confronting many of the negative interpretations of his actions that had already begun to develop. Through analysis of the fragments of the *Autobiography*, therefore, this thesis asks important questions concerning the nature of self-representation and propaganda in the late Republic and the role of religious discourse within political negotiation in this period, and offers new insights into the intellectual world of Rome in the early first century BC.

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Abbreviations

<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> . Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 1972-.
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> . Berlin: G. Reimer. 1862-.
<i>FGRH</i>	Jacoby, F. (1923-) <i>Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> . Leiden: Brill.
<i>FRH</i>	Cornell, T. J. (ed.) (2013) <i>The Fragments of the Roman Historians</i> . 3 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
<i>ILLRP</i>	Degrassi, A. (1963) <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Publicae</i> . Florence: La Nuova Italia.
<i>ILS</i>	Dessau, H. (1892-1916) <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> . 3 vols. Berlin: Weidmann.
<i>LS</i>	Liddell, H. G., Scott, R. (1889) <i>An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon</i> . Oxford: Clarendon. 7 th edition.
<i>LTUR</i>	Steinby, E. M. (ed.) (1993-2000) <i>Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae</i> . Rome: Edizioni Quasar.
<i>MRR</i>	Broughton, T. R. S. (1951) <i>The Magistrates of the Roman Republic</i> . 2 vols. New York: American Philological Association.
<i>RDGE</i>	Sherk, R. K. (1969) <i>Roman Documents of the Greek East: senatus consulta and epistulae to the age of Augustus</i> . Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press.
<i>RRC</i>	Crawford, M. (1974) <i>Roman Republican Coinage</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
<i>TLG</i>	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Graecae</i> . Irvine: University of California, Irvine, 1972-.
<i>TLL</i>	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Latinae</i> . Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 1894-.

The abbreviations of ancient works are given according to those used in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th ed. The abbreviations of journal titles are given according to those used in *L'Année Philologique*.

The fragments of Sulla's *Autobiography* are cited using the format "F1P"; in this context, "P" refers to Peter (1914), "C" to Chassignet (2004), and "S" to *FRH*. Where the fragments belong to a work other than the *Autobiography*, this is made clear.

Introduction

Sulla's *Autobiography*, a detailed account of the life of Lucius Cornelius Sulla composed in 79-78 by the former dictator following his return to the status of *privatus* after his consulship of 80 BC, has been lost. The surviving fragments of the text, however, enable the reader to determine the ways in which Sulla chose to recount and represent his career. Sulla was responsible for a number of innovations in the methods of self-representation employed by the political elite in this turbulent period of the late Republic. This thesis aims to place the *Autobiography* within the context of Sulla's self-representation strategy, examining the ways in which Sulla engaged with different stories that had been circled concerning himself, and constructed a coherent image of himself as a man favoured by the gods. In order to analyse the innovative aspects of Sulla's *Autobiography*, it will first be necessary to establish the context of the work within the development of autobiography as a burgeoning genre in the late Republic. This introduction will therefore summarise the important precedents that may have informed Sulla's work, before examining the place of the *Autobiography* within Sulla's career, some of the most important details of the work (including its title and the language in which it was written, and the form in which the fragments of the work have been preserved); the most important scholarship on the *Autobiography* will be reviewed, and the methodology employed in this thesis will be explained.

The development of autobiography in the late Republic

Between the end of the second and the beginning of the first centuries BC, a new branch emerged within the genre of Roman historiography. A number of leading political figures began to write accounts of their own careers after retiring from active public life. The earliest of these texts were traditional historical works written in the style of annalistic historiography, that for the first time stretched down to contemporary events, and included episodes in which the authors themselves had taken part. In time, the more traditional historiographical aspects were abandoned in favour of purely autobiographical accounts, and works came to be written which may be loosely termed 'autobiographies'. Although very little has survived of these early works, the remaining fragments can be used to reconstruct the dynamics of this emerging tradition.

Various social, cultural, and political factors seem to have played a role in the development of autobiographical culture and, eventually, of the autobiographical genre in the late Republic. It is clear that the growth in popularity of the autobiography as a vehicle for literary efforts, as well as for the gaining of political capital, drew on a range of cultural developments that had been taking place during the preceding decades. The identification of all of these social trends is a difficult task, and several attempts have been made to isolate the various roles of these diverse influences on the growth of autobiography as a genre.¹

The idea of ‘memory’ features prominently in all accounts of the rise of autobiography in Rome.² In the Republic, there were two main venues for the negotiation of a person’s memory after their deaths: *laudationes funebres* and *imagines*. In the case of the *laudationes funebres*, orations given following the death of a prominent individual, the encomiastic potential of bibliographical accounts became apparent. Although these speeches were inevitably not autobiographical, it is apparent that certain individuals swiftly saw the use of this practice for self-promotion as a venue for the display of oratorical excellence and for conveying specific messages about the speakers themselves.³

Similarly, the idea of ‘memory’ is central to the tradition of *imagines*, the wax ancestor masks that adorned the *atria* of the *domus* of all the prominent individuals in Roman society who could claim senatorial forebears, and which were carried in procession upon the death of any member of that family.⁴ It is notable that many of the earliest autobiographers in Rome were those who could not boast of many illustrious ancestors; the senatorial ancestry of both M. Aemilius Scaurus and P. Rutilius Rufus were, for example, so remote that when each man stood for the consulship, they did so

¹ Rawson (1985) 215-232 identifies autobiography as one of the genres that reveal the increasing importance and diversification of historiography in all its forms as a means of intellectual communication in the Republic. Rüpke (2012) is the most recent attempt to analyse the most important trends in the various cultural practices that developed in the late Republic.

² See for example the discussions of Bates (1983) and Flower (forthcoming).

³ Eg. Scaurus F1 Peter = Val. Max. 4.4.11; see below. *Laudationes funebres* consisted of a summary of the life of the deceased and of the careers of each of the individuals whose masks were being carried in the procession: Pol. 6.54.1. Kierdorf (1980). *Laudationes* in the development of autobiography in Rome: Lewis (1993) 658.

Although the text of the *laudatio* was kept in family archives, it was not uncommon for copies to be published and circulated; Cicero notes on two occasions that he had enjoyed reading *laudationes*: *Orat.* 11.37, *Brut.* 16.61. Crawford (1941) 25-26.

⁴ Flower (1996).

as *novi homines*.⁵ It is possible that the intense interest in self-representation among these men was linked to a need to assert strong credentials in a political atmosphere in which their lack of prestigious or distinguished forebears had already placed them at a considerable disadvantage.⁶ A similar picture emerges in the case of Sulla: although he was not a *novus homo*, in recent years his family had fallen out of public life and, though part of the *gens Cornelia*, his was not an illustrious branch.⁷ Two fragments of Sulla's *Autobiography* concern Sulla's ancestors, and while it seems to have been commonplace for autobiographers to discuss the deeds of their ancestors, the extent to which Sulla appears to have done so is notable.⁸

Roman autobiography did not emerge in its fully developed form until the first decades of the first century BC, but its origins can be traced back much further. The first Roman who might be said to have written an autobiographical account of his own life was Q. Fabius Pictor, who composed his *Graeci Annales* in the late third and early second centuries BC.⁹ Pictor's work was certainly not an autobiography; his interests lay in the moral analysis of Rome's past and the interpretation of her role in the wider Mediterranean world. Probably writing in Greek, it is likely that his audience was made up of the senatorial, educated elites, but it is also possible that he was writing an account of Roman history with a Greek reader in mind, explaining unfamiliar Roman terms and customs where needed.¹⁰ It is even possible that he included an address to Carthage.¹¹ Pictor's history began with the arrival of Aeneas in Italy, covering all major

⁵ See below. Scaurus: Wiseman (1971) 106.

⁶ Lewis (1993) 658-659 notes the importance of claims of illustrious ancestry within a political career.

⁷ See below on Sulla's early financial difficulties.

⁸ See the commentaries on F2P and F3P. This seems to have reflected the contents of the *laudatio funebris*; see n. 3 above.

⁹ Peter (1914) lxix-c, 3-39; Beck/Walter (2001) 55-147; Chassignet (2004) 16-59; *FRH* 1.160-178, 2.32-105, 3.13-49.

¹⁰ Alföldi (1963) 123-175 has argued that the *Graeci Annales* were a form of propaganda for Rome to be read by those in the Greek world; this account suggests a relationship between Greece and Rome that does not seem to reflect the reality suggested by our sources. In a paper delivered in Newcastle in October 2012, Tony Woodman suggested that Pictor's work might have been written in Latin, rather than Greek. The evidence he cited is compelling, including the way in which Pictor is referred to by later authors and some of the language used in the surviving fragments. I anticipate that a more developed iteration of that argument in its published form will provide an extremely strong argument that Pictor wrote in Latin. Bispham and Cornell in *FRH* argue, on the basis of Cic. *Div.* 1.43 (*Graecis annalibus*) that, on the contrary, this can only be understood to mean that the work was written in Greek. *FRH* 1.163.

¹¹ Badian (1966) 2-6.

events in Rome's past down to the Second Punic War – in which he himself had fought – and included personal insights, observations, and experiences. These autobiographical features of the work seem to have been part of his historical project, and, despite the key role Pictor played in inspiring the historians of the Republic, it was some time before other writers followed this precedent.¹² Although the inclusion of autobiographical details in an essentially historical work was not new, since both Thucydides and Xenophon had done so long before, Pictor marks the first attempt to write history with an autobiographical element in Rome.¹³

The *Origines* of M. Porcius Cato the Elder (*cos.* 195)¹⁴ was a work of pivotal importance in the development of Roman historiography, and is the first example of which many fragments have survived.¹⁵ Writing in Latin but, like Pictor, rejecting the annalistic method,¹⁶ Cato's history concerned his own participation in political events and included a large number of his own speeches, arguably for the purpose of displaying his wisdom and his oratorical skills.¹⁷ Cato's *Origines* still seems to have been a work that ought primarily to be categorised as historiographical; while autobiographical features also appeared, and were a more prominent aspect of the work than was the case in Pictor's *Graeci Annales*, the *Origines* cannot simply be defined as 'an autobiography' in the sense that works of later writers can. However, by combining historical narrative and didacticism with his own political agenda, and using his writing in order to influence his peers, Cato's work was of great importance in the establishing of written Latin as a venue for the negotiation of power relationships among the

¹² Pictor's influence on Roman historians: Badian (1966) 6.

¹³ Thucydides (4.104.4-107.7) recounts his own role in the failed attempt to prevent the capture of Amphipolis. Xenophon's *Anabasis* features autobiographical details throughout.

¹⁴ *MRR* 1.339; Bates (1983) 58-120.

¹⁵ Peter (1914) cxxvii-clxiv, 55-97; Chassignet (1986); Beck/Walter (2001) 148-224; *FRH* 1.191-218, 2.63-159; 3.134-243.

¹⁶ Cato's decision to write in Latin appears to be consistent with his interest in promoting Roman values. Gruen (1992) 52-83 argued that Cato's professed anti-Hellenism was often over-stated. He seems to have found some aspects of Greek culture appealing, although it is difficult to find any "systematic principles of selectivity" (63). Cato's *Origines* certainly contained a number of Greek, or Greek-inspired, features, such as the universalizing ethic which prompted him to write about both *otium* and *negotium*: Rüpke (2012) 145-146.

¹⁷ Badian (1966) 7-10; Bates (1983) 58.

senatorial elite in Rome,¹⁸ which, together with his innovative approach to the creation of his self-portrait, paved the way for autobiography proper.¹⁹

A shift seems to have occurred by the age of the Gracchi; it had become more acceptable for Roman historians to include autobiographical details in their compositions, and to use history as a venue for the expression of specific political agendas.²⁰ Gaius Gracchus is known to have written a biographical pamphlet in which he narrated the life of his brother.²¹ Like some of the later autobiographies, it seems to have been dedicated to, or couched as a letter to, one of the writer's friends, M. Pomponius,²² and seems to have been reasonably brief.²³ Unfortunately, we have very little evidence concerning this work, but we may surmise that it must have contained certain autobiographical elements, and will have been circulated for political purposes.

From this point on, it becomes much easier to analyse the development of autobiographical writing in Rome, since a greater number of fragments have survived of the works of three further autobiographers who preceded Sulla himself, all of whom were connected in some way with Sulla: M. Aemilius Scaurus, P. Rutilius Rufus, and Q. Lutatius Catulus. Scaurus (*cos.* 115)²⁴ composed what was undoubtedly the first Roman work that was purely autobiographical in nature and intention. His *De Vita Sua*, which ran to three books, consisted of apologetic discussions of his highly distinguished career.²⁵ Like Sulla, Scaurus was born into a patrician family that had in recent generations become more obscure,²⁶ but he earned many honours, eventually becoming

¹⁸ Sciarrino (2011) 117-160.

¹⁹ Badian (1966) 9: "history could become polemic and apologia"; Bates (1983) 59.

²⁰ See Badian (1966) 11-14.

²¹ Peter (1914) 119. Santangelo (2005) 198-200; *FRH* 1.243; 2.344-5; 3.225. The main evidence for Gracchus' pamphlet is Cic. *Div.* 1.36, with further information at 2.62, and Plut. *Ti. Gracch.* 8.7.

²² Cic. *Div.* 2.62: *C. Gracchus ad M. Pomponium scripsit...* Briscoe in *FRH* 3.225 argues that it must be a dedication, citing the use of similar phrases by Scaurus (see below) and Coelius Antipater (*rhet. Herr.* 4.18).

²³ Plutarch describes it as a βιβλίον: *Ti. Gracch.* 8.7.

²⁴ *MRR* 1.531.

²⁵ Peter (1914) 185-186; Bates (1983) 121-162; Chassignet (2004) 161-163; *FRH* 1.267-270, 2. 432-439, 3.273-274. Scaurus' career: Henderson (1958) 194-195; Bates (1986); Chassignet (2004) lxxxviii-xc.

²⁶ Cic. *Pro Mur.* 16. Scaurus' family had fallen so far from fame that he could even be considered a *novus homo*: Plut. *De Fort. Rom.* 4; Wiseman (1971) 106; at 103, Wiseman notes the similarity between Scaurus' and Sulla's family backgrounds. In the *de vir. ill.* (72.2) we are told that, while young, Scaurus chose to enter public life rather

consul in 115. He maintained a strong relationship with the Metelli: his colleague in the consulship was M. Caecilius Metellus, and his second wife was the same Caecilia Metella who would later marry Sulla.²⁷ Sallust's portrayal of this man, who was *princeps senatus* for more than quarter of a century,²⁸ is less than flattering: while he admits some qualities (he was *nobilis* and *impiger*), he also states that he was *avidus potentiae, honoris, divitiarum, ceterum vitia sua callide occultans*,²⁹ although recent scholarly work has aimed to view the life and career of Scaurus without the influence of Sallust's judgement.³⁰ Scaurus' decision to write an account of contemporary history is not surprising. By this stage, it had become common for prominent statesmen to turn to literary pursuits, and the increasingly important role of the individual within public life of Rome meant that the line between traditional senatorial or annalistic history and political biography was becoming increasingly blurred.³¹ Established Republican historiographical traditions allowed great scope for the exploration of autobiographical details, and no writer had yet turned to writing an account of their life that was purely autobiographical, rather than part of a historical work of wider scope.

For these reasons, Scaurus' choice to abandon traditional models and embark on a purely autobiographical project entitled *De vita sua*, written in the first person, is notable.³² Scholars have explained this choice either by describing the work as a development of the genre of *commentarius*, a set of notes which may include lengthy personal discussions of specific themes,³³ or by suggesting that Scaurus drew inspiration from the autobiographical writings of Aratus of Sicyon (271-213),³⁴ the Peloponnesian politician who led the Achaean League against the Macedonians. His

than becoming an *argentarius*, a detail perhaps taken from his own *De vita sua*: Bates (1986) 252.

²⁷ Plut. *Sull.* 6.10; Badian (1957) 324.

²⁸ *MRR* 1.533. On Scaurus as *princeps senatus*, and the way in which this was received by Sulla, see Tansey (2000).

²⁹ Sall. *Iug.* 15.4-5.

³⁰ Bates (1986).

³¹ It seems to have been conventional to write such accounts following the retirement of the author from public life. Although there is little evidence on which to draw, it has been suggested that Scaurus wrote about his involvement in the outbreak of the Social War, and therefore did not publish his work before 90-89. See Bates (1986) 128, 136-145.

³² Badian even suggests that the work was intended to be part of the tradition of historical writing, rather than a deviation from that broad genre: (1966) 23. First person: Diomed. 1, p. 374K (= F3 Peter); Serv. *ad Verg. Aen.* 12.121 (= F6 Peter).

³³ Bömer (1953); Lewis (1993) 633; see below on *commentarii*.

³⁴ Peter (1914) 247. *FGRH* §231: 974-8.

autobiography, which was extremely detailed and over thirty books in length, and written in a style that Plutarch dismisses as a *πάρεργος*, composed in haste,³⁵ was received rather more favourably by Polybius as being *λίαν ἀληθινούς καὶ σαφεῖς*,³⁶ and is frequently cited as being an important influence on the growth in popularity of autobiography in Rome.³⁷ While it is possible that Aratus' autobiography was influential, the fact that it took a century for a work that was purely autobiographical in nature to appear in Rome strongly suggests that other influences were involved in this process. Bates' suggestion, that the answer is to be found in the life of Scaurus himself as much as social and literary factors, is likely to be correct.³⁸ Scaurus had held his outstanding status for quarter of a century and played such a significant role in the governing of Rome that the history of the period in which he took part in politics became a history of his own life and, hence, he wrote about his own life – *De vita sua*.³⁹

Unfortunately, very little remains of Scaurus' *De vita sua* to allow us to verify these hypotheses. Just seven brief fragments have survived, of which only two preserve more than a few words, and the context of all of which is almost impossible to ascertain. Three seem to derive from the context of military operations, although this too is impossible to establish.⁴⁰ In a lengthy article from 1918, Pais compiled an exhaustive collection of passages from ancient authors that are likely to be drawn from Scaurus' *De vita sua*, but which do not contain any reference to that text.⁴¹ Although many of Pais's conclusions are difficult to verify, his reconstruction of Scaurus's work suggests that it had a very wide scope, covering the whole of Scaurus's career, and possibly starting from his youth. The work was, according to Cicero, dedicated to his friend L. Fufidius.⁴² There is no suggestion that Scaurus incurred any negative reactions to his

³⁵ Plut. *Arat.* 3.2.

³⁶ Pol. 2.40.4. Polybius' own politics may have played a part in this connection.

³⁷ Marasco (2011) 104-118; Tatum (2011) 167.

³⁸ Bates (1983) 122.

³⁹ Cicero famously commented (*Font.* 24) that the whole world was governed by Scaurus' nod: *nutu prope terrarum orbis regebatur*. Dyck (2012) 58 has noted that Cicero was here drawing a parallel between Scaurus and Jupiter, "whose nod indicated assent" (such as at Verg. *Aen.* 9.106).

⁴⁰ Peter and Chassignet fragments 5 (= Diomed. 1 p. 377K), 6 (= Serv. *ad Verg. Aen.* 12.121), and 7 (= Front. *Strat.* 4.3.13).

⁴¹ Pais (1918) 91-167. The majority of these passages are located in the works of Valerius Maximus (3.2.18; 3.7.8; 5.8.4), Asconius (22C), and the *de vir. ill.* (72.1-2). Pais identified fragments of the basis of their level of detail, and the political affiliations of the sources, an unwise methodology given the paucity of surviving material.

⁴² Cic. *Brut.* 112. The identification of this Fufidius is problematic; Nicolet (1967) 297-301 argued that he could not be identical with the *primipilaris* who served under Sulla,

choice to write an autobiography. Tacitus claims that no-one questioned the motives of either Scaurus or P. Rutilius Rufus in the writing of their autobiographies, and Cicero appears to have thought of Scaurus very highly.⁴³ The work appears to have contained a significant element of self-praise, and Cicero even refers to the piece as *Scauri laudes*.⁴⁴ Despite Tacitus's knowledge of the work, however, it does not seem that the *De vita sua* survived for long after Scaurus' death; Cicero states that, despite the high quality of the writing and the work's usefulness, it was scarcely read in his day.⁴⁵

P. Rutilius Rufus is the next individual known to have written an account of his own career that might be said to be autobiographical in nature and intention, and was another figure with whom Sulla came into contact in the course of his career. The details of the life and career of P. Rutilius Rufus are reasonably well known. Although he seems to have hailed from a patrician family, no ancestors have been confidently identified, and when he stood for the consulship he did so as a *novus homo*.⁴⁶ Rutilius first stood for the consulship of 115 but lost to Scaurus;⁴⁷ his second attempt was successful, and he held the post in 105.⁴⁸ Rutilius is best known, however, for his trial and his conviction *de repetundis*, among other charges, which seems to have taken place between 92 and 89 BC, and for his subsequent exile from Rome.⁴⁹ Rutilius had been serving as *legatus* to Q. Mucius Scaevola (*cos.* 117), during the latter's governorship of Asia,⁵⁰ and it is likely that, since Scaevola was a more senior politician, Rutilius was the easier target for prosecution.⁵¹ Rutilius never returned from his exile, but spent the

who was granted a praetorship and a seat in the senate in 81 or 80, and who was said to have been responsible for the idea of the proscriptions, although Konrad (1989) has shown that this distinction may not be necessary. Sall. *Hist.* 1.55.22; Plut. *Sull.* 31.1-3; Flor. 2.9.25; Oros. 5.21.3.

⁴³ Tac. *Agr.* 1; Cicero's opinion: Asconius 22C; Cic. *Brut.* 111-112; cf. his defence of Scaurus' son M. Aemilius Scaurus (*pr.* 56): Cic. *Pro Scaur.* Bates (1983) 127 even suggested that Scaurus' autobiography might have been the cause of Cicero's admiration.

⁴⁴ Cic. *Brut.* 112.

⁴⁵ Cic. *Brut.* 112.

⁴⁶ Hendrickson (1933) 154-156. Kallet-Marx (1990) 130 suggests that he may have had either a father or a grandfather who achieved the tribunate in 169, but even if this were true it is apparent that Rutilius did not come from an illustrious line.

⁴⁷ Cic. *De Orat.* 2.280.

⁴⁸ For a summary of the evidence see *MRR* 1.555. Connections between Rutilius and Scaurus: Kallet-Marx (1990) 131-135.

⁴⁹ Kallet-Marx (1990), with 126-129 on the date of Rutilius' exile; Alexander (1990) 49-50 (no. 94) argues for a dating of 92.

⁵⁰ *MRR* 1.528.

⁵¹ Gruen (1968) 204-206; Kallet-Marx (1990) 122-139; Steel (2013) 36.

remainder of his life in Mytilene and Smyrna; Sulla reportedly offered him a pardon and permission to return to Rome, and was refused.⁵² The story of Rutilius' exile became extremely well known. It was frequently asserted that he had been wrongly convicted, and that his exile was the result not of justice but of the struggle for the courts between the senate and the *equites*; because of this, Rutilius himself came to be seen as a martyr, a paragon of proper Roman virtue, who had been unjustly punished.⁵³

It is likely that Rutilius himself did much to encourage this caricature. He is thought to have spent much of his exile in literary pursuits, and is known to have produced two works: an autobiographical *De vita sua* in Latin, five books in length, and a history of recent times in Greek.⁵⁴ Since the history also considered contemporary events, and incidents in which Rutilius took part, it is extremely difficult, and in many cases impossible, to determine from which of the two parallel works the fragments of Rutilius' writing stemmed.⁵⁵ It has even been suggested that the Greek history was merely a translation for a Greek audience of the Latin *De vita sua*, albeit expanded with explanatory notes for a readership that might have been unaware of certain Roman cultural details;⁵⁶ whether or not this was true, it was certainly the case that Rutilius' history contained a large amount of information concerning his own life and, as such, can be termed autobiographical, even if it was not strictly speaking an autobiography.

It is clear, however, that Rutilius wrote with a dual purpose in mind: both to set out recent events in the way in which Rutilius thought they ought to be remembered, and to present a character portrait of himself that fulfilled his own agenda. It is this portrayal of Rutilius as a man of unparalleled virtue and honour, who was punished unjustly by the state which he had served for so long, that betrays the reach and influence of Rutilius' literary works. Velleius described him as *virum non saeculi sui sed omnis aevi optimum*,⁵⁷ and he was referred to as a Roman counterpart to Socrates.⁵⁸ Rutilius came to be seen as a victim of equestrian attempts to gain revenge through their

⁵² Sen. *Ep. mor. ad Luc.* 24.4; Val. Max. 6.4.4; Sen. *De Prov.* 3.7; Quint. *Inst.* 11.1.12.

⁵³ Hendrickson (1933) 174; Bates (1983) 165; Kallet-Marx (1990) 124.

⁵⁴ Hendrickson (1933) 166.

⁵⁵ Bates (1983) 165-170. Fragments: Peter (1914) 187-190; Chassignet (2004) x-xvi, 2-5, 164-169; *FRH* 1.278-281, 2.458-471, 3.284-288. See also the large number of passages attributed to Rutilius by Pais (1918) 35-89.

⁵⁶ Hendrickson (1933) 166.

⁵⁷ Vell. Pat. 2.13.2.

⁵⁸ Cic. *De Orat.* 1.229, 231; Quint. *Inst.* 11.1.3.

power in the courts,⁵⁹ and other writers may have contributed to the development of this portrait, but the consistency of this depiction is so striking that it is unlikely to have arisen spontaneously, but derived from the character portrait contained the two autobiographical works written by Rutilius himself.⁶⁰

Rutilius' motivations for the cultivation of this public image appear to stem from a desire not only for self-praise, but also self-defence. Although Rutilius' character portrait seems to have been influential during the decades and indeed centuries that followed, it is nonetheless clear that alternative interpretations of Rutilius' actions and career had been possible. Most striking is the tradition mentioned by Plutarch in which Rutilius was held responsible for conspiring with Mithridates VI Eupator and inciting him to carry out the massacre of Roman citizens in Asia in 88 BC, known as the Asiatic Vespers.⁶¹ Plutarch's source for this story was, apparently, Theophanes of Mytilene, and it is possible that the tale had arisen due to Theophanes' own political association and friendship with Pompey, whose father had been a bitter enemy of Rutilius. Plutarch states that he did not believe this story, but the fact remains that it was known to the biographer centuries later. It is likely that it was malicious stories such as this that prompted Rutilius to set out his own account of recent events, so that he could persuade his reader that any such rumours were not accurate. In this sense, Rutilius' work was innovative, since as well as adopting Cato's model of using an autobiographical medium to create a consistent character portrait, he understood the potential of the genre for self-justification. This was an aspect of autobiographical writing that seems to have been of the utmost importance to Sulla, as shall become clear below. Moreover, Rutilius is known to have interacted with Sulla in the incident of his refusal of Sulla's invitation to return to Rome. He and Scaurus, pioneers of autobiographical writing, were thus within Sulla's circle of acquaintances, however remotely, and it may be argued that, because of this, Sulla had been made aware of some of the potential benefits of autobiography. The final Republican autobiographer before Sulla himself was, however, far from a distant acquaintance of Sulla, but a former colleague and an important

⁵⁹ Gruen (1968) 204-6.

⁶⁰ Hendrickson (1933) 174.

⁶¹ Plut. *Pomp.* 37.2-3. Asiatic Vespers: see the commentary on F17P.

political ally, whose autobiography there can be no doubt that Sulla knew well: Q. Lutatius Catulus.⁶²

The story of Catulus' career is not one of glory. Although he held the consulship in 102 (with Marius)⁶³ and, also with Marius, celebrated a triumph over the Cimbri in 101, this belies a life that was otherwise marked by conspicuous failures. He stood for the consulship unsuccessfully on three occasions before being elected, and despite his eventual success in the Cimbric War after Marius had arrived to assist him, during his consular year he failed to achieve any great victories. His losses to the Cimbri were so great that the son of M. Aemilius Scaurus, who fought under Catulus, on returning from the war, was turned away by his father and committed suicide out of shame.⁶⁴ To a certain extent, Catulus' later success with Marius at the battle of Vercellae alleviated the problems caused by his previous failures; in the years that followed, Catulus engaged with an unprecedented range of self-representational media, and it is likely that this was, in part, an attempt to ensure that he was remembered as favourably as possible, despite his early failures. Catulus was granted a joint triumph with Marius after the battle of Vercellae, and he embarked on a building programme that stated his claim to responsibility for the victory over the Cimbri.⁶⁵ His building projects were matched in the literary sphere by four or five historiographical projects: his *Communes historiae*, composed with the Greek freedman Daphnis, which concerned the early history of Rome and focussed on Aeneas in particular, running to at least four books;⁶⁶ a published funeral speech in praise of his mother;⁶⁷ epigrams;⁶⁸ and either one or two autobiographical projects, depending on how one interprets the ancient evidence.

⁶² Peter (1914) 191-194; Chassignet (2004) 6-12, 170-171; Scholz/Walter (2013) 71-79; *FRH* 1.271-273, 2.440-445, 3.273-274. Flower (forthcoming) 29-30 argues that Catulus' autobiography should be dated earlier than the autobiographies of his older contemporaries, Scaurus and Rutilius. Although she is correct that Catulus and Marius did participate in an intense conflict after the battle of Vercellae, there is no reason to suppose that he produced his autobiography at such an early stage, when the two men would remain political enemies for decades to come.

⁶³ *MRR* 1.567.

⁶⁴ *Front. Strat.* 4.1.13. Lewis (1974) 108.

⁶⁵ He constructed the *Aedes fortunae huiusce diei* (*LTUR* 2.269-270) and the *Porticus Catuli* (*LTUR* 4.119). See Noble (forthcoming); Flower (forthcoming) 37-39.

⁶⁶ Flower (forthcoming) 35; Chassignet (2004) xx-xxi.

⁶⁷ *Cic. Orat.* 2.44. Cicero seems to have been very familiar with Catulus' oratorical skills, and it is likely that he either published other speeches, or that these speeches were included in his autobiographical works, on which see below.

⁶⁸ Courtney (2003) 75-78; Flower (forthcoming) 35.

Cicero and Fronto mention autobiographical works, but the different ways in which they allude to these texts render it unclear whether they are discussing the same work, or two distinct texts. Cicero discusses a work *de consulatu et de rebus gestis suis*,⁶⁹ which, he claims, was written in a style that was reminiscent of Xenophon.⁷⁰ Although Catulus' autobiographical work is conventionally given the title *De consulatu suo et de rebus gestis suis* for this reason, Flower is correct to point out that Cicero's citation of the text does not imply that the work was called by this name, but simply that this was its subject matter.⁷¹ Fronto's reference to an autobiographical work by Catulus differs in two key respects: he describes the work as a letter (*litterae*), and his literary technique as being pompous and long-winded (*turgent*), which contrasts with Cicero's description of Catulus' style.⁷² Flower, in a stark departure from the conclusions of previous scholars, argues on the basis of these differences that Catulus must have written two autobiographical accounts of his own life: a lengthy literary piece with which Cicero was familiar, and a letter concerning his achievements in the war against the Cimbri, known by Fronto, which was most likely an edited version of the letter sent by the commander to the senate petitioning them for the right to hold a triumph.⁷³ However, the evidence for the existence of two autobiographical texts is not unimpeachable. While it is true that Fronto's description of Catulus' linguistic style differs somewhat from Cicero's, there are also points of similarity. Cicero's description of Catulus' language as *mollis* and the use of *teneris* in Fronto may be seen to correspond, and while this alone is not sufficient to determine that the two authors were referring to the same text, it nonetheless demonstrates that the two descriptions are not as dissimilar as Flower imagines. Moreover, we know from Cicero that Catulus sent his autobiographical piece to his friend, the epic poet Aulus Furius, in the hope that he would use the material as the basis for an epic composition on the subject of the Cimbric War.⁷⁴ The verb *mitto* was frequently used for the dedication of literary texts,⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Cic. *Brut.* 132.

⁷⁰ This is usually, and reasonably, taken to be a reference to the *Anabasis* (Bates (1983) 206; Flower (forthcoming) 31), which was in many ways an excellent parallel with Catulus' autobiographical project. For the connection between Catulus and Xenophon see also Rawson (1985) 228.

⁷¹ Flower (forthcoming) 31.

⁷² Fronto *Ad Ver. Imp.* 2.1.14. Cicero's and Fronto's conclusions concerning the qualities of Catulus' writing confirm that the text was composed in Latin. Chassignet (2004) xcvi-xcix.

⁷³ Flower (forthcoming) 32.

⁷⁴ Cic. *Brut.* 132. Courtney (1993) 97-98.

but the appearance of *misit* in Cicero's account of this transaction may suggest that, in a more literal sense, Catulus sent his autobiographical work to Furius; this would account for Fronto's assertion that the work took the form of *litterae*.⁷⁶ Scholars have long inferred that Cicero and Fronto were both referring to the same work in the two passages under consideration here, and although Flower argues that the *litterae* represented an alternative autobiographical project on the part of Catulus, the ancient evidence is far from conclusive.⁷⁷ It seems likely, however, that Catulus wrote a relatively brief autobiographical account of his career, focussing on his consulship of 102 and his actions in the Cimbric War. The failures and disappointments of Catulus' early career suggest that he had more reason than most to compose an account of his own life that emphasised his success in attaining the consulship, in defeating the Cimbri at Vercellae, and in being awarded a triumph.

It is likely that Catulus' interest in his public image was also influenced by his familiarity with Greek culture: although autobiography was a recent development within Roman historiography, it had been present in Greek historiography for some time.⁷⁸ 102, the year of Catulus' consulship, was considered by Cicero an important landmark in the history of the reception of Greek culture in Rome, since it saw the arrival of the poet Archias.⁷⁹

As Catulus' friendship and alliance with Marius came to an end in the years that followed their joint triumph, it is likely that Catulus wished to ensure that his own achievements were not forgotten. Very few fragments of Catulus' work have survived, but those that do all concern Catulus' and Marius' roles in the Cimbric War, preserved in Plutarch's *Life of Marius*.⁸⁰ They appear to show a concerted effort by Catulus to remove from Marius the credit for the victory that had cemented the security of the Italian peninsula, which is consistent with Catulus' other public projects, such as his

⁷⁵ *TLL* 8.1180, '*mitto*', *strictius sc. dedicandi causa*, with list of *exempla*. See Flower's interpretation of the use of *misit* here: (forthcoming) 30-31.

⁷⁶ This may be literary fiction: see Gibson (2012) on the phenomenon of published letters and letter-collections, and Rosenmeyer (2001), esp. 39-60, on fictive letter-writing in antiquity. On pseudepigraphy in Rome see Peirano (2012), esp. 1-35, 205-241.

⁷⁷ This argument dates back to the 1870s. For a bibliographical survey see Flower (forthcoming) 32.

⁷⁸ See above.

⁷⁹ *Cic. Arch.* 5.

⁸⁰ *Plut. Mar.* 25.6, 26.5, 27.4.

building programme.⁸¹ Although these fragments are informative and enable us to understand some elements of Catulus' self-representation, it does not appear that they have been taken directly from Catulus' autobiography. It has long been suspected, and rightly so, that these three passages were derived by Plutarch from the *Autobiography* of Sulla, which the biographer is known to have used extensively in the composition of the *Life of Sulla*, and which appears to have been consulted for those episodes in the careers of Marius and Lucullus in which Sulla played a particularly important role.⁸²

This has two significant implications for the understanding of Sulla's *Autobiography*. On the one hand, Sulla's detailed knowledge of Catulus' autobiography strongly suggests that Catulus may have been a direct inspiration for Sulla's decision to embark on an autobiographical project. It is highly likely that Catulus' autobiography reflected the hostility that had developed between himself and Marius, which culminated in Civil War and his own death in 87. This is reflected in his restatement of his own role in the victory over the Cimbri, together with his presentation of Marius as a general who suffered frequent lapses in judgement. Catulus could thus use his autobiography as a medium for the discussion of the respective roles of himself and Marius in the recent past, and use the circulation of this account as part of a strategy to portray himself in a positive light and smear Marius' reputation. Sulla's familiarity with the work proves that he had thus seen not only the use of autobiography as a literary form, but also the potential that the genre held within the context of the political clashes that marked this period of the Republic. Catulus' work had been considerably shorter, and as a result he could only have dealt with a limited amount of material.⁸³ Sulla's *Autobiography* may thus be interpreted as an amalgamation of the two strands that had developed even within the nascent genre of autobiography: he combined the immediate political benefits that he had seen in Catulus' autobiography with the more sustained literary efforts of Scaurus and Rutilius to create a work that eclipsed them all both in length and in scope.

Secondly, the fact that Sulla seems to have engaged with passages from Catulus' autobiography in his own work also reveals a significant aspect of Sulla's methods in composing his *Autobiography*. Many have suggested that the level of detail

⁸¹ See above, and Noble (forthcoming).

⁸² Peter (1914) cclxvi; Bardon (1952) 120; Bates (1983) 207. Other scholars have suggested that Plutarch was drawing on Posidonius here; see bibliography in Chassignet (2004) xcvi-xcviii n. 506.

⁸³ According to Cicero's description of the autobiography as *is liber*: Cic. *Brut.* 132.

demonstrated by some of the fragments of Sulla's *Autobiography* suggests that he referred to notes that he had taken while on campaign in order both to verify and to add greater depth to his accounts of the military campaigns in which he participated.⁸⁴ It was commonplace for military leaders to keep detailed records of their activities while representing Rome's interests and leading a campaign; these records would then be condensed into *commentarii*, which would be sent to the senate.⁸⁵ It is certainly plausible that the early Roman autobiographers, whose works focussed on military achievements, might refer to such original notes during their writing. The inclusion of citations of Catulus' autobiography, however, suggests that Sulla was writing a much fuller account, using alternative sources for his information, and was willing to check and reaffirm his statements by reference to sources other than his own notes. There is no evidence in antiquity for any other autobiography that explicitly cites the work of another, and it is likely that, in this respect, Sulla's methods were innovative.

Sulla's *Autobiography* was therefore not a work that stood alone in the development of autobiographical writing in the Republic; it was part of a complex development of political and contemporary historiography that had reasonably swiftly moved further away from traditional and annalistic history-writing towards works that had immediate political significance for the writer's own career and public image. The brief works were exceeded in length by Sulla's *Autobiography*, which, at twenty-two books, must have contained narratives of almost all the most important episodes of his lifetime. Sulla did not merely add to an existing genre, but created a work that interpreted the task of the autobiographer in a new and exciting way, which encouraged not only political and military narrative, but a reconsideration of his whole life, and the creation of a coherent portrait of himself as a man to whom the gods had always shown special favour. Since the work was of such striking scope and length, and since it drew on a genre that was written primarily with the contemporary reader in mind, it is apparent that Sulla's *Autobiography* must have played an important role in Sulla's self-representation strategy. Sulla was without doubt a man driven by an intense interest in the way in which he was perceived by others; the extant tradition betrays either his own interpretation of the events in which he participated throughout his career, or stories concerning his efforts to create and disseminate a consistent image of himself. It is

⁸⁴ See the discussion below in the commentaries on F12 and 13P, and F19P.

⁸⁵ See below on *commentarii*.

therefore important to consider what function and role the *Autobiography* played, or was intended to play, in Sulla's career and his self-representational strategy.

The *Autobiography* in Sulla's career

Sulla was born in about 138 BC⁸⁶ to a noble family that had fallen from prosperity and renown. From relatively ignominious beginnings, living in cheap housing⁸⁷ and gaining his fortune not through family money but inheritance from a fond widow and from his stepmother,⁸⁸ Sulla rose to prominence due to his military prowess. There is little certainty concerning Sulla's early life and career, but he seems to have served as *quaestor* under C. Marius in the Jugurthine War from approximately 107,⁸⁹ apparently playing an important role in the negotiations that led to the surrender to him of Jugurtha, the king of Numidia, by the latter's father-in-law Bocchus, the king of Mauretania,⁹⁰ an incident that would feature prominently in Sulla's self-representation strategy for many years to come.⁹¹ He then held the post of *legatus* in the war against the Germanic peoples (including the Cimbri and Teutones) who had been in conflict with the Romans since 113 BC, first serving under Marius,⁹² and later transferring to the command of Q. Lutatius Catulus,⁹³ which seems to have been one of the catalysts of the dispute between himself and Marius.

After one unsuccessful attempt, Sulla was elected to the praetorship in 97,⁹⁴ and in the following year he was sent as *propraetor* to the province of Cilicia, where he became heavily involved in the important events concerning the throne of Cappadocia,

⁸⁶ Or 139: Badian (1964a) 174 n. 12.

⁸⁷ Plut. *Sull.* 1.4.

⁸⁸ Plut. *Sull.* 2.4.

⁸⁹ *MRR* 1.551; 1.554.

⁹⁰ Sall. *Iug.* 102-114; Diod. 34-35.39;

⁹¹ The surprising speed with which Sulla appears to have risen from relative obscurity to a position of some power and authority has long been noted by scholars. The tradition concerning Sulla's role in the negotiations with Bocchus has almost certainly been strongly influenced by the former's own version of events, most strikingly in the *Autobiography*; see below in the commentary on F7P. The most important work on this difficult problem is that of Ridley (2010), who argues, very convincingly, that the insistence in our sources that Sulla had not served in the cavalry before holding the quaestorship (Sall. *BJ* 96.1: *rudis antea et ignarus belli*), and that his own innate qualities had allowed him to swiftly rise through the ranks, derives from Sulla's *Autobiography*, and is unlikely to have been truthful.

⁹² *MRR* 1.561; 1.564.

⁹³ *MRR* 1.569; see the commentary on F4P. On the early stages of Sulla's career, and the problems in our sources on this subject, see Keaveney (1980) 165-171.

⁹⁴ Plut. *Sull.* 5.1-3.

and attempts on the part of Rome to check the growing threat posed by Mithridates VI Eupator, king of Pontus.⁹⁵ Upon his return to Rome, probably in 92 BC,⁹⁶ he faced a trial for bribery at the prosecution of Censorinus, although the charges were dropped,⁹⁷ ostensibly because Censorinus did not attend the trial, although it is more likely that events were overtaken by the onset of the Social War.⁹⁸

During this conflict, he served as *legatus* under the consuls L. Julius Caesar⁹⁹ and M. Porcius Cato¹⁰⁰ in 90 and 89 respectively,¹⁰¹ winning renown as a man of significant military ability and, by then, proven experience. It seems to have been largely on the basis of the reputation he had won in the Social War that Sulla successfully stood for the consulship of 88.¹⁰² Although he had been assigned the province of Asia as his consular command, in order to check the now serious threat posed by Mithridates, Sulla was challenged by a series of laws proposed by the tribune Sulpicius, who gave the Mithridatic command to Marius, now a bitter enemy of Sulla.¹⁰³ The events of 88 are well known, and were to have a significant impact on Sulla's career.¹⁰⁴ Sulla's success in persuading his troops to remain under his command, and his unprecedented decision to march on Rome in 87, paved the way for much of the rest of Sulla's public life, which was marked both by political clashes and by the consistent, unerring support of his men.¹⁰⁵ When Sulla entered Rome, legislation was passed that restored to him the Mithridatic command, and Marius fled the city. After Sulla had left for the East, however, the consuls of 86, L. Cornelius Cinna and C. Marius, had him declared a *hostis* and stripped him of his command.¹⁰⁶ From 86 to 83, therefore, Sulla fought against Mithridates in Greece and the Greek East despite

⁹⁵ *MRR* 2.14-15; 2.18. The chronology of Sulla's career in this period is extremely difficult to reconstruct, and, although various attempts have been made, there is as yet no consensus, with some arguing that Sulla's praetorship and propraetorship should be dated to 97/6, and others arguing that it is best understood as having taken place in 93/2. For a summary of the most important contributions to this debate, see Cagniard (1991) and Brennan (1992), whose chronology is followed here.

⁹⁶ See above on the dating of events in Sulla's career in the 90s.

⁹⁷ Plut. *Sull.* 5.6; see the commentary on F7P.

⁹⁸ Alexander (1990) 48 (no. 92); Santangelo (2007a) 4.

⁹⁹ *MRR* 2.26.

¹⁰⁰ *MRR* 2.32.

¹⁰¹ *MRR* 2.29; 2.36.

¹⁰² *MRR* 2.39-40.

¹⁰³ On the Sulpician period and the removal of the Mithridatic command from Sulla see the commentary on F11P.

¹⁰⁴ For bibliography see the commentary on F11P.

¹⁰⁵ See the commentary on F18P.

¹⁰⁶ *MRR* 2.53; 2.55.

fundamental questions being raised as to the legitimacy of his actions and his right to carry out the campaign on behalf of the Roman people, of whom he was no longer an official representative. His successes were so notable, however, particularly in removing from power the tyrant of Athens, Aristion, and capturing the Pontic general Archelaus, that the troops sent to replace him in the campaign, under the command of L. Valerius Flaccus and C. Flavius Fimbria, ultimately joined his own army and fought together with him.¹⁰⁷ Sulla's work in the East was of the greatest importance, since he was able to remove the Mithridatic threat from Greece in a series of victories, and negotiated the Peace of Dardanus, at which Mithridates agreed not to attack Rome's territories any further.¹⁰⁸

Sulla returned to Italy in early 83, landing at Brundisium and beginning the journey to Rome. His return sparked a civil war, with a number of opponents fighting against him, including the consuls of 83, L. Scipio Asiagenus and C. Norbanus,¹⁰⁹ and those of 82, the younger Marius, and Cn. Papirius Carbo.¹¹⁰ It was during this conflict that the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus was destroyed in a fire, an event which had some significance within Sulla's self-representational strategy.¹¹¹ A number of battles followed, culminating in Sulla's eventual victory over the Samnites on the outskirts of Rome itself, in the Battle of the Colline Gate on the 1st of November 82,¹¹² and in the defeat and demise of the younger Marius at Praeneste.¹¹³ Sulla now effectively held sole power in Rome, and assumed the post of dictator, which he held until 81, during which he brought about wide-ranging constitutional reforms pertaining to both political and social matters, before stepping down, and being elected consul for 80.¹¹⁴ At the end of this second consulship, Sulla returned to the status of *privatus* and, according to our sources, left Rome for his villa at Puteoli, where he spent the rest of his life engaging with matters of local politics, but with no active role in Roman affairs.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁷ *MRR* 2.53.

¹⁰⁸ For bibliography and discussion see the commentary on F17P.

¹⁰⁹ *MRR* 2.62.

¹¹⁰ *MRR* 2.65-66. One of the most detailed accounts of these events may be found in App. *BC* 1.76-96.

¹¹¹ See the commentaries on F18P and F20P.

¹¹² See the commentary on F20P.

¹¹³ The first proscription, under the *lex Cornelia de proscriptione*. See Santangelo (2007a) 78-87; Hinard (1985a) 18-223, 329-411.

¹¹⁴ *MRR* 2.74-76; 2.79.

¹¹⁵ App. *BC* 103-105. There is some debate as to the location of Sulla's villa: see discussion in the commentary on F10P.

It was at this stage, after his retirement, that Sulla began to write his *Autobiography*.¹¹⁶ This is, on the one hand, perhaps unsurprising; it is not difficult to imagine that Sulla might have felt the need to set out in his own terms an account of his controversial career. The proscriptions, the dictatorship, and the two marches on Rome might all be thought to require special explanation by a man who was profoundly concerned with the perception of himself by other people. All the ancient evidence suggests that Sulla paid particular attention to the way in which he was seen by his contemporaries. To write an autobiography of such exceptional length and scope was not a choice undertaken lightly. It is clear that Sulla put much time and effort into the way in which he presented himself in the *Autobiography*, and it is chiefly for this reason that the fragments of this text are valuable objects of study. They reveal Sulla's self-representation in its most direct form; that is to say that the fragments of Sulla's *Autobiography* are as close as it is now possible to get to Sulla's propaganda in his own words.

The term 'propaganda' is not used here without caution. It has a range of meanings, some of which are inapplicable to the ancient world, but consideration of its full semantic scope reveals that it is an extremely useful term to discuss ancient historical subjects. The modern scholarship on propaganda relies very heavily on the seminal work by the French philosopher and sociologist, Jacques Ellul, whose 1962 work *Propagandes*, published in English as *Propaganda: the Formation of Men's Attitudes*, remains the most important systematic study of propaganda.¹¹⁷ Ellul distinguished between various types of propaganda, which differ according to their intention, the methods employed, the people to whom they are directed, and so on. His main categories are agitation and integration; rational and irrational; vertical and horizontal; and political and sociological. Not all of these categories are applicable to the ancient world, or to Republican Rome in particular. The distinction between agitation and integration propaganda is perhaps most useful for this current project: the former seeks to change attitudes or opinions, and the latter to reinforce existing attitudes or opinions.¹¹⁸ When we examine the ways in which Sulla, both in his *Autobiography*

¹¹⁶ Peter (1914) 270. Although there is no direct ancient evidence for this, it is generally accepted that Sulla would have been unable to engage in a lengthy literary project before the moment of his retirement from Rome.

¹¹⁷ English translation: Ellul (1973).

¹¹⁸ Silverstein (1987) provides an excellent discussion of integration propaganda, and argues that it is agitation propaganda of which people usually think, although this is only one aspect of the term's scope.

and elsewhere, made a concerted effort to change people's opinions, and especially to reinforce messages that existed in various strands of his self-representation strategy, it is clear that the basic meaning of 'propaganda' is not only applicable, but helpful, since it captures the idea of the cohesiveness of Sulla's efforts better than alternative terms, such as 'self-representation strategy'. Although the latter phrase is used liberally in this thesis, as it conveys the scope of Sulla's efforts in a number of instances, it is not entirely synonymous with 'propaganda'.

Unfortunately, two problems have frequently stood in the way of the greater adoption of the term 'propaganda' by classicists: firstly, the term is commonly understood in the sense with which it is applied to recent, twentieth century history, which does differ drastically from any form of propaganda in the ancient world. Secondly, almost all of the research into the concept of propaganda has concentrated on modern history, with the occasional glance to the Middle Ages; there has been almost no effort by sociologists to include classical evidence in their studies. For this reason, there are many aspects of their conclusions that are not (directly, at least) applicable to the cultures of the ancient Mediterranean.

However, some classicists have demonstrated that once the term is stripped of the connotations that are attached to it by recent and contemporary history, it can provide a useful framework with which aspects of Roman and Greek history can be examined.¹¹⁹ Sulla's attempts to influence the way in which he was perceived by his contemporaries and by posterity involved the use of a number of different media, which often worked together in order to create a consistent self-portrait. For example, it is argued in this thesis that several of the fragments, including F9P and F15P, show how Sulla combined the messages he conveyed in his *Autobiography* with ideas that he had already established in the decades that preceded its composition. There is no reason that, in its purest sense, the term 'propaganda' should not be used to describe the consistent programme of information to which Sulla chose to draw attention. Other scholars have reached this same conclusion, too: Frier (1971) and Ramage (1991) have both concluded that the term is applicable to Sulla, given the attention that he paid to creating

¹¹⁹ It has been fairly widely adopted by numismatists (see for example Alföldi (1956), Rowland (1966), Luce (1968), Martin (1989)), as well as some Republican historians, such as in Jal (1961), Frier (1971), Glew (1977), Gardner (1983), Gosling (1986), Ramage (1991). The best exposition of the usefulness of the term 'propaganda' is found in Bremmer (1997), who considers both the modern sociological aspects, the history of the term, and the problems inherent in its application to ancient evidence.

and disseminating a consistent story about himself. Although in this thesis the term ‘self-representation strategy’ is primarily used, ‘propaganda’ is applied when the evidence suggests that it is an apposite term for Sulla’s methods of self-representation.

Indeed, Sulla was evidently a man who had a keen interest in managing the ways in which he was perceived by other people. He paid great attention to the use of inscriptions, coinage, monuments, iconography, and more abstract ideas such as nomenclature in order to portray and circulate certain ideas about himself – perhaps a symptom of a life filled with conflict and controversy.¹²⁰ By combining a variety of different self-representational vehicles, therefore, Sulla could attempt to ensure that his contemporaries, both in Rome and in the places he spent time on campaign, were influenced by specific messages about himself. The most visible example of this is in Sulla’s *cognomina*. Sulla assumed two *cognomina*: Ἐπαφρόδιτος, which was used only in a Greek-speaking context, and Felix, which was used in Italy and Rome. These names clearly proclaimed one of the central messages of Sulla’s self-representation strategy: that he enjoyed the special favour of the gods.¹²¹ The *Autobiography* was such a lengthy expression of this idea that it would have been implausible for him to have embarked on such a project before his retirement from an active role in Roman politics, when he could devote the time to the creation of the literary manifestation of the theme that had been so influential within his public image.¹²²

Indeed, it is in the political sphere, rather than the literary, that the true value of the *Autobiography* becomes apparent. Earlier autobiographers had used the genre in order to disseminate particular ideas about themselves, portraying themselves in a favourable light and re-telling recent history in a manner that emphasised their own contributions to events. Sulla took this idea much further. One of the key themes of his *Autobiography* was self-defence, since the fragments reveal how Sulla denied and dispelled certain negative stories about himself that had entered circulation. It was this function of the *Autobiography*, more than any literary or aesthetic qualities, that provides the framework within which Sulla’s *Autobiography* seems to have functioned. The *Autobiography* was of immediate and potential future political use for its author. In the intensely literary and cultural atmosphere of the late Republic, in which public

¹²⁰ These are discussed in the commentaries below.

¹²¹ On the meanings of Sulla’s *cognomina* see the Conclusion.

¹²² One might object that Caesar’s *Commentarii* would provide a possible parallel for this, although the political activities of the two men were not entirely comparable.

readings of literary works were frequent and there was widespread interest in the arts, an important new text such as Sulla's *Autobiography* might have reached a wide audience within a short space of time. Moreover, this audience would have been made up of the intellectual elite of Rome which, for the most part, overlapped with the political elite: senators and influential *equites*. One of the most important innovations of Sulla's *Autobiography*, therefore, was the use of autobiographical writing for political ends. This was an idea that was later developed by Caesar and Augustus, albeit in very different ways, particularly since such texts also saw considerable oral dissemination.¹²³ Sulla's writings provided a new model for the potential use of literary composition in the construction of an individual's public image. Even though the *Autobiography* was composed at a time when Sulla was no longer the central figure in the political life of Rome, and the advancement of his illness had made it apparent that he would be unable to return to a life of similar prominence even if he should have wished to, this does not mean that Sulla was uninterested in self-representation. In many ways, it appears that the knowledge that he was about to die contributed to, rather than diminished, his desire to ensure that he was perceived by others in the way that he chose. It is possible that the realisation that he was about to die gave Sulla further incentive to complete the *Autobiography* since, after his death, it would play an important role in determining how he would be remembered by posterity.¹²⁴

The language of Sulla's *Autobiography*

Many details of the *Autobiography* are now lost, and as such there is even debate concerning some of its most basic features of the text, such as its title, and the language in which it was written. It is not difficult to see why the argument arose that the *Autobiography* was written in Greek. It is evident that Plutarch's biography of Sulla was heavily influenced by the *Autobiography*. He cited the work frequently: there are twelve fragments of the *Autobiography* in the *Life of Sulla*, and five fragments in other Plutarchan texts, and some estimates of the proportion of Plutarch's biography that derives from the *Autobiography* have reached as high as two thirds.¹²⁵ Although some have suggested that Plutarch only knew the text second hand, through the work of an

¹²³ For Sulla's influence on Caesar and Augustus see Hall (1998) 15; Thein (2006) 242-247; Thein (2009); Wiseman (2009b); Powell (2009).

¹²⁴ See the commentary on F21P for Sulla's final dream, foreknowledge of his death, and the completion of the *Autobiography*.

¹²⁵ Valgiglio (1975) 275-276.

intermediary writer such as Sisenna or Livy,¹²⁶ the detail given in certain of the fragments and the interest which Plutarch displays in ascertaining the character of his subject strongly suggest that he had read the work directly. This raises the well-known problem of assessing Plutarch's Latin reading skills in light of his famous declaration that he struggled to read the language.¹²⁷ Plutarch is explicit, however, in his assertion that he could read Latin, but that he was unable to detect its subtler intricacies. His conclusion, that details often passed him by, has evidently been reached after a substantial amount of reading, and while it may be true that Plutarch's Latin was not strong enough to enable him to appreciate Latin literature, he was clearly able to read it and understand its basic meaning. It is irrefutable that he conducted a considerable amount of research into Latin texts, particularly for the Roman *Lives*.¹²⁸ There is therefore no reason whatsoever to believe that Plutarch would only have been able to read the *Autobiography* if it had been written in his native Greek.

The remaining two arguments that have been deployed to suggest that Sulla wrote in Greek are more difficult to definitively disprove. Firstly, Plutarch's assertion that Lucullus' skills in both Greek and Latin played some role in Sulla's decision to dedicate the work to him might be seen to suggest that the younger man's Greek skills were necessary for the task of arranging the material in the *Autobiography*.¹²⁹ However, there are a number of different reasons why this might have been mentioned. Sulla was, for example, heavily influenced by Greek culture, and the majority of the narrative of the *Autobiography* seems to have been set during the conflicts in which Sulla fought in Greece and in the Greek East. It is possible that Sulla knew that his protégé shared his deeply Hellenic viewpoint, or thought that someone skilled in reading and writing Greek would better understand the Greek names, places, cultural details, and even possibly quotations.¹³⁰ It is thus not clear that the reference to Lucullus' skills in the Greek language should be taken to imply that the *Autobiography* was written in Greek.¹³¹

¹²⁶ The strongest statement of the argument may be found in Calabi Limentani (1951). Plutarch certainly refers to Livy's work directly in the *Life of Sulla*: 6.10.

¹²⁷ Plut. *Dem.* 2.2-4. See discussion of this passage below.

¹²⁸ Jones (1971) 81-6.

¹²⁹ Plut. *Luc.* 1.3 = F1P.

¹³⁰ Valgiglio (1975) 246: "la ragione della dedica si rivela non limitata alla conoscenza del greco da parte di Lucullo, ma fondata sulla sua cultura generale, della quale la conoscenza del Greco era solo una componente e un indizio."

¹³¹ See below in the commentaries on F1P and F21P.

Secondly, although authors such as Cato had done much to elevate written Latin into a language suitable for serious literary endeavours, it is difficult to determine precisely when this transformation was complete.¹³² It is certainly true that during the early to mid Republic serious academic treatises were written in Greek, even when their authors were heavily influenced by Latin and specifically Roman ideals. It was unusual for lengthy pieces of writing, addressed to the Roman cultural elites, to be written in Latin rather than Greek.¹³³ However, it is also apparent that some of Sulla's predecessors in the genre of autobiography had decided to write in Latin: the style of the Latin of Q. Lutatius Catulus, for example, was highly praised by Cicero.¹³⁴ The existence of Republican autobiographies composed in Latin before Sulla's conclusively demonstrates that such an undertaking was plausible.

The issue of the language in which Sulla's *Autobiography* was written ought to have been dismissed long ago. It is absolutely certain that the work was composed in Latin; the direct quotations of the text of the *Autobiography* by Aulus Gellius and Priscian put this beyond any doubt. Gellius quotes one passage of Sulla's text to show an unusual usage of *capere*,¹³⁵ and a second in the discussion of whether it was correct to say *habeo curam vestri* or *habeo curam vestrum*,¹³⁶ while Priscian quotes a passage as an illustration of the use of the future participle.¹³⁷ If the *Autobiography* had been written in Greek, there would be no conceivable reason for these authors to use Sulla's text in their illustrations of these grammatical features. The only plausible inference is that the *Autobiography* was composed in Latin.

The ancient title of Sulla's *Autobiography*

This conclusion is useful in determining the original title that was given to the *Autobiography*. A number of different words are used to refer to the work:

ὑπομνήματα	Plut. <i>Sull.</i> 6.5; 6.6; 14.2; 23.2; 37.1.
αἱ αὐτοῦ πράξεις	Plut. <i>Luc.</i> 1.3
<i>Res suae</i>	Priscian 9 p.476H
<i>Res gestae</i>	Aul. Gell. 1.12.16; 20.6.3

¹³² Badian (1966) 3-8 stresses the role that the choice of language played in the works of Pictor and Cato.

¹³³ Badian (1966) 3; Bates (1983) 27. The earliest Roman scholarly works seem to have been composed in Greek, such as Q. Fabius Pictor's *Graeci Annales*; see above.

¹³⁴ Cic. *Brut.* 132.

¹³⁵ Gell. 1.12.16 = F2P.

¹³⁶ Gell. 20.6.3 = F3P.

¹³⁷ Prisc. 9 p.476H = F20P.

It was not unusual for ancient authors to use a range of terms to refer to one work, and the idea of a piece of writing having one title, in the modern sense, is rather anachronistic. It is not possible to determine precisely which word or words were used by Sulla to refer to his *Autobiography*. However, we may reconstruct the main components of this title from the ancient references that have survived.

Because the title used most frequently is ὑπομνήματα, many scholars have argued that the title, or at least the main component of the title, was *commentarii*. This word is in many ways related to ὑπομνήματα, since both terms are derived from words for memory, and refer to texts that may be seen to act as *aide-mémoires* for the writer, the reader, or both. It is clear that, since the *Autobiography* was written in Latin, ὑπομνήματα itself could not have formed part of the title, so it has been suggested that Plutarch used this term since he wished to translate the Latin word *commentarii*. A *commentarius* could be many different things in Rome.¹³⁸ *Commentarii* might consist of political or religious accounts; notebooks or published pieces by grammarians and jurists; technical works on engineering, building, and mathematics; pieces of writing composed in an educational context; or compositions by private individuals and not intended for publication or public readings. They were composed throughout the Republic and Principate, both by individuals and by groups, and usually consisted of official records, or scholarly enquiry.¹³⁹ Although Caesar was the most famous exponent of the genre, his was not the only sort of *commentarii*. Before Caesar, there is no evidence that *commentarii* were closely associated with autobiographical writing, other than in the context in which Caesar claimed to be writing: that is, military notes and texts sent from a commander on campaign to the senate. It is not clear to what extent the *commentarii* of magistrates could be described as autobiographical, since they appear to be concerned only with the magistrate's public actions, and may have been kept corporately by those who held each post.¹⁴⁰ For these reasons, and due to the apparent breadth of the genre of *commentarii*, it cannot be excluded that autobiographies were considered a form of *commentarii*. In general, however, it is likely

¹³⁸ Frontinus' *Strategemata* and *De aqueductu*, Aulus Gellius' *Noctes Atticae*, and Gaius' *Institutes* are all *commentarii*, for example: Riggsby (2006) 133. For the various possible interpretations of the term *commentarius* see *TLL* 3.1856-1861.

¹³⁹ Riggsby (2006) 133-134.

¹⁴⁰ Lewis (1993) 633-638; Riggsby (2006) 136.

that *commentarii* were thought to be works lacking literary merit, since they derived from the practice of the keeping of official records, and it is not clear that Republican autobiographies were ever seen as anything other than literary undertakings. The term was never applied to Republican autobiographies before Caesar, so the term must not be applied anachronistically due to the developments that the genre underwent at Caesar's hands.

There are important objections to the idea that *commentarii* was the central component of the title of Sulla's *Autobiography*. In the Latin works which record a name for the work, the word *commentarii* does not appear. Instead, we find the very similar *res gestae* and *res suae* in Gellius¹⁴¹ and Priscian¹⁴², and the surprising *historia* in Cicero.¹⁴³

It is reasonably clear that the latter was never part of the title of Sulla's *Autobiography*. While autobiography was still in the process of becoming a more concretely defined genre in Sulla's time, *historia* was more easily understood, and implied certain generic constraints that do not seem to have been applicable to Sulla's writing. Although the writing of an autobiography is an inevitably historical task, *historia* implies a work with a very different function. The intention of Sulla's *Autobiography* seems to have been to convince the reader of his own interpretation of events, and to shape the opinions of the reader, rather than inform the reader concerning historical events; apart from the obvious political subject matter, it was not a work of general history. The *Autobiography* was primarily a political work that operated within a political sphere. It is true that Sulla's *Autobiography* seems to have gone far beyond previous autobiographical accounts and included lengthy discussions of Sulla's ancestry¹⁴⁴ and his *felicitas*,¹⁴⁵ but there are no fragments that suggest that Sulla was discussing items irrelevant to his self-representation programme. It is possible that Cicero's use of the term *historia* reflects the extent to which Sulla expanded upon the established conventions of autobiographical writing, but there is no suggestion that it should be taken as a reference to the title of the work.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ F2P; F3P.

¹⁴² F20P.

¹⁴³ F9P.

¹⁴⁴ See the commentary on F2P.

¹⁴⁵ See the commentary on F8P.

¹⁴⁶ Cicero frequently uses *historia* in an unspecific manner to refer to prose: Tatum (2011) 166 n. 18.

Another title which has been posited by scholars is *De vita sua*, a title that had been used both by M. Aemilius Scaurus and by P. Rutilius Rufus.¹⁴⁷ While it is clear that this was a title that was being used for autobiographical compositions in the late republic, there is no evidence which connects the title to Sulla's *Autobiography* and, as such, it would be unwise to suggest that this was the name given to the work by Sulla himself.

The ancient evidence for the title of Sulla's *Autobiography* is thus scanty. But three of our sources use formulations that strongly suggest that the title was largely comprised of a formula including *Res gestae*. In both of Gellius' direct quotations of Sulla's original Latin text he uses the title *Res Gestae: L. Sulla rerum gestarum libro secundo*.¹⁴⁸ The precision with which Gellius is able to refer to the work, including the book number of the citation and reasonably lengthy passages of the original text, leaves little doubt that he knew the *Autobiography*, and in all probability had in front of him while he was composing either a copy of the original work, or notes which he had compiled from the *Autobiography*. In such a situation, Gellius must have known the name that the author had given to the work, even if the idea of a 'title' was a more fluid construct than it is in modern literary composition. Similarly, while Plutarch usually uses the term ὑπομνήματα to refer to Sulla's *Autobiography*, on one occasion he speaks of the work as αἱ αὐτοῦ πράξεις.¹⁴⁹ This seems to be a direct translation into Greek of the Latin *res gestae*. Ὑπομνήματα was the term customarily applied in Greek to autobiographical compositions, so this one usage of αἱ αὐτοῦ πράξεις strongly suggests that the original title of the work was in fact *Res Gestae*.

Priscian refers to the *Autobiography* with the similar title *Res Suae*.¹⁵⁰ There is no other evidence to suggest that this phrase was applied to Sulla's *Autobiography*, and it is possible that the phrase is used here as a reference to the genre within which the work fell. By the time in which Priscian was writing, the idea of writing *res suae* required no clarification. The phrase *res suae* seems to have been a common way to refer to Caesar's commentaries on the Gallic War, in the phrase *Commentarii rerum suarum*.¹⁵¹ Rather tellingly, Hirtius in the eighth book of the work itself uses the phrase

¹⁴⁷ Scholz/Walter (2013) 80-98. For Rufus and Scaurus see above.

¹⁴⁸ Gell. 1.12.16 = F2P and 20.6.3 = F3P.

¹⁴⁹ τὰς αὐτοῦ πράξεις; Plut. *Luc.* 1.3 = F1P.

¹⁵⁰ *Sulla in vicesimo primo rerum suarum*: Prisc. 476 H = F20P.

¹⁵¹ Cic. *Brut.* 262: *commentarios... rerum suarum*; Suet. *Iul.* 56.1: *rerum suarum commentarios*.

Commentarii rerum gestarum.¹⁵² With regard to Caesar's war commentaries, therefore, it was possible to use *res suae* and *res gestae* almost interchangeably. This in turn implies that just because *res suae* appears in the title of the work as recorded by Priscian, this may still essentially be the same title as *res gestae*. This, together with Plutarch's use of αἱ αὐτοῦ πράξεις, strongly suggests that the original title of Sulla's *Autobiography* was a variation on the basic formula of *res gestae*.

It is often argued by those scholars who agree that *res gestae* formed the most important part of the title of Sulla's *Autobiography*, that the original title was therefore *Commentarii rerum gestarum* or *Commentarii rerum gestarum L. Cornelii Sullae*.¹⁵³ This conclusion relies on the assumption that, by his frequent references to the work as ὑπομνήματα, Plutarch intended to convey the title of the work, although, as discussed above, ὑπομνήματα was the customary way to refer to autobiographies in the Hellenistic period, so this need not be an objection. It is equally likely that the title of the work was *Res Gestae* and that, since the work fell into the broad category of *commentarii*, since its scope was broader than that of earlier autobiographies, and since it contained many innovative features, later authors were either unsure of how to refer to the work, or perhaps felt that they had greater leeway.

Why *Autobiography*?

It is therefore most likely that the ancient title of Sulla's autobiographical work centred around the phrase *res gestae*, and may have been formulated as *Res gestae L. Cornelii Sullae*, *Libri rerum gestarum L. Cornelii Sullae*, or *Commentarii de rebus gestis suis L. Cornelii Sullae*; with no further information or evidence, this is as close as we can get to the original given name of the piece. However, it is important that the work has a title which may be used to refer to it in a modern scholarly discussion. To use *Res Gestae* would be misleading, since it would imply a certainty that this was the original title of the work; any English translation of these phrases, such as 'Achievements', would present similar problems. *Commentarii* and 'Commentaries' are even more problematic, since *commentarii* refers not to the title of a work, but to its genre. Many scholars have

¹⁵² Hirt. *BG.* 8.pr.2: *commentarios rerum gestarum*.

¹⁵³ Eg. Peter (1914) 195; Balsdon (1951) 2. Tatum (2011) 166-167 discusses the bibliography on this matter, noting that the term *commentarii* may have been applied later, in the light of Caesar's *Commentarii*, and that the title may have been applied to the work by Epicadus after Sulla's death.

used the term ‘Memoirs’.¹⁵⁴ This does convey many of the right connotations for Sulla’s autobiographical work; it implies, correctly, that the work was a retrospective account of the author’s own life and career, and, in English at least, the term is closely connected with the writings of political figures. However, ‘memoirs’ also implies attributes that do not seem to have been applicable to Sulla’s work, and refers more properly not to an account of a whole life and career, but a specific event or series of events in which an individual played a leading role. Sulla’s work had a much broader scope, both in terms of the material that it covered and the complex assessments which Sulla seems to have carried out concerning his own life. Although ‘memoirs’ does, like *commentarii* and ὑπομνήματα, draw on roots related to the ideas of ‘memory’, it puts undue emphasis on this connection, since it is by no means clear that these were the title either of the work, or of the genre to which the work belonged.

The term ‘autobiography’ is to some extent equally problematic. The pseudo-Greek word was coined in the late 18th century as an alternative to ‘self-biography’; no such ancient word existed.¹⁵⁵ However, since this is the word which is universally used for ‘self-biography’ in English, its use ought to be considered to refer to Sulla’s writing. ‘Autobiography’ gives a much better impression of the scope of Sulla’s work than ‘Memoirs’, and is to be preferred in English-speaking contexts.

In this thesis, therefore, the title is given as *Autobiography*, capitalized and in Italics. Although we know relatively few details concerning the *Autobiography* and its contents, it is important not to forget that, at the time of its writing, this was a lengthy, complex, coherent, and consistent literary effort on Sulla’s part. Despite the survival of only a few fragments, it is vital that we do not think of Sulla’s output as sub-literary, or hastily composed and of poor quality. The *Autobiography* was a work of considerable gravitas, and was structured at least in part as a re-assessment of Sulla’s career in the light of the role that *felicitas* had played in it. There is no evidence that any comparable task had ever been undertaken before, and it is clear that the work was intended to be a serious piece of historical writing, as well as being politically motivated. Moreover, even though the surviving fragments are disparate and diverse, they reveal consistent methods of self-representation throughout the narrative of Sulla’s own career. In order to demonstrate that the fragments represent not distinct elements, but glimpses of one

¹⁵⁴ Eg. English: Tatum (2011); French (*mémoires*): Assenmaker (2013a); Italian (*memorie*): Valgiglio (1956).

¹⁵⁵ For the development of the term ‘autobiography’ see Momigliano (1993) 14.

important text, the work is therefore referred to as Sulla's *Autobiography* throughout this study.

The fragments of Sulla's *Autobiography*

Sulla's *Autobiography* survives in fragments. Lengthy passages of the works of authors such as Appian, Plutarch, Sallust, and Livy have been identified as Sullan in origin, but only twenty-three surviving passages of ancient literature explicitly claim to record some of the substance of the *Autobiography*. Of these, three appear to contain direct quotations of the original Latin text: Gellius 1.12.16 and 20.6.3, and Priscian 9 p. 476 H (fragments 2P, 3P, and 20P) each claim to preserve a brief section of Sulla's text in order to illustrate a grammatical feature of the text. These authors would have no reason to cite Sulla's *Autobiography* for these specific details if they did not have access to the original Latin. Moreover, each of these fragments mentions the location in Sulla's *Autobiography* from which they have taken their information, with a degree of precision rarely found in ancient source citations. Although these three fragments appear to consist of the original words of Sulla's *Autobiography*, they are each brief, and little information is given concerning their original contexts. The first fragment preserved by Gellius concerns Sulla's ancestors, a common feature of autobiographical writing in this period.¹⁵⁶ The remaining Gellius fragment is, however, extremely difficult to identify. Since we have only part of a sentence, it is impossible to identify the historical or literary context of the fragment, and there is as yet no consensus on the matter.¹⁵⁷ Finally, Priscian has preserved a short extract from the penultimate book of Sulla's *Autobiography* describing a moment of crisis that has also presented a number of problems to scholars, since there are a wide range of possible interpretations of the original context of the fragment.¹⁵⁸

A further twenty passages survive that are discussed in this thesis as 'fragments'. Each editor of the fragments of Sulla's *Autobiography* has made the same choice to do so.¹⁵⁹ Strictly speaking, these twenty passages are paraphrases of Sulla's original text and, as such, present a unique set of methodological problems. While each passage professes to preserve some of the substance of Sulla's *Autobiography*, each author may

¹⁵⁶ See below in the commentary on F2P for the role of ancestral narrative in Sulla's *Autobiography*.

¹⁵⁷ See commentary on F3P below.

¹⁵⁸ See commentary on F20P below.

¹⁵⁹ Peter (1914) 195-204; Chassignet (2004) 172-184; Scholz/Walter (2013) 80-135; *FRH* 1.282-286, 2.472-491, 3.289-299.

have taken the information directly from that text or indirectly from an intermediary source, and may have been more or less precise in the recording of the information. For this reason, the interpretation of the information that they preserve is particularly difficult, but it is crucial that they are studied in depth, since they provide a range of information concerning the contents of the *Autobiography* that would otherwise have been unavailable to modern scholars. The majority of this type of fragment is located in the writings of Plutarch for whom, since he was writing in Greek, it would have been impossible to record precisely the text of Sulla's *Autobiography*, however well he may have known it.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, Plutarch was anything but a disinterested or neutral reader, and his primary interest in the *Lives*, where all but one of his citations of Sulla's work are located, was not in recording historical fact, but creating a portrait of the character of his subject. For the purposes of his project, the biographer could have used whatever passages of the *Autobiography* he thought best illustrated the aspects of Sulla's character, without being concerned with presenting an accurate account or reconstruction of Sulla's text. However, Plutarch seems to have displayed a particularly intense interest in Sulla's life, not least since two of the most important battles in which he fought took place at Chaeronea itself, Plutarch's home town, and at Orchomenus, which was very close.¹⁶¹ For this reason, the paraphrases of Sulla's *Autobiography* that are preserved in the *Life of Sulla* are usually taken to be a reasonably accurate and faithful representation of the meaning and outline of the original passages.

The commentaries below use as their basis the fragments established by Peter in his 1914 edition. The one exception is F17aP (Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.56.2), which, it is argued here, cannot be considered a fragment in any meaningful sense, and is therefore discussed in the appendix. In this, I am also following the decision of Smith in the 2013 edition of the *Fragments of the Roman Historians*, who lists F17aP (given as no. 27) as a 'doubtful fragment'. Finally, there are three potential fragments that have been omitted by all editors to date. These are included here in the discussion of other fragments: Appian, *BC* 1.98 is discussed in the commentary on F3P, in the context of the potential use of documentary sources by Sulla in the composition of the *Autobiography*; Florus, *Ep.* 1.40.10, which touches on Sulla's treatment of Athens, is discussed in the commentary on F12P and F13P; and Pliny, *NH* 1.38 is discussed in the commentary on F18P, since it deals with the destruction of the Capitol.

¹⁶⁰ Plutarch's method of work: Pelling (2002) 1-44, 65-90.

¹⁶¹ See commentary on F5P and F6P below.

Scholarship on Sulla's *Autobiography*: a brief review

Research has been conducted into the fragments of Sulla's *Autobiography* over a long period of time, and by scholars with a wide variety of interests. They fall into two main categories: those interested in the ways in which Sulla constructed his public image and interacted with different groups, and those chiefly concerned with the *Autobiography*'s place in the development of autobiography as a genre in the late Republic. Much of the work on the individual fragments of the *Autobiography* has consisted of brief discussions in the context of wider research unconnected to the subject of this thesis. A comprehensive review of all such contributions would be a thankless task, and unhelpful for the reader. For this reason, the following overview considers only those works that have made significant contributions to the field, and that have defined the study of the *Autobiography*.

The starting point of the modern scholarly debate on the *Autobiography* may be identified with the work of Hermann Peter who, in his seminal collection of the fragments of Roman historians first published in 1878, included an edition of the fragments of Sulla's *Autobiography*. Although there had been occasional discussions of the *Autobiography* before this, Peter's collection changed the way that the text was viewed, and for the first time defined many aspects of the work. The methodology that he employed in the compilation of the *Historicorum Romanorum Reliquiae* has for the most part been followed to this day; it is the usual practice of scholars to consider only those passages which include direct citations of Sulla as fragments of the work, and to make hardly any distinction between 'true' fragments, preserving passages of the original text, and paraphrases, which preserve the sense and meaning but little or none of the original wording employed by the author.¹⁶² To a certain extent, the inclusion only of passages in which there is a direct citation of Sulla's *Autobiography* is an overly limiting method. It is beyond any doubt that the influence of Sulla's text on the extant tradition extended far beyond those twenty-three passages, and included authors that almost certainly read Sulla's work, even if they did not cite him.

It seems that Peter himself was aware of such problems, as may be seen in his treatment of the passages derived from Plutarch. While the number of passages in which Plutarch claimed to be citing Sulla is notably high, it is not an easy task to determine which pieces of information, and which events, the citation concerned. The most

¹⁶² Smith has for the first time moved away from this system in *FRH*; on his methodology see below.

striking example of this is F7P, Plut. *Sull.* 5, in which the biographer narrates the story of Sulla's *repulsa* on his first attempt to attain the praetorship, his actions with Ariobarzanes in Cappadocia, and his meeting with Ariobarzanes and Orobazus, in which Sulla received a physiognomical examination and prediction from a Chaldaean. Plutarch cites Sulla for the information that the people had rejected Sulla's bid for the praetorship because they knew of his close relationship with the Mauretanian king Bocchus, and therefore wanted him to become aedile and put on games featuring exotic beasts.¹⁶³ There is no question that Plutarch is here recording Sulla's own explanation for his failure to secure election to the praetorship on his first attempt, a conclusion confirmed by the citation φησὶ.¹⁶⁴ The passage also contains stories that most scholars attribute to the *Autobiography*, such as his involvement in the investiture of Ariobarzanes, his meeting with Ariobarzanes and Orobazus, and the physiognomical examination carried out in a divinatory context by a Chaldaean.¹⁶⁵ The pro-Sullan tone, the emphasis on Sulla's political stature, and the interest in religious matter that stood apart from mainstream Roman practice strongly suggest that Plutarch derived his information on these points from Sulla's own text. The presence of alternative sources in this chapter, however, including the story in which Caesar taunted Sulla with the argument that he had bought his praetorship with the promise of games, undoubtedly stemmed from a tradition hostile to Sulla.¹⁶⁶ This is an important reminder of the wealth of sources upon which Plutarch drew, and means that, in some cases, it is difficult to determine precisely which pieces of information Plutarch derived from Sulla, or intended to ascribe to Sulla with his citation. For this reason, Peter made no attempt to delimit this fragment in his edition, merely ending the passage with “κτλ”.¹⁶⁷

Similarly, in F12P Peter included the whole passage (Plut. *Sull.* 14.1-2) as a potential fragment. There are two citations in this passage, however, and they do not necessarily refer to the same text. In the latter half of the passage, Plutarch gives a precise reference to the *Autobiography*: λέγει δὲ αὐτὸς ὁ Σύλλας ἐν τοῖς ὑπομνήμασι. This citation is then followed by remarkably detailed information: the name of the first man to mount the wall of Athens, and the details of this encounter. It is beyond reasonable doubt that these details were taken from Sulla's *Autobiography*. The first

¹⁶³ Plut. *Sull.* 5.1.

¹⁶⁴ On this citation see the commentary on F7P.

¹⁶⁵ Plut. *Sull.* 5.3, 5.4-6.

¹⁶⁶ Plut. *Sull.* 5.2.

¹⁶⁷ Peter (1914) 197.

part of the passage, however, contains a citation of a very different kind: λέγεται. This vague and imprecise (by modern standards, at least) mention of a source makes no claim to be referring to the *Autobiography*, and a multitude of alternative identifications for this source are possible.¹⁶⁸ Peter's inclusion of this whole passage as a fragment suggests that he has, perhaps, tentatively considered the proximity of a citation of Sulla for one specific detail as sufficient proof that the surrounding passage might also have been Sullan in origin.

Such problems are, however, reasonably rare in Peter's work, and his research was paramount in establishing that Sulla's *Autobiography*, while lost, is still an extremely valuable text. Due to the nature of his task, however, Peter was not interested in drawing wide-ranging and far-reaching conclusions about Sulla's *Autobiography* from the newly compiled fragments; this task was left to later historians, whose task was, however, only made possible by Peter's seminal work.

Since the work of Peter, several scholars have taken on the task of examining the fragments of the *Autobiography*, but few have carried out their projects in a systematic or comprehensive manner. This may be seen from the first modern article which dealt with Sulla's *Autobiography*, which established many of the main trends in the discussion of the fragments: Camillo Vitelli's 1898 article "Note ed appunti sull'autobiografia di Lucio Cornelio Silla".¹⁶⁹ As the title of the article suggests, this was not an attempt to examine all the known fragments, or indeed to discuss all the ancient authors in whose work portions of the *Autobiography* had been preserved. Vitelli comments on some of the most interesting passages, and focuses his research on three authors in particular (Plutarch, Appian, and Sallust), in order to identify which of these, if any, used Sulla's writings. He concludes, unusually, that the only one of these three to have had direct access to Sulla's work was Sallust, while Appian makes less certain use of the work, and Plutarch may have drawn on the work of an intermediary source. This conclusion is unsafe. While there are sections of Sallust's *Bellum Jugurthinum* which seem surprisingly favourable to Sulla, and may preserve a Sullan interpretation of events,¹⁷⁰ there is no evidence that Sallust either read the work, or used

¹⁶⁸ See the commentary on F12P below for the various interpretations of λέγεται.

¹⁶⁹ Vitelli (1898).

¹⁷⁰ Including the rather surprising prominence given to Sulla in the negotiations with Bocchus, at a time when he held a very junior position, and the extremely flattering description of him as *sollertissimus omnium*, and a diligent and skilled military man, popular both with his commanders and the soldiers (*BJ.* 96.1-3).

ideas from the *Autobiography* in the composition of his historical essays.¹⁷¹ Appian, too, is likely to have been aware of the work, and on some occasions preserves an account of incidents which appears to originate from Sulla's own presentation of events; due to the lack of citations, however, and the absence of any parallel passages to any of the known and confirmed references to the *Autobiography*, no certainty on this matter may be reached.

When it comes to Plutarch's knowledge of the *Autobiography*, Vitelli's conclusion that the Chaeronean biographer had probably only read an intermediary source that preserved elements of Sulla's text, and not the original text itself, was taken up in the 1950s by Calabi Limentani.¹⁷² Her lengthy article, "I commentarii di Silla come fonte storica", argued that Plutarch had taken his information from a variety of sources, but that there was no evidence that he had ever read Sulla's *Autobiography* in the original. She bases her arguments on the absence of specific citations in Plutarch's text (an unconvincing approach, given the general attitudes towards the naming of sources in ancient texts and level of specificity in fragments such as F16P and F21P) and on the problematic passage of Plutarch's *Life of Demosthenes*, in which he claims that his grasp of Latin was not strong.¹⁷³ Although to a certain extent this problem may never be resolved, the common consensus today is that Plutarch's protestation should not be over-stated; that is to say that Plutarch did not feel able to grasp some of the finer details of Latin style, but he was perfectly able to read texts and appreciate many aspects of them, as well as gain a serviceable understanding of their contents, and his skills in Latin were more than sufficient for his academic task and the research for his writing.¹⁷⁴ There is therefore no compelling evidence to suggest that Plutarch had not read Sulla's *Autobiography*. Calabi Limentani's work, however, did reveal the extent to which Sulla's *Autobiography* affected our extant sources on the period of the late Republic in which Sulla came to the fore; she argued that Sulla's influence, even where

¹⁷¹ On Sallust as a location of Sullan propaganda, see the review of Bates (1983) below.

¹⁷² Calabi Limentani (1951).

¹⁷³ Plut. *Dem.* 2.2-4. Rather surprisingly, Lintott (2013) does not confront this issue in his recent commentary on the *Lives* of Demosthenes and Cicero, although he does note (p. 2) several points in the *Life of Cicero* at which Plutarch displays knowledge of Latin, such as his discussion of Cicero's *cognomen* at 1.4, or of the meaning of *verres* at 7.6.

¹⁷⁴ For a summary of the debate on this issue, and the most important argument that Plutarch could read Latin, see Jones (1971) 81-86.

it was indirect, was nevertheless great, and that a large number of the surviving sources reveal Sulla's own interpretation of events.¹⁷⁵

After the work of Calabi Limentani, scholars working on the *Autobiography* may be divided into two main groups according to their methodology: those on the one hand who restricted their research to the *Autobiography* itself, working on the fragments in which Sulla is cited and on the passages of ancient literature which seem to have been drawn from the *Autobiography*, albeit without any citation, and those on the other hand who have used the fragments of the *Autobiography* in order to examine wider historical issues. The most important proponents of the former approach are Valgiglio, Pascucci, Russo, Alonso-Nuñez, Scholz/Walter, and Smith, while Bates and Thein have contributed most to the latter strand, to which this present study also adds.¹⁷⁶

Valgiglio in 1975 published an article entitled “L'Autobiografia di Silla nella biografia di Plutarco” in the proceedings of a conference on fragmentary Roman historiography, in which he argued that a very large proportion of the *Life of Sulla* drew directly on the *Autobiography*.¹⁷⁷ His decision to centre his discussion around the major Sullan campaigns reveals the extent of the *Autobiography* which seems to have been devoted to military narrative. However, while much of Valgiglio's discussion of the fragments is both sensible and sensitive to the many nuances of the fragments, his conclusions are rendered unreliable by one fundamental flaw: even though it is absolutely certain that Plutarch consulted more than one source in the composition of the *Life of Sulla*, and that Plutarch must have been drawing on a multitude of sources which were not named, Valgiglio assumed that the presence of a citation of Sulla, or pro-Sullan narration of events, within a paragraph indicated that the whole paragraph was drawn from the *Autobiography*. Moreover, he assumed that all the pro-Sullan narrative in the *Sulla* was drawn from the *Autobiography*; this is almost certainly untrue, and at the very least may not be suggested without justification. For these reasons, while Valgiglio's general conclusion that a very large proportion of the *Life of Sulla* was derived from the *Autobiography* may be upheld, his claim that two-thirds of the biography was based on that source must be rejected.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Calabi Limentani (1951) 301-302.

¹⁷⁶ See aims, intentions, and methodology below.

¹⁷⁷ Valgiglio (1975).

¹⁷⁸ Valgiglio (1975) 275-276. Valgiglio's conclusions are, however, based on his calculation of a Sullan derivation for 236 out of the 379 paragraphs that make up the

In the same volume, Pascucci also published an article on the *Autobiography*.¹⁷⁹ This article, however, predominantly analyses the fragments of the *Autobiography* which have been preserved in the works of Latin authors, and pays little attention to the paraphrases that have been transmitted in Plutarch's *Life of Sulla*. Although Pascucci has many interesting insights, therefore, his rejection of the Plutarchan evidence for the contents of the *Autobiography*, problematic as it may be, does not provide a sound basis for a proper investigation of the lost work. In the same vein are the 2004 article by Alonso-Nuñez and the 2009 article by Smith.¹⁸⁰ Both of these offerings do provide some new insights into the fragments, and Smith's article in particular does contain some excellent analysis of some of the more problematic passages that appear to be derived from the *Autobiography*. These articles may both be described, however, as functioning more as summaries of the evidence concerning the *Autobiography*, rather than significant contributions to the scholarship on the text.

In the work of Russo (2002), the fragments of the *Autobiography* are viewed from a slightly different angle.¹⁸¹ Rather than compiling a survey of the fragments, he combined this more traditional method with the approach of Calabi Limentani, and considered the role of the *Autobiography* as a historical source, focussing specifically on Plutarch's *Life of Sulla*. While Russo's analysis is excellent, and his interpretation of the fragments of the *Autobiography* located in the *Sulla* shows keen insight, the results of his survey are unfortunately detrimental to his project. While Russo's intention was to study the use of the *Autobiography* in the *Sulla*, the absence of other pro-Sullan accounts of this period renders almost impossible the task of determining which pro-Sullan passages stemmed from the *Autobiography* and which were taken from other, now lost, authors.¹⁸² For this reason, Russo concludes that the majority of the *Sulla*

Life, which relies on the erroneous assumption that only one source might be consulted concerning or preserved within each paragraph. See the sensible discussion of Valgiglio's methods in Russo (2002) 282 and *passim*.

¹⁷⁹ Pascucci (1975).

¹⁸⁰ Alonso-Nuñez (2004-5); Smith (2009b).

¹⁸¹ Russo (2002).

¹⁸² Most frequently cited in this regard is Sisenna, who composed a history of the period which seems to have been narrated from a pro-Sullan perspective. Sisenna had fought alongside Sulla in the second civil war, but had turned to his cause at a late stage in the conflict. For this reason, he is frequently thought to have acted as much as an apologist for those senators and elites in the same position (who had supported Sulla, albeit with a certain amount of reluctance) as he did as an apologist for the Sullan cause. See Badian (1964b); Rawson (1979); Perutelli (2004). Another possibility, although less likely for the *Lives* set in this period, is Asinius Pollio: Pelling (2002) 1-44.

seems to have drawn heavily on the *Autobiography*. While this may be the case, and it is beyond question that Plutarch knew the text well, caution must be exercised in attempting to determine whether the pro-Sullan elements that Russo identified were from Sulla himself, or from other pro-Sullan writers.

Finally, three modern editions of the fragments have been published in the last decade, which have, to different degrees, added to the scholarship on the fragments. In 2004, Martine Chassignet published her edition of the fragments within her volume on Republican annalists and political autobiographies.¹⁸³ This was the first new edition of the fragments in almost a century, and her bibliography on each text is extremely useful. Her discussion of the problems of each fragment is insightful, although at times disappointingly brief, due in part, no doubt, to the nature of her broader project. In 2013, two new editions emerged: firstly, that of Scholz and Walter. Although the authors of this edition have included updated bibliography and a lengthier discussion of each fragment than Chassignet provided, their interests are more in explaining the content of the fragments than in exploring the wider consequences of these texts.¹⁸⁴ Most recently, the long-awaited edition of the *Fragments of the Roman Historians*, directed by Tim Cornell, was published at the end of 2013.¹⁸⁵ In this study, Christopher Smith compiled and edited the fragments of Sulla's *Autobiography*, which were, for the first time since Peter, fully reconsidered, and re-ordered, involving a new division of F8P,¹⁸⁶ and for the first time including *testimonia*. The commentary on the fragments in that edition is excellent, and the introductory discussion very informative. The commentaries may perhaps be accused of being overly historical in nature, since they rarely discuss points of literary interest, and of being rather more brief than would be ideal; as will be clear from the commentaries given below, these fragments have a great deal more to offer historians of literature and of the period, if they are considered carefully. I have no doubt, however, that this edition will replace that of Peter for modern scholars, and it is undoubtedly an extremely useful reference resource.

¹⁸³ Chassignet (2004).

¹⁸⁴ Scholz/Water (2013). For example, they argue that Sulla died leaving the work unfinished and without an explanation of the dictatorship, his constitutional reforms, and retirement, but without considering the possibility that Sulla had deliberately chosen to end his *Autobiography* where he did.

¹⁸⁵ Cornell (2013): *FRH*.

¹⁸⁶ See the commentary on F8P below.

The use of the fragments of the *Autobiography* as a springboard from which to examine various historical subjects has been carried out predominantly by two scholars: Bates and Thein. Bates' 1983 PhD dissertation considered the themes of memory and self-perception in the early Roman autobiographies.¹⁸⁷ Although these are indeed two of the most important issues in the study of Republican autobiography, and his thesis did an excellent job of placing Sulla's *Autobiography* in its context with the development of the genre, Bates' methodology had one significant problem. In order to determine whether particular passages of ancient texts were derived from the *Autobiography*, Bates moved away from the traditional method, which has been to compare the potential fragments to the known citations of Sulla, looking for points of similarity and contrast. Instead, he created a character portrait of Sulla based on a number of sources, and decided whether passages were drawn from Sulla himself by determining whether or not they were psychologically compatible with his character. It hardly needs stating that this is not a sensible manner in which to proceed. Character portraits of ancient figures are always subjective, and there is no way to verify the extent to which Sulla was, for example, vainglorious. Bates argues, as a result of this research, that much of Sallust's *Bellum Iugurthinum*, from the arrival of Sulla in North Africa onwards, was inspired by the *Autobiography*. While it is highly likely that Sulla himself was responsible for encouraging the circulation of the story of the surrender of Jugurtha to him, it is not possible to be certain that other pro-Sullan writers had not also recorded these events from a Sullan perspective, and a subjective character portrait must not be the means by which the hypothesis is tested.

The work of Thein on the *Autobiography* is different to all that had preceded it: rather than examine the *Autobiography* alone, Thein used the fragments in a comparative study which examined some of the most important points of contrast between Sulla's *Autobiography*, and the lost autobiography written by Augustus.¹⁸⁸ In order to illuminate these differences, Thein engaged with the ways in which each of the autobiographers dealt with the concept of *felicitas*, the good fortune bestowed on those who were especially deserving and who enjoyed a particularly close relationship with the divine. By using this one concept, Thein has been able to delve deeper into the nature of the relationship that Sulla claimed in the *Autobiography* that he held with the divine. The scope of Thein's review was narrow, and the article says little about the

¹⁸⁷ Bates (1983).

¹⁸⁸ Thein (2009).

wider similarities and differences between the autobiographies of Sulla and Augustus, but his sensitive study of the issue of *felicitas* has made it possible for a deeper analysis of the *Autobiography* to take shape.

Other work has been carried out on various aspects of Sulla's self-representation strategy and his engagement with different audiences through various means; these works are tangential to the purpose of this study, and are therefore mentioned and discussed below, where appropriate, in the commentaries on each fragment.

Aims, intentions, and methodology

The discussion of Sulla's *Autobiography* that is set out below takes the form of a series of commentaries on the fragments that were included in Peter's 1914 edition, which have formed the core of editions of the fragments ever since. Peter chose to include only those passages that contain an explicit reference to Sulla himself, although not necessarily including the work's title. This process resulted in the twenty-three fragments discussed below, stemming from a range of authors, periods, and genres, and covering a wide variety of subject matter. These same fragments are to be found in the 2004 edition by Martine Chassignet, the 2013 edition by Scholz and Walter, and in the new edition by Christopher Smith. The decision to make these fragments the centre of the discussion of the *Autobiography* here was taken since it is from these brief glimpses of Sulla's original text that we can derive the most valuable information concerning Sulla's methods of presenting himself to his contemporary audience and to posterity.

It is important to remember, however, that the effects of Sulla's *Autobiography* on the extant tradition were almost certainly much greater than the twenty-three fragments. A number of scholars have identified other passages of ancient texts that appear to have drawn on the *Autobiography* as a source, as discussed in the literature review above. These scholars have tended to focus on Plutarch's *Life of Sulla*, a biography that undoubtedly drew heavily on Sulla's own version of events, including on occasions where no explicit citation is made. Conclusions vary concerning the extent to which the *Life of Sulla* drew on the *Autobiography*, with some claiming that as much as two thirds of the text repeated ideas taken directly from that work.¹⁸⁹ Authors such as Sallust and Appian have also been analysed in this manner, with scholars arguing that large portions of these texts derived their information (and, at times, their biases) from

¹⁸⁹ Valgiglio (1975) 275-276.

Sulla himself.¹⁹⁰ To a certain extent, however, such exercises are of limited value. While we may be certain that large portions of the works of these authors may have been inspired by Sulla's *Autobiography*, the little secure information that has been preserved concerning the contents of that text is insufficient to allow us to make anything more than speculative and tentative suggestions, and do not permit meaningful interpretations either of the author's intentions and work, or of Sulla's original text. There is one important exception, however: F17aP is, it is argued here, unlikely to have been derived from the *Autobiography*, despite Peter's choice to include it as a fragment.¹⁹¹

The remaining twenty-two fragments, however, are accepted as likely to derive from, and preserve aspects of, the *Autobiography*. Of these, only three record any of Sulla's original Latin text: F2P and F3P, in Gellius' *Noctes Atticae*, and F20P, in Priscian's *Institutiones Grammaticae*. Since these fragments are used by the authors to illustrate particular grammatical features, we may be reasonably certain that they have been accurately recorded, and that they contain the original words of the *Autobiography*, albeit only for very brief statements. Cicero and Pliny the Elder both cite Sulla's *Autobiography*, but do not claim that they have taken material from that source directly, or that they do anything more than paraphrase the original text.¹⁹² These fragments, F9P and F10P, are therefore treated in the same manner as the fragments preserved by Plutarch, which consist of paraphrases in Greek of Sulla's Latin original. These paraphrases pose a number of interpretative and methodological problems. It is important to remember that they do not claim to be a precise record of the content, or even the sense, of Sulla's *Autobiography*, and there is no way of knowing whether the authors have been accurate or in any way faithful to the text which they were using as a source. Indeed, it is probable that the *Autobiography* was used by these authors in ways which best served their purposes, without having any interest in creating an account which reflected the intended meaning of Sulla's original text. Moreover, while we have no reason to suspect that these authors had not read Sulla's *Autobiography*, they may not have checked their references to the text or taken care to record the information precisely as it was transmitted by Sulla. For these reasons, therefore, although they are referred in this thesis as fragments, Peter's fragments 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 10a, 11, 12,

¹⁹⁰ See for example the lengthy analysis of Sallust's portrait of Sulla in Bates (1983) 240-286.

¹⁹¹ See the commentary on F17aP in the Appendix.

¹⁹² Cic. *Div.* 1.72 = F9P; Plin. *Nat. Hist.* 22.6.12 = F10P.

13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 17a, 18, 19, 20 and 21 are paraphrases of an original text, often written in a different language to the original, which may be closely related to their source, or much more distant. This type of preserved section of a lost text is, in the strictest sense of the word, not a ‘fragment’. However, in the case of Sulla’s *Autobiography*, we have a relatively large amount of information preserved concerning the lost text, and referring to lengthy and detailed citations of Sulla’s work as *testimonia* diminishes their potential for interpreting the original contents of Sulla’s work. For this reason, the passages recorded as fragments by Peter and Chassignet are similarly discussed as ‘fragments’ in this thesis.¹⁹³

The structure of this thesis has been designed in order to present the most important aspects of the fragments of the *Autobiography* in as detailed a manner as the format of a PhD thesis will allow. Each of the fragments is therefore discussed below in a series of commentaries, which are presented below in the order and numbering system established by Peter in the second (1914) edition of *Historicorum Romanorum Reliquiae*.¹⁹⁴ The purpose of the commentaries is not to give a line-by-line analysis of the passages with references to the key bibliography on each point. This editorial task has been carried out recently and in considerable depth by Chassignet in 2004, and by Scholz/Walter and Smith in 2013. Instead, the commentaries format is used here to examine what the fragments of the *Autobiography* reveal concerning Sulla’s strategies of self-representation, his engagement with prominent, repeated themes, and the ways in which he chose to represent the most important and controversial aspects of his career. Sulla’s public life had been marked by a series of decisions that might be seen to require

¹⁹³ See the discussions by Laks (1997) and Schepens (1997) on the nature of, and most important methodological choices in the approach towards, fragmentary texts of different kinds.

¹⁹⁴ The only exception to this is F8P, which is divided into parts (a)-(f). For the reasons for this decision see the introduction to the commentary on F8P below. Although more recent editions of the fragments have used different numbering schemes, the system used by Peter is the one most widely adopted by scholars and, as such, is the most useful numbering system to be used at present. I anticipate that the new numbering system, adopted by Smith in the 2013 edition of the fragments, will be widely adopted to refer to this text. For reasons discussed below in the commentary on F8P, however, Peter’s numbering system is maintained here. Thein (2005) 283, while reviewing Chassignet (2004), has argued that a new numbering system should be adopted, and that future editions of the fragments should include passages that may have derived from the *Autobiography* albeit with less certainty, in order to give a fuller picture of the potential original scope of the work. Such a task would not be well suited to the purposes of this discussion, but I hope that future editors take up this strategy in dealing with the *Autobiography*.

defending in some way and it is clear that, while not engaging in outright *apologia*, the *Autobiography* nevertheless confronted some of the stories and adverse accounts that had been circulated regarding Sulla. In this aspect, the *Autobiography* was one of the first examples of a sophisticated attempt by an individual to personally control and manage the way in which he was perceived by others through a written text. Similarly, it is argued below that Sulla concentrated in the *Autobiography* on certain key themes: while maintaining a primary interest in self-representation, Sulla also examined the role that the gods had played in his life, showing him consistent great favour even in those incidents in his life which may otherwise have been perceived as unfortunate.¹⁹⁵ While the importance of the themes of divine favour and *felicitas* in Sulla's public image have long been recognised and explored, the depth and complexity of the use of this theme in the *Autobiography* have not been sufficiently acknowledged. The theme of *felicitas* and divine favour and the related issue of Sulla's methods of self-representation are therefore the focus of the commentaries below. The Conclusion will then bring together these diverse strands and consider the *Autobiography* as a complex literary work, and a carefully constructed piece of self-defence.

¹⁹⁵ See for example his explanation for his *repulsa* in the commentary on F7P below.

Commentaries

Commentary on F1P – Plut. *Luc.* 1.3 (= F1S, F1C)

*Sulla dedicated his Autobiography to Lucullus due to the latter's skills in Latin and Greek, so that he would set it in order and arrange the account better than himself.*¹

Plutarch's statement that Sulla's *Autobiography* was dedicated (προσεφώνησεν) to Lucullus ὡς συνταξομένῳ καὶ διαθήσοντι τὴν ἱστορίαν ἄμεινον has raised a number of questions concerning the nature of that dedication.² It seems to have been common practice for an autobiographer to dedicate his work to another, with the claim that it was to be arranged and re-written by the dedicatee – apparently in an effort to “blunt... *invidia*”³ – but there are no examples from antiquity when this task was actually carried out.⁴ For this reason, it remains unclear whether Plutarch's statement that Sulla's *Autobiography* was dedicated to Lucullus so that he would arrange it better than himself implies that Lucullus ever edited or re-wrote the *Autobiography*.⁵ Some scholars have argued that this was the case, since we know that Lucullus was interested in the writing of recent and contemporary history.⁶ For example, he composed a history of the Marsic War in Greek, apparently as the result of a game with Hortensius and Sisenna.⁷

However, there is no ancient evidence to suggest that Lucullus actually had any role in the process of editing or preparing Sulla's *Autobiography* for publication. On the contrary, it is suggested that this task fell to Sulla's learned Greek freedman C.

¹ Each fragment is introduced with a summary of its contents; on occasion, phrases or sentences are translated, but the ancient texts are used at the basis of discussion throughout.

² Plut. *Luc.* 1.3.

³ Lewis (1993) 662.

⁴ This is one of the reasons why Sulla's *Autobiography* has been described as *Commentarii*, since these too were often considered in some way ‘provisional’: Misch (1950) 237-238; Scholz (2003) 179-180; Riggsby (2006) 136-137; and discussion in the Introduction above.

⁵ The most famous examples of this are Catulus' dedication of his autobiography to the epic poet Aulus Furius (Cic. *Brut.* 132), and Cicero's letter to the historian L. Luceius (Cic. *Ad Fam.* 5.12). For a discussion of this practice see the Introduction.

⁶ Eg. Valgiglio (1975) 245.

⁷ Plut. *Luc.* 1.5. Cicero (*Ad Att.* 1.19) confirms that this account was written in Greek. Tröster (2008) 28; *FRH* 1.287, 2.492-493.

Epicadus,⁸ described by Sallust as a *scriba*,⁹ and apparently the author of a treatise on *cognomina*.¹⁰ Although we do not know precisely what was implied by Suetonius's statement that he *supplevit* the work, it certainly seems that it was Epicadus, and not Lucullus, who prepared the *Autobiography* for publication. Since it is suggested that the work was unfinished (*imperfectum*), it is possible that his task focussed on the addition of details concerning Sulla's last days, his death, and his funeral, which the politician would have been unable to supply for himself.¹¹ However we are to interpret Epicadus' role in the publication of the *Autobiography*, Lucullus does not seem to have played any role in this process and, as such, we may interpret the statement that the work was to be arranged by him as flattery, rather than a genuine request. Under this interpretation, the dedication and editorial request becomes an "elegant salute" to Lucullus,¹² and may be seen as "a sign of sophistication".¹³

Many reasons have been speculatively given for Sulla's dedication of his *Autobiography* to Lucullus. The apparently close friendship and relationship between the two was undoubtedly part of the cause.¹⁴ Plutarch himself states that the dedication was carried out δι' εὔνοιαν,¹⁵ and the connection between the two men is strengthened with the construction 'ὁ δὲ Λεύκολλος... ὥστε καὶ Σύλλας'.¹⁶ In the *Praecepta Gerendae Rei Publicae* he uses the relationship between Sulla and Lucullus as an example of ideal political patronage, describing them as being like new ivy that grows around a strong tree.¹⁷ It is clear that this was not the only cause, however: there were other colleagues and friends that were arguably equally close to Sulla. The most

⁸ Suet. *De Gramm.* 12: *Librum autem, quem Sulla novissimum de rebus suis imperfectum reliquerat, ipse supplevit.*

⁹ Sall. *Hist.* 1.55.17.

¹⁰ Charisius 1, p.110 K.

¹¹ See the commentary on F21P for Epicadus' role in editing the *Autobiography*, and in what sense the work seems to have been *imperfectum*.

¹² Keaveney (1992) 37.

¹³ Rawson (1985) 228.

¹⁴ It is likely that Lucullus was the only officer to remain with Sulla in his march on Rome in 88; Badian (1962a), with further discussion in Levick (1982b). Plutarch suggests that Sulla attached the young man to himself due to Lucullus's εὐστάθεια and πραότης (*Luc.* 2.1). For the relationship between Lucullus and Sulla see Keaveney (1992) 15-31.

¹⁵ Plut. *Luc.* 4.4.

¹⁶ Plut. *Luc.* 1.3.

¹⁷ Plut. *Praecepta Gerendae Rei Publicae* 10: *Mor.* 805e-f.

obvious candidate would be Pompey, who was passed over by Sulla in favour of Lucullus in the decision to entrust his children to the latter after his death.¹⁸

The explanation appears to rest in the reason that Plutarch gives for the dedication: Lucullus' aptitudes in both Latin and Greek.¹⁹ Lucullus was a philhellene and a man of παιδεία. His command of the Greek language and his love of Greek culture are well-documented,²⁰ and one may observe parallels with Sulla's own philhellenic outlook.²¹ The emphasis of the importance of Lucullus' excellence in both Greek and Latin has often led scholars to conclude that the *Autobiography* must have been composed in Greek, but the survival of direct quotations in Latin, preserved by grammarians to illustrate particular oddities of the Latin, remove any doubt that the work was written in Latin.²² If the *Autobiography* were not in Greek, then some alternative explanation must be found for Plutarch's explicit connection of the dedication with Lucullus' Greek (and Latin) skills. It seems that the solution lies in the interpretation of the reason that Plutarch gives for mentioning of this detail. Lucullus' philhellenism would appear to provide the answer. Much of Sulla's career, and very many of the military achievements of which Sulla was writing, took place in the Greek East; it was therefore important that Sulla should find a dedicatee who would understand the culture with which Sulla had been dealing for so many years. As well as having spent a great deal of time together on campaign, Sulla and Lucullus also shared this philhellenic outlook, and it may be postulated that Lucullus' interpretation of the

¹⁸ Plut. *Luc.* 4.4.

¹⁹ The role played by the Greek language among the social and political elites in Rome in the Republic is a complex problem. Rawson (1985) 1-18; Petrochilos (1974) 23-33. For the purposes of this discussion, it need only be noted that while it was far from surprising Lucullus should have a good knowledge of the Greek language, his skills seem to have been particularly impressive. Cicero states that he deliberately included barbarisms in his work on the Marsic War so that readers would be aware that it was written by a Roman. Cic. *Ad Att.* 1.19.10.

²⁰ Plut. *Luc.* 1.3-7. On the role of Lucullus' Hellenism in his career and public image see Tröster (2008) 27-47.

²¹ Sulla's philhellenism may be observed, for example, in his initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries (Plut. *Sull.* 26.1), his strong connections with the theatre (Plut. *Sull.* 2.2; 26.3; 36.1), and in the complex connotations of the *cognomen* Ἐπαφρόδιτος, which he assumed in Greek contexts late in his career; see below the Conclusion on Sulla's *cognomina*. The political importance of philhellenism in the Roman Republic: Ferrary (1988a); Gruen (1992). It is argued below in the commentary on F8P that there is no inherent contradiction in Sulla's philhellenism and his treatment of the Greek sanctuaries during the Mithridatic War. On Sulla's connections with the theatre see Garton (1964).

²² See the Introduction.

events in question might be broadly similar to Sulla's own, or that he would at least be sympathetic to the significant Greek influence on Sulla's approach to his public image and the narration of events in his *Autobiography*. It would therefore seem that it was a combination of all these many, diverse influences which led Sulla to select Lucullus as the dedicatee of his *Autobiography*.²³

This fragment must also act as a reminder not to take the contents of Plutarch's biography of Sulla as direct evidence for the *Autobiography*. Although it is clear that the biographer knew the *Autobiography* well, and drew on it heavily in his own writing, there are certain elements which must surely have appeared in the *Autobiography*, but which are absent from the *Life of Sulla*. Since this fragment reveals that the *Autobiography* was dedicated to Lucullus, it ought to be expected that Sulla must have at least mentioned some of the events in which the two men participated together. If Lucullus was so important a figure to Sulla to be the dedicatee of his *magnum opus*, then the younger man would surely have been given some mention in the narrative of their shared exploits, such as, for example, the march on Rome in 88. In the *Life of Sulla*, however, Lucullus appears only once, when he ordered Brutius Sura to give way to Sulla in Boeotia in the fight against Archelaus.²⁴ It is unlikely that this reflects a similar arrangement or concentration of materials in Sulla's *Autobiography*; it is instead the result of Plutarch's division of subject matter between the *Lives* of Sulla and Lucullus. The younger man barely appears in the biography of Sulla since Plutarch had another location in which to discuss his contributions to events. Plutarch was writing biography, not general or comprehensive history, and as such he did not need to convey the prominence that was surely accorded to Lucullus in the *Autobiography*.²⁵

²³ Lewis (1991a) 514. It should also be noted that Plutarch may have exaggerated the importance of Lucullus in this process due to the particular interest which he had in the younger politician, who was warmly remembered in local tradition and the recipient of a marble statue in the town: Plut. *Cim.* 2.2-3. Tröster (2008) 19-21. It is also notable that in the *Lucullus*, Plutarch's depiction of the relationship between Sulla and Lucullus is not unfavourable, despite his more nuanced and unflattering portrait of Sulla in the *Sulla*: Lavery (1994) 264 n. 13. Even if Lucullus were accorded a favourable interpretation due to his status within Plutarch's community, however, this would not explain why he was named as the dedicatee, and why his skills in Greek and Latin were mentioned.

²⁴ Plut. *Luc.* 11.4-5.

²⁵ On Plutarch's interest in Lucullus see Tröster (2008).

Commentary on F2P – Gell. 1.12.16 (= F2S, F2C)

Sulla wrote in the second book of his Res Gestae that P. Cornelius, the first man to be given the cognomen “Sulla”, was made flamen Dialis.

Gellius here preserves one of the three surviving direct quotations of Sulla’s *Autobiography*: *P. Cornelius, cui primum cognomen Sullae impositum est, flamen Dialis captus.*¹ Sulla is cited to illustrate the use of *capere* in a religious context.² The identification of the P. Cornelius in question has proven problematic. Macrobius records that the first of the Cornelii to be called ‘Sulla’ was the *decemvir* P. Cornelius Rufus, who took the *cognomen* ‘Sibylla’ owing to his role in the institution of the *Ludi Apollinares* in 212, which was inspired by consultation by the *decemviri* of the Sibylline Books.³

*Sed invenio in litteris hos ludos victoriae, non valitudinis causa, ut quidam annalium scriptores memorant, institutos. Bello enim Punico hi ludi ex libris Sibyllinis primum sunt instituti, suadente Cornelio Rufo decemviro, qui propterea Sibylla cognominatus est, et postea corrupto nomine primus coepit Sylla vocitari.*⁴

But I find in the written record that these games of victory were begun not for the sake of well-being, as certain writers of annals record. For these games were first set up in the Punic War out of the Sibylline books, at the persuasion of Cornelius Rufus the *decemvir*, who was given the *cognomen* ‘Sibylla’ for this reason; and afterwards, when the name had been corrupted, he was the first who began to be called ‘Sylla’.

¹ On the flamine in the Republic see Marco Simón (1996). The flamine was not viewed as the most prestigious of priesthoods to attain since it imposed a large number of restrictions on the public activity of the holder. Gell. 10.15.16: *Dialis cotidie feriatu est.*

² See Livy 27.8.5; Tac. *Ann.* 2.86; Gaius *Inst.* 1.30. Chassignet (2004) 240. Gellius’ interest in historical and descriptive linguistics is well-known. 136 of his 383 essays deal with this subject. Springer (1958) 121-128.

³ The Sibylline Books in the Republic: Santangelo (2013) 128-148. The institution of the *Ludi Apollinares*: Orlin (2010) 154-156; Santangelo (2013) 163-164.

⁴ Macrobius *Sat.* 1.17.27; *MRR* 1.271.

This man, who was also *praetor urbanus et peregrinus* in 212, was certainly one of Sulla's more illustrious ancestors.⁵ However, he cannot have been the *flamen Dialis* mentioned by Sulla, since it was not possible to hold both the flamine and the decemvirate, and since Livy records that the *flamen Dialis* at this time was C. Claudius.⁶ Since Sulla insists that this ancestor was the first of the Cornelii to bear the *cognomen* 'Sulla', it seems that he was indeed discussing the same individual mentioned in Macrobius.⁷ Sulla was undoubtedly interested in onomastics, as the assumption of the *cognomina* 'Felix' and Ἐπαφρόδιτος powerfully shows.⁸ Moreover, Epicadus, the Greek freedman in Sulla's retinue who seems to have been responsible for editing and completing the *Autobiography* following Sulla's death, is known to have written a treatise on *cognomina*.⁹ Although we cannot know when this work was produced, and whether Sulla was aware of it, Epicadus' project does strongly suggest that there was an interest in *cognomina* and onomastics in general among Sulla's intellectual circle. For this reason, it is compelling to suggest that Sulla may have engaged with various etymologies of the *cognomen* 'Sulla' also.¹⁰

Συκάμνος (mulberry) is the other derivation of 'Sulla' that was proposed in antiquity; we may be certain that it not the origin of the *cognomen*, but it does reflect classical interest in alternative and knowingly fabricated etymologies. Plutarch narrates a story in which Sulla is taunted with the following mocking verse from the walls of Athens during his siege of the city: συκάμινόν ἐσθ'ὁ Σύλλας ἀλφίτῳ πεπασμένον. By calling Sulla 'a mulberry sprinkled with barley-meal', the Athenians were referring rather insultingly to his ruddy complexion: his skin, according to Plutarch, was covered with blotches of red and white.¹¹ Rather surprisingly, perhaps, this etymology has received some scholarly notice due to a comment on the part of Quintilian that 'Sulla'

⁵ *MRR* 1. 268.

⁶ Livy 26.23.8. See *FRH* 3.290, who also notes that Livy had indicated (27.8.7) that recent *flamines Diales* had not been senators. Marco Simón (1996) 253 argues the opposite, stating that he was the same individual that held the praetorship of 212, and was a *decemvir*.

⁷ Rüpke disagrees, identifying the *flamen* as having lived in the second quarter of the third century BC, otherwise unknown, distinct from the *decemvir* of 212. Rüpke (2008) 644, nos. 1385 and 1386.

⁸ See the commentary on F15P, and the Conclusion, for Sulla's *cognomina*.

⁹ Charisius 1, p.110 K.

¹⁰ Pascucci (1975) 285 has connected the presence of details concerning Sulla's ancestry with the autobiographer's desire to assuage criticisms of his family's recent fall from prominence.

¹¹ Plut. *Sull.* 2.1.

was one of the Roman *cognomina* that derived, albeit obscurely, from physical characteristics.¹² However, as hardly needs stating, it is evident that it was not the origin of Sulla's *cognomen*, since he was not the first to bear the name. Quintilian may be correct that the name derived from a physical characteristic of the first man to whom the name was given, but it did not refer to L. Cornelius Sulla's own appearance. There is no need to suggest that the Athenians were aware of Sulla's interest in *cognomina*, or that he might have begun by this early stage to have drawn attention to his ancestral connection to Jupiter (and Apollo: see below); this would require a much greater knowledge of Latin on the part of the anonymous Athenians that came up with the joke than seems plausible.

Macrobius' suggestion for the etymology is attractive and, unlike *σικάμνος*, does strongly suggest that Sulla himself engaged with alternative etymologies of his *cognomen*. He states that the first of the Cornelii to receive the name 'Sulla' was P. Cornelius Rufus, who was called 'Sibylla' due to his role in the institution of the *ludi Apollinares*, which were the result of a consultation of the Sibylline Books.¹³ Over time, 'Sibylla' became corrupted to 'Sylla', and 'Sulla'.¹⁴ Not only does this suggestion seem logical, but the fact that it was discussed in antiquity suggests that our Sulla may have engaged with this story.¹⁵ When the Capitol was burnt in 83 BC, the Sibylline Books

¹² Cf. Bertinelli (1997) 296. Quint. *Inst. Orat.* 1.4.25: *scrutabitur ille praeceptor acer atque subtilis origines nominum: quae ex habitu corporis Rufos Longosque fecerunt (ubi erit aliquid secretius: Sullae (etc.))*

¹³ Livy 25.12. *Ludi Apollinares*: Gagé (1955) 221-418; see also Russo (2005) on the *Carmina Marciana*. RRC 205 has been used to suggest that the Cornelii Sullae asserted the derivation of their *cognomen* from 'Sibylla' as early as the mid-second century BC (Crawford: 151 BC). Crawford (1974) 250 has shown, however, that this evidence is not conclusive, although he argues, unconvincingly, that the presence of an alternative explanation for the derivation of the *cognomen* 'Sulla' in the dictator's *Autobiography* implies that the 'Sibylla' derivation was false (and therefore an invention of the imperial age), implying that Sulla always wrote truthfully in the *Autobiography*, or that Sulla's intention in this fragment was to discuss the historical derivation of the name rather than to engage, playfully, with alternative etymologies, in the knowledge that his educated audience would understand the different references to his ancestral connections to Jupiter and Apollo. Gagé's discussion of this etymology is persuasive, suggesting that it was known in the time of Sulla the dictator: "il se présentait comme "l'homme de la Sibylle"": Gagé (1955) 436-437. See also Gabba (1975) 13-14 with n. 25, and Crawford (1974) 250 for bibliography and discussion.

¹⁴ Macrobius. *Sat.* 1.17.27.

¹⁵ Gabba (1975) 13-14 argues that this was the most likely derivation of the *cognomen*, but adds that Sulla's discussion of a different ancestor suggests that he distances himself from this story. On Sulla's use of his *cognomen* as a way to associate himself with the cults of Jupiter and Apollo, see below.

were destroyed, which compounded the terrible loss of Rome's most important archaic temple.¹⁶ It has been suggested that Sulla was responsible for starting the process of reconstructing the texts of the Sibylline Books by sending embassies to sanctuaries throughout the Mediterranean that had a Sibylline connection. Sulla had died before the senate passed the decree that ordered this mission, but it is certainly plausible that Sulla had suggested the initiative, or perhaps started the process either during his consulship in 80, or following his retirement.¹⁷ It is argued below, in the commentary on F18P, that Sulla might have used the story of the burning of the Capitol as a means by which to cast blame on his enemies for delaying his return to Rome, and thereby causing the fires.¹⁸ It is therefore plausible that Sulla may have wished for this story concerning the derivation of his *cognomen* to become widely known, since it reinforced the idea that he (and his family) had a long standing connection with the Sibylline lore, and further suggested that no blame should be attached to him for their later loss. On the other hand, this etymology may also have been used as a means of attacking Sulla, since it pointed to a distinction between his exemplary ancestor, who had used the Sibylline Books to bring Rome into a renewed excellent relationship with the gods, and himself, who had allowed for the Books to be lost when he tarried on his return to the city in 83. Macrobius does not make it clear precisely how this story had come down to him, and it is by no means apparent that Sulla himself might have been responsible for encouraging the discussion of this etymology of his *cognomen*, although that possibility is attractive.

Moreover, if Sulla's ancestor was not in fact a *flamen Dialis*, as Sulla appears to have claimed, then it is important to consider the reasons why Sulla might have made such an assertion – perhaps as an attempt either to associate himself with Jupiter, or to lessen the blame for the burning of the Capitol and the loss of the Sibylline Books.¹⁹ There were certainly more obvious points of similarity between Sulla and his ancestor. Sulla appears to have made some attempt to associate himself with Apollo: although he had a somewhat troubled relationship with the famous sanctuary of the god at Delphi, he is said to have carried around a small golden statue of Apollo, to which he prayed during the battle of the Colline Gate.²⁰ Furthermore, Sulla was, like his ancestor,

¹⁶ For Sulla and the Capitol see the commentary on F18P.

¹⁷ The argument that Sulla had intended to reconstitute the Sibylline Books is based on his decision to increase the membership of the decemviral college by five: Serv. *ad Verg. Aen.* 6.73. See Orlin (1997) 79-80; Santangelo (2013) 135.

¹⁸ See commentary on F18P below.

¹⁹ As noted by Gabba (1975) 13-14.

²⁰ Plut. *Sull.* 29.6.

instrumental in the institution of *ludi*, having arranged the *Ludi Victoriae*, held in 81 BC.²¹ It is tempting to suggest that Sulla was drawing on these parallels between himself and his famous ancestor when he wrote the passage that is preserved in F2P.²² One may even speculate that the ancestors that Sulla mentioned in his account of his lineage may have displayed, or be said to have displayed, important connections with his own career, highlighting certain aspects that Sulla wished to bring to the fore in the *Autobiography*.²³

Due to the way in which this quotation has been preserved, we may assume that it is accurate. There would be no reason for Gellius to cite Sulla for the specific use of a word, if he were not lifting the sentence from a text that he thought was reliable. Although it is possible that Gellius was relying on an intermediary source for his information, its presentation in *oratio recta* renders this unlikely. If we are to take this quotation as accurate and precise, this has important implications for our understanding of the structure of the *Autobiography*, since Gellius states that he took this sentence from the second book of Sulla's *Res Gestae*. It is generally accepted that the main narrative of the *Autobiography* was presented in broadly chronological order, and that the work would have begun with some sort of introduction.²⁴ It seems to have been common for autobiographical works in this period to have included a discussion of the writer's ancestry;²⁵ this no doubt reflects the Roman cultural practices that inspired the genre, including *laudationes funebres* and the display of *imagines* at funerals and in the *atria* of the homes of Rome's elite families.²⁶ However, while it is logical to assume

²¹ *Ludi victoriae*, later called the *ludi victoriae Sullanae*: *RRC* 421; *Cic. Verr.* 1.31; *Vell. Pat.* 2.27.6. See Martin (1989); Bernstein (1998) 313-327; MacKay (2000) 194-195.

²² If Sulla was indeed fabricating certain details concerning his ancestors, this confirms the fears expressed by Cicero regarding the closely related genre of the *laudatio funebris*: *Cic. Brut.* 62.

²³ Modern scholars have suggested two main possible derivations of the *cognomen* 'Sulla': either from *sura*, 'calf', and its diminutive *surula*, or from *suilla*, 'pork'. For bibliography on these possibilities see Bertinelli (1997) 296. There is little suggestion, except perhaps the comment by Quintilian that the *cognomen* 'Sulla' derived from a physical attribute, that these etymologies were discussed in the age of Sulla the dictator.

²⁴ The nature of this introduction is discussed below; it is known to have existed in some form since Plutarch preserves the dedication (F1P) and the advice to Lucullus that he should think nothing as secure as that which the divine enjoins in dreams, on which see the commentary on F8P.

²⁵ See for example Scaurus' *De vita sua* F1 Peter = *Val. Max.* 4.4.11.

²⁶ See the Introduction for the influence of these practices on the development of autobiographical writing in Rome.

that Sulla had written about his ancestors,²⁷ the location of this information in the second book of the *Autobiography* requires further analysis. It is conventionally assumed that such a discussion of the individual's most prominent ancestors would have been relatively brief, and would have been located at the beginning of the work, serving as a sort of introduction to the life of the autobiographer himself. However, Gellius asserts that Sulla made this statement about his forebear in the second book of the *Autobiography*. Does this mean that Sulla's account of his most important ancestors was located in the second book of the work? And, if so, what material might have been covered in the first book of the *Autobiography*?

There is no need to doubt the book number that Gellius gives; since he has apparently taken this quotation directly from Sulla's *Autobiography* then it has to be assumed that the book number is also given correctly. Given the paucity of evidence concerning the *Autobiography*, it will not do to suggest that book numbers are likely to have been recorded incorrectly, simply because they do not fit with the most convenient reconstruction of the work. Three main arguments have therefore been offered to explain this apparent anomaly. Firstly, it has been suggested that Sulla's account of his ancestors was exceptionally lengthy, so much so that it would not fit in the first book of the *Autobiography* alone.²⁸ It is widely acknowledged that, during the early stages of his career, Sulla would have found his family's recent obscurity a problem for his burgeoning political ambitions. Indeed, the early Republican autobiographies seem to have been written primarily by politicians in a similar situation to Sulla, in that they came from families that could not claim recent illustrious members.²⁹ It is possible that an awareness of this deficiency prompted Sulla to write an account of his ancestors that was exceptionally lengthy, and that his discussion of the subject should be located within the same cultural paradigm as the *laudationes funebres* and the *imagines* – that is, an innovative location for a discussion that would have fitted within the context of established genres. It was inevitable that Sulla would have had to confront the fall of his ancestors from political favour and, while there are many possible ways of constructing such a failing in order to make it less problematic, it is certainly plausible that Sulla

²⁷ For Sulla's attitude towards his ancestry and the reasons why they seem to have featured prominently see below in the commentary on F3P.

²⁸ One of the most thorough exponents of this view is Badian (1970), 4; cf. Badian (1968) 41 n. 6: "the scale of Sulla's treatment of the earliest period (including, presumably, legendary descent) must have been enormous."

²⁹ See the Introduction for a discussion of the need of the early autobiographers from more obscure backgrounds to take particular care to assert their ancestral heritage.

drew on the example of Scaurus and other early autobiographers, and used his *Autobiography* to explain the many honours which had been won by his branch of the *gens Cornelia*. However, this reconstruction fails to account for certain details: it does not explain why F3P, which is hard to place within the context of any ancestral narrative, is also ascribed to book two, or the relative lack of information regarding Sulla's ancestry which made its way into our surviving texts. It is an argument *ex silentio* to suggest that the silence of our texts on a particular matter necessarily implies that Sulla himself did not discuss the issue. However, if Sulla had written such a lengthy account of his ancestors that it filled two books, this would surely have received some comment in antiquity, or have left some trace other than this short notice in Aulus Gellius.

The second possible reconstruction is to suggest that the comment on P. Cornelius Sulla was part of a digression from an early point in Sulla's narrative of his own career, but not necessarily part of a concentrated discussion of Sulla's ancestry. Smith argues that Sulla is likely to have mentioned this detail when describing Sulla's ascension to a particular priesthood, at which point he might have discussed the priesthoods held by his forebears.³⁰ Although, strictly speaking, there is no evidence to disprove this theory, the suggestion that Sulla would list all his ancestors' priesthoods after the mention of his own first priesthood is implausible in the extreme. Not only does this suggest too neat a distinction between priesthoods and magistracies, but it would also require such a lengthy digression that it would distort the otherwise broadly chronological structure of the narrative. One would also have to suggest that when Sulla mentioned his first magistracy or public post, he also paused and gave a list of all his ancestors' magistracies. Such a structure has no precedent and is not supported by the surviving evidence.

The third and final reconstruction best explains our surviving evidence. In 1991, R. G. Lewis proposed an alternative structure of Sulla's *Autobiography*, which argued that the second book of the work did contain Sulla's account of his ancestors, but that it was not an account that was two books in length.³¹ On the contrary, it was set out in the second book since the first book was a lengthy introduction to the *Autobiography* that included a prolonged dedication to Lucullus (which contained advice on how he should

³⁰ *FRH* 3.290.

³¹ Lewis (1991a) 514-517.

live his life),³² and a thematic discussion of *felicitas*.³³ Plutarch includes in his *Life of Sulla* a discussion of his subject's attitudes towards the divine.³⁴ It is not clear that the many citations of the *Autobiography* in that passage were taken from the same section of the text, but the many generic statements concerning Sulla's 'beliefs' certainly may have been derived from a similar discussion of this theme in the *Autobiography*. It is beyond any doubt that Sulla's *Autobiography* contained a significant body of information concerning his relationship with the gods. The surviving evidence regarding Sulla's life makes clear that there was an abundance of stories of Sulla engaging with the worship of the gods in various ways available to writers during the subsequent centuries, and it is not difficult to believe that a man who used the gods as an important theme in his coinage, inscriptions, and monuments would also write about that theme in his *Autobiography*. Lewis' suggestion was just not that Sulla discussed his relationship with the gods in general in a thematic introduction, but that he focused on the theme of *felicitas* in particular.

It hardly needs stating that *felicitas* must have been an important theme within Sulla's self-representation strategy, since he famously assumed the *cognomen* 'Felix' late in his life.³⁵ It also appears to have been a key theme in the *Autobiography*, if we are to take Plutarch's references to εὐτυχία in F8P as an attempt to capture the meaning of this word in Greek.³⁶ *Felicitas* has a complex meaning that is difficult to translate into English; it refers to a reciprocal relationship between an individual and the gods, in which the individual was given good fortune and shown special favour, due to his pious behaviour and correct religious practice. Not every man would attain this special status, but it was thought to be a necessary attribute of an emperor, according to Cicero.³⁷ To a certain extent, therefore, it might be expected that Sulla should have engaged with the concept in his self-representation strategy; for Sulla to have used the theme so prominently in his *Autobiography* and assumed the *cognomen* 'Felix' implies an extremely close association with the concept.³⁸ If Sulla began his *Autobiography* with a discussion of his personal approach towards the divine, it is therefore logical to imagine

³² See the commentary on F8P (d) for the advice to Lucullus.

³³ Lewis (1991a).

³⁴ Plut. *Sull.* 6.4-7 = F8P.

³⁵ See the Conclusion for Sulla's nomenclature.

³⁶ See the discussion of Plutarch's terminology in the commentary on F8P (a).

³⁷ Cic. *Pro Leg. Man.* 28: *Ego enim sic existimo, in summo imperatore quattuor has res inesse oportere: scientiam rei militaris, virtutem, auctoritatem, felicitatem.*

³⁸ This has been well established in modern scholarship: see Thein (2009) with bibliography.

that he might have focussed on *felicitas* in particular, given the prominence of this theme in Plutarch's *Life of Sulla* and the fact that Sulla was writing at the end of his career, when his association with *felicitas* was well established.

The combination of the above evidence with the presence of material on Sulla's ancestors in book two of the *Autobiography* therefore strongly suggests that Sulla opened his work with a discussion of the role that the gods had played in his life and career, focussing on *felicitas* in particular, since this was a concise illustration of the close relationship with the divine that he enjoyed. This does not imply that the subsequent sections of the *Autobiography* were not still peppered with further comments on this theme. Indeed, it would suit Sulla's purpose to reinforce the message of his introduction by mentioning throughout the *Autobiography* the many occasions on which the gods might be said to have helped him, or he might have enjoyed notable good fortune. By opening his *Autobiography* with a thematic discussion of his *felicitas*, Sulla was writing an innovative work, which combined autobiographical (and historical) narrative with a thematic treatment of one aspect of his public persona.

Other ancient authors carried out similar projects in genres other than autobiography: one might think, for example, of Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae*, which opens with a discussion of Rome's descent into immorality, and which reinforces the central idea of this introduction throughout the work.³⁹ Sulla's *Autobiography* is known to have been unprecedented in several respects, including its length and, consequently, the level of detail it contained. It is thus not implausible to suggest that Sulla's work was also innovative in its structure and conceptual outlook. After opening the work with a discussion of Sulla's *felicitas* and a series of instructions to Lucullus concerning the ways in which he was to trust in and engage with the divine, Sulla then proceeded to narrate his life, alluding to the role that the gods had played within his career at the relevant points in the narrative.

³⁹ Introduction: Sall. *Cat.* 1-13. Catiline in the context of a corrupted Rome: *Cat.* 14-16.

Commentary on F3P – Gell. 20.6.3 (= F3S, F3C)

In the second book of Sulla's Autobiography an address is made by an unknown speaker to an unidentified audience, stating that if they may still consider the speaker a civis rather than a hostis and to fight for them rather than against them, then this would be due to his services and those of his ancestors.

Gellius preserves this, the lengthiest of the direct quotations of Sulla's *Autobiography*, in the context of a grammatical discussion in which the author is discussing with his former tutor, C. Sulpicius Apollinaris, whether it is correct to use *vestrum* or *vestri* as the genitive of *vos* in phrases such as *habeo curam vestri* or *habeo curam vestrum*.¹ Sulla is cited because he used a similar formula, *nostri nunc in mentem veniat*, in the second book of his *Autobiography*.² Although the fragment is still reasonably brief, the high quality of the Latin has been praised by modern scholars.³ The ascription of this fragment to the second book has, however, caused many problems for the identification of the context of this comment within Sulla's wider project. It is clear that this fragment was part of an address, but both the speaker and the audience are extremely difficult to identify.⁴ There are three main possibilities: this was an address to the reader by Sulla himself as narrator; this was taken from one of the stories concerning one of Sulla's ancestors; or this was part of a speech delivered during Sulla's lifetime, either by himself or by another speaker that was somehow connected to his own career.

The theory that Sulla was here addressing the reader in the context of a *captatio benevolentiae* before the narrative proper began, has some merit.⁵ We know from F2P that the second book of Sulla's *Autobiography* contained an account of the deeds of his ancestors, and it is reasonable to expect some introductory material or comments on the part of the author to bridge the gaps first between the thematic introduction in book one, and the ancestral narrative in book two, and the beginning of Sulla's own public career.

¹ Gell. 20.6.1-3: *Quod si fieri potest, ut etiam nunc nostri vobis in mentem veniat, nosque magis dignos credatis, quibus civibus, quam hostibus utamini, quique pro vobis potius quam contra vos pugnemus: neque nostro neque maiorum nostrorum merito nobis id contingent.*

² As is the case with F2P, the title of Sulla's work is given as *Res Gestae*; see the Introduction for the original title of the *Autobiography*.

³ Bardon (1952) 157.

⁴ The fact that this is an address may be seen from *vobis*, *vos*, *creditis* and *utamini*. The only alternative possible context would be a letter; on Sulla's letters and the possibility that some documents of this type were included in the *Autobiography* see below.

⁵ Lewis (1991a) 514.

Moreover, the address in the fragment does seem to be made by one who had carried out a number of deeds that were considered controversial, to such an extent that there was a possibility that the speaker might no longer be considered a *civis* but a *hostis*, and asks the audience of the address to consider the speaker as fighting for them, rather than against them.⁶ This resonates with the hostility that many showed towards Sulla following his return to Rome in 83, and the growing unease with which he was viewed following his return to the status of *privatus* in 79.⁷ The context in which Sulla might describe himself in such terms could only be towards the end of his career, which cannot have featured in the second book. If Sulla is the speaker of the address contained in this fragment, therefore, the only solution to the problem of the fragment having been taken from book two is to suggest that this was an address by the autobiographer to his reader, appealing for them not to consider him a *hostis*. We may be certain that the addressee was not the same as the recipient of the only other known address in the *Autobiography*, Lucullus.⁸

However, certain aspects of the fragment do not support the conclusion that this fragment was taken from an appeal by Sulla to his reader. Although some elements of the fragment seem to refer to Sulla's own career, and there certainly were elements of apologia in Sulla's *Autobiography*, he at no other point uses a similar tone, or pleads with the reader not to view him with hostility. Most of his self-defence in the *Autobiography* consists of the construction of an alternative account of events, in which he is excused from any blame and portrayed as acting at all times in the best interests of Rome.⁹ In the light of this otherwise subtle and careful system of self-justification, it would be extremely surprising to find such an openly apologetic statement at the beginning of the narrative. Moreover, only on very rare occasions did Sulla actively engage with the negative traditions that had emerged about his career. In F17P, for example, Plutarch tells us that Sulla defended himself against certain accusations of complicity with the Pontic general Archelaus. The scope of his self-defence in that context appears, however, to be strictly defined: after presenting the accusations that had been laid against him, Sulla explained the 'true' version of events, and thus showed

⁶ For *hostis* declarations in the Republic see Allély (2012), esp. 21-45 on the Sullan period. Allély does not confront this passage, however.

⁷ Lewis (1991a) 516-517.

⁸ F1P; Lewis (1991a) 516 n. 27.

⁹ Sulla's self-defence and *apologia*: see for example the commentaries on F17P and F21P below, and the Conclusion.

how he was in fact blameless.¹⁰ Although it was therefore possible that Sulla might, on occasion, admit to the existence of certain accusations that had been made against him, it was only in the context of a broader discussion of the events in question, and only when he would go on to explain why these accusations were false or unfounded. F3P displays a very different attitude, and while it is possible that Sulla would go on to give further explanatory statements that were simply not recorded by Gellius, the weakness displayed in the admission that some might (still) perceive him as a *hostis* and think that he had fought against the Roman state remains to be explained.

Various attempts have been made to reconstruct the sentence in which this fragment may have featured. Lewis suggested that it would be concluded with an appeal to “the benevolence of the gods, the Roman People’s good sense, or... Sulla’s own Felicitas”, and argued that, rather than revealing weakness or uncertainty on the part of Sulla, this fragment displays “savage irony”.¹¹ Alternatively, it was suggested that *merito* should be emended to *immerito*.¹² The omission of the first syllable of *immerito* would be possible, especially considering its position in the sequence *nostrorum immerito*, and would make the fragment in its current form easier to understand; such interventions in the text are unwise, however, given the lack of context and the absence of any indications as to what the wider meaning of this passage was. Pascucci has persuasively argued that this emendation should not be accepted.¹³

Since there are such significant problems with the conclusion that F3P was taken from an address from Sulla to the reader, it is necessary to consider the alternative possibilities, according to which the statement contained in this fragment was part of Sulla’s account of the affairs of his ancestors, or part of the main narrative of the *Autobiography*. Three elements have to be explained for each potential reconstruction: the speaker, the addressee, and the historical context.

The mention of citizenship in this fragment allows for the elimination of a number of possibilities. The distribution of the Roman citizenship to peoples outside the city of Rome itself was one of the most problematic issues in this period, and there are

¹⁰ See the commentary on F17P.

¹¹ Lewis (1991a) 516.

¹² Madvig (1873) 612-613. The fragment would thus run as follows: *Quod si fieri potest, ut etiam nunc nostri vobis in mentem veniat, nosque magis dignos credatis, quibus civibus, quam hostibus utamini, quique pro vobis potius quam contra vos pugnemus: neque nostro neque maiorum nostrorum immerito nobis id contingent.*

¹³ See Pascucci (1975) 287-289.

very few occasions on which Roman troops fought against an enemy that might be described as *cives*. The appearance of comments about citizenship such as are found in F3P would not be plausible in the earliest parts of Sulla's career,¹⁴ and would only be conceivable during or after the Social War. It is difficult to explain why this material would have been set out in the second book of the *Autobiography*, when the other fragments do not suggest such an extremely uneven arrangement of material within the work. If the *Autobiography* dealt with Sulla's career in a broadly chronological manner, it is unthinkable that Sulla could have reached the events of the Social War even by the very end of his second book.¹⁵

Since Gellius preserves another fragment of the *Autobiography* which shows that Sulla was dealing with material connected with his ancestors in book two, it has been suggested that the context of this fragment might therefore have been a story concerning one of his ancestors.¹⁶ The speaker would thus be either one of Sulla's ancestors themselves, or an unknown participant in an event that was central to the career of one of his forebears. There are no known or identifiable instances in which any of Sulla's ancestors took part, however, which provide the circumstances or context necessary for this fragment. Similarly, since the manner in which Roman citizenship is discussed suggests a date no earlier than the end of the Social War and the widening of the citizen body, it is unlikely that any of Sulla's ancestors could have been involved in any such story. For these reasons, although our lack of information renders it impossible to state with absolute certainty that this fragment was not taken from Sulla's narrative of the deeds of his ancestors, it seems very unlikely to have been the case.

The final potential solution for the identification of the historical context of the event from whose narrative F3P was taken is that it originated in one of the events of Sulla's own life, and that he either reports that he gave this speech, or records that another spoke those words to him. This solution is not without problems, yet is more frequently accepted than either of the theories mentioned above. As stated above, most scholars recognise that this speech could not have been made before the outbreak of, or

¹⁴ Lewis (1991a) 510-511 suggests that no such comments would be expected before 91-89 at the very earliest.

¹⁵ It is, of course, possible that this fragment was part of a digression, but it is difficult to believe that such a digression would have been used at such an early juncture of Sulla's narrative, given that he would undoubtedly have returned to the events of the Social War and set them out in some detail later in the *Autobiography*.

¹⁶ F2P; see commentary above.

at the very least the run up to, the Social War. There have, therefore, been several attempts to place this fragment in this context: Madvig, with his emendation to *immerito*, believed that this was part of a discourse addressed by the Italians to the Senate or people of Rome at the outbreak of the war.¹⁷ Keaveney dismissed this conclusion, although he accepted Madvig's point that the context of the fragment was the Social War, instead identifying two incidents involving the Hirpini in which these words may have been spoken.¹⁸ Two scholars have linked this fragment to the narrative of Sulla's march on Rome; that is, after the Social War, when discussion of the citizenship could be considered plausible, yet not during it: Valgiglio argues that the fragment refers to an embassy sent to Sulla by the Senate after the Sulpician riots, whereas Behr views it as part of a speech given by Sulla to the Senate after his entry into Rome.¹⁹ Although few scholars have deviated from the theory that the fragment belonged to no earlier than the Social War, one notable exception is Pascucci, who laments the lack of any determined or determinable historical situation for this fragment, stating that this prevents us from penetrating further than the basic identification of this as part of a *captatio benevolentiae*. However, he does point out the tone of this fragment, with its timid offer of alliance and admission of unfavourable aspects, and therefore ascribes this to diplomatic and military negotiations near the beginning of Sulla's career, probably in 107 when he was first sent to Africa with Marius.²⁰ This cannot have been the case, however, since there can be no explanation for the use of the term *civis* in the context of Sulla's negotiations with Bocchus.

It may tentatively be suggested that this fragment might have been taken from a letter that Sulla chose to include in his *Autobiography*, rather than an address. A number of Sulla's letters have survived in later works, and all betray the same tone: one of defiance, rather than the weak pleading found in F3P. The letter related by the Epitomator of Livy portrays his tone as firm; although Sulla agrees to yield to the

¹⁷ Madvig (1873) 613.

¹⁸ Keaveney (1981) 294-296.

¹⁹ Valgiglio (1975) 265-269, Behr (1993) 72. Valgiglio's conclusions are reached from a very different approach, however: he rejects the commonly held belief that Sulla used the first two books of his *Achievements* for contents other than historical narrative of his career (thematic introduction, an address to Lucullus, narrative of his ancestors' achievements), but rather insists that the first book began with the Jugurthine War, and that it was possible for him to have reached the Social War by the second book. (Valgiglio (1975) 225).

²⁰ Pascucci (1975) 287-288.

authority of the senate, he does so only under certain conditions, which must be met.²¹ Sulla's letter to the Senate in Appian is even stronger in tone. Sulla is described as writing ἐπὶ φρονήματος ('in a superior tone'); in this letter, Sulla recounts his many military engagements and achievements, gives his own interpretation of these, and declares the course of action which he would then proceed to take.²² Sulla's letter to Flaccus, *interrex* at the end of 82,²³ shows a similar boldness of expression.²⁴ In this letter, Sulla argued that the condition of the state demanded that the dictatorship, which had not been invoked for very many years, should be reinstated, and that the post should be tenable until the problems of the state were resolved.²⁵ He also argued that he was the best candidate for this role.²⁶

It has been suggested that Appian is here accurately preserving an account of Sulla's letter and, further, that this letter was originally presented in the *Autobiography*, thereby making this passage a fragment.²⁷ However, establishing that Appian had read Sulla's *Autobiography* is not an easy task. While it is generally agreed that the *Bellum Civile* probably drew on the account of Livy, who in turn may have read Sulla's *Autobiography*, there is little evidence that Appian had read the work directly; he does not cite the work on any occasion.²⁸ Moreover, he frequently preserves speeches and letters, without declaring where he had found these documents.²⁹ It is therefore not surprising to find Appian claiming to reproduce a letter of Sulla's.³⁰ Some have argued that Sulla's *Autobiography* included contemporary documents, such as letters and speeches, which would either be paraphrased or quoted at length in the text.³¹ If this was

²¹ Livy *Ep.* 84.

²² App. *BC* 1.77.

²³ *MRR* 2.68 (with 2.66-67 on Sulla's dictatorship, including the procedure of his acquisition of that post).

²⁴ App. *BC.* 1.98.

²⁵ On Flaccus and Sulla see Gabba (1958) 267-271; Keaveney (1984) 131-138.

²⁶ This account differs from that of Plutarch (*Sull.* 33.1), who states that Sulla declared himself dictator, rather than asking for the role.

²⁷ The most comprehensive statement of this argument may be found in Bellen (1975).

²⁸ Appian's sources: Enßlin (1926); Calabi Limentani (1951) 302; Gabba (1956) 91-93; Magnino (1993) 524-525, 546-547. On speeches and letters in Sulla's *Autobiography* see Smith (2009b) 71.

²⁹ Eg. App. *BC* 2.28, the letter from Pompey to the senate praising Caesar's achievements and expounding his own, and offering to return the offices which he claimed he had been given unwillingly. Appian gives a great deal of detail concerning this letter, claiming to quote from it, and commenting on its τέχνη.

³⁰ He also preserves an earlier letter of Sulla to the Senate announcing his intention to march on the city for a second time in 83: *BC* 1.77.

³¹ See the Introduction.

the case, then it is certainly plausible that this account of Sulla's letter to Flaccus could have been preserved in Sulla's *Autobiography*, reproduced by Livy, and subsequently copied by Appian. This is, however, a more complex route for the potential survival of a fragment of the *Autobiography*, and it ought to be remembered that there are alternative, less convoluted origins for the letter, which may equally have been fabricated by a pro-Sullan writer, or preserved accurately by an author other than Livy. The tone of the letter is certainly pro-Sullan: he requests the dictatorship in strong terms, but does not demand it outright, and he suggests that it should be tenable until the problems of the state were fixed, rather than until the death of the office holder. It cannot be established with any degree of certainty, however, that it was specifically in Sulla's *Autobiography* that this letter was preserved.

However this letter was preserved, it is evident that, even when dealing with an issue that was potentially so highly sensitive as the revival and extension of the dictatorship, Sulla did not speak timidly, but declared his intentions openly and without concealment (οὐ κατασχὼν αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῦτ'... ἀνεκάλυπτεν). It is compelling to suggest that these letters may have been preserved in the *Autobiography*. It is frequently argued that Sulla probably used field notes and copies of communications with the Senate in the composition of the *Autobiography*, and it is not difficult to posit that letters such as these may have been quoted in that work.³² These glimpses into Sulla's epistolary writing are not sufficient to prove that his tone was always as firm as it happens to be in these few examples, but the difference between the tone of these letters and that of F3P is striking. If F3P came from a letter that Sulla wrote, and which was preserved in the *Autobiography*, then it would display a rather uneven character, and display a weakness in Sulla's position that the rest of the fragments do not suggest was ever admitted.

The identification of the context of F3P is thus not possible without further evidence, and although the location of this fragment in the second book of the *Autobiography* and the lack of suitable historical episodes in which the address could have been given suggest that Lewis' theory that Sulla addressed these words to the reader is the most likely, the question must ultimately remain open.³³

³² See eg. Behr (1993) 9-15.

³³ Chassignet (2004) 241; *FRH* 3.290.

Commentary on F4P – Plut. *Sull.* 4.1-3 (= F7S, F4C)

Plutarch describes the origins of the personal animosity between Marius and Sulla: during the war against the Cimbri and Teutones, Marius grew angry at Sulla's successes. Sulla transferred his legateship (and allegiance) to Catulus, since he realised that Marius would no longer support his advancement. Under Catulus, Sulla successfully provided enough provisions for both Catulus' and Marius' troops, which did not help to appease Marius.

When constructing his self-portrait in his *Autobiography*, Sulla had to confront a number of potentially awkward and problematic issues concerning his political career. One of these problems was his early association with Marius which, given their later dispute, had to be explained carefully. Marius was important within Sulla's rise to prominence, but Sulla could not emphasise their friendship without rendering questionable his account of the conflict that later arose between them. In the late 100s BC, Sulla's political associations dramatically shifted. Although Marius and Sulla appear to have worked together well in the African campaign, fractures began to appear in their relationship. Marius was placed in charge of the war against the Cimbri, the Teutones, and a number of other Germanic peoples that had been threatening the security of the Italian peninsula since 113 BC. Sulla accompanied him as *legatus*, and later *tribunus militum* or *tribunus rufulus*,¹ but his career had begun to stagnate, and it was apparent that Marius had become opposed to his advancement. In order to further his own political ambitions, therefore, Sulla transferred to the command of Catulus, Marius' co-consul of 102 BC.² It may be that this transfer of allegiance was an early indication of Sulla's ruthless ambition, since, according to Plutarch, Sulla made this decision because he knew that remaining under Marius would prevent him from furthering his political career. It is evident that he was willing to ally himself with whoever he thought was most likely to allow his own advancement. However, while Plutarch presents Sulla's decision here as autonomous, Badian has rightly pointed out that it is implausible that Sulla could have made such a change without the permission of Marius.³

¹ *Legatus*: MRR 1.569. *Tribunus militum/rufulus*: MRR 1.564.

² MRR 1.567.

³ Badian (1969a) 9 n. 21. Badian posits a family connection between Sulla and Marius to explain the latter's decision. As Ridley (2010) 100 points out, Keaveney (1980) is

It certainly seems that Marius had begun to be annoyed by his young protégé since, as Plutarch here points out, he had claimed responsibility for a number of Marius' most important successes. It is possible that the project of securing grain supplies was, in fact, the reason for Marius' decision, since he needed an officer that he could trust to ensure that the Roman army had sufficient provisions, without which they would be at a significant disadvantage against the Cimbri. If this is correct, then there is little to suggest that Marius would be irritated with Sulla for performing this task well, and it is likely that the explanation recorded in Plutarch is Sulla's later reconstruction of events. According to this interpretation of events, the dispute between Marius and Sulla arose at an early date, and was caused not by Sulla's own ambitions, but by Marius' jealousy. Sulla's career at this point had not been stellar, and it was by no means apparent that he would rise to greatness and eventually present a challenge to the authority enjoyed by Marius. Sulla emphasised that he was still in a relatively junior position, even if he had started to take charge of his own career by transferring his allegiance to Catulus, and thus makes Marius' jealousy seem petty and misplaced.⁴ There is no indication, for example, of any animosity between Marius and Catulus, that is seen in Plutarch to have exacerbated the irritation caused by Sulla's change of allegiance, before the battle of Vercellae and the disagreement over the individual to whom the credit for the victory was to be given.⁵

Thus, within Sulla's interpretation of these events, the original cause of the dispute between himself and Marius is attributed not to any fault on Sulla's part, but to the elder politician's failure to cope with Sulla's ascending star. Sulla had not done anything which was out of the ordinary, but was following the usual *cursus honorum*, albeit marked by notable successes such as his role in the capture of Jugurtha, yet Marius was irrationally hostile towards him, attempting to block his political pathway, and ensuring that he had to transfer his allegiance to another. This brief fragment

surely correct to reject this, but Keaveney's insistence on Sulla's lack of previous military experience is untenable. It certainly seems to be the case that Marius had selected Sulla for service in the African campaign since, as Ridley notes, the allocation of quaestors to provinces was usually carried out by lot but this was at times circumvented; it is difficult to believe that Marius would have left the selection of his second-in-command for this pivotal campaign to chance, but would rather have selected the individual whom he believed to be the best candidate.

⁴ Note the progression of Marius' feelings within this passage from the beginning, when Marius is said to have thought that Sulla was beneath his envy (ἐλάττονα τοῦ φθονεῖσθαι), his anger when Sulla began to achieve success (ἀχθόμενον), and his distress when Sulla proved adept at providing sufficient grain supplies (ἀνιάσαι).

⁵ See the commentary on F5P and F6P.

therefore reveals one of the key ways in which Sulla dealt with his problematic early association with Marius: by emphasising that while he himself had been acting in a proper manner, his opponent had become overly hostile and, in doing so, had caused the rift between them that would later engulf Rome itself. This was a very powerful claim to make.

Unfortunately, this passage also raises one of the key methodological problems inherent in the study of fragmentary texts: that of the delimitation of the fragment in the editorial process.⁶ The passage identified by Peter as originating in the *Autobiography* is long, and concerns a reasonable range of material. It contains only one citation of Sulla, however, given at the end of the paragraph. It is important to consider, therefore, whether the citation is intended to ascribe all the information from the paragraph to Sulla, or just the information that immediately follows the citation. This issue is common to many fragmentary texts in antiquity, and is certainly not unique to Sulla's *Autobiography*. Some criteria must be established, however, in order to proceed. In this thesis, the edition of Peter (1914) is used as the main reference point of the discussion. For F4P, Peter gives Plut. *Sull.* 4.1-3: Ἡνία μὲν οὖν ταῦτα τὸν Μάριον... ἐφ' ᾧ φησιν αὐτὸς ἰσχυρῶς ἀνιᾶσαι τὸν Μάριον. However, while this does contain the ascription of material to Sulla (φησιν αὐτὸς), Plutarch does not attempt to demarcate precisely which information is taken from the *Autobiography*, other than the information that Marius was greatly distressed. Is Peter's (or, indeed, Plutarch's) reader meant to understand that the cause of Marius' distress is also covered by this citation, or not? And what about the preceding story of Marius' growing unease with Sulla's position? These questions are impossible to answer definitively, of course, but must be confronted when dealing with a fragmentary work.

The approach of Valgiglio (1975) is not fruitful. Valgiglio's interpretation of the evidence concerning Sulla's *Autobiography* is to assume that each story features in only one source and, therefore, that if Sulla is cited within the context of the discussion of one point, all the information given in that narrative was taken from the *Autobiography*.⁷ Unfortunately, Plutarch simply does not give enough information for

⁶ Chassignet (2004) 173 notes the particular difficulty of delimiting this fragment.

⁷ For Valgiglio's methodology see the literature review in the Introduction. Rather ironically, in the case of this fragment Valgiglio (1975) 262 n. 46 argued that not all the information could have been taken from Sulla, since we are given some insights into Marius' feelings towards Sulla which, he argued, could not have been given in the *Autobiography*. This is not the case, however. As is established above, Sulla was

us to come to any firm conclusions on that matter and it is good practice to assume that he was using a wider range sources than just the few he happens to mention explicitly. Plutarch's account of Sulla's early career gives surprisingly little detail. When compared with the length and depth of his narrative of the campaigns against Mithridates and the civil war in 83, the succinctness with which Plutarch describes Sulla's military career in Africa (and his role in the campaign against the Cimbri and Teutones) becomes apparent. We may be certain that the early events of Sulla's career, many of which played important roles in the development of Sulla's self-representation strategy, would have been discussed in considerable detail in the *Autobiography*. The brevity of Plutarch's account of these events and his lack of citations of the *Autobiography* cannot be taken as evidence that Sulla began his narrative with the Cimbric War.

Only one example need be examined in order to prove this hypothesis: the Bocchus affair. Although Sulla is not cited in Plutarch's brief account of Sulla's time in Africa, the importance given to this story elsewhere in Sulla's self-representation strategy serves to prove that it cannot have been omitted from the *Autobiography*. The scene of Bocchus surrendering Jugurtha to Sulla appears on a coin minted by Sulla's son Faustus in 56 BC.⁸ It has long been argued that this image was intended to reproduce the signet ring worn by Sulla, which is described in very similar terms.⁹ Sulla's choice to use this scene in such a prominent manner was a powerful one, not least since it contradicted the claims that Marius was making about his own role in the Jugurthine War.¹⁰ Although Marius was credited with the victory, Sulla could claim that he was the one truly responsible for bringing that war to a successful conclusion, since he was the one who had arranged Jugurtha's capture. At the beginning of the passage identified by Peter as this fragment, Plutarch states that this ring was a source of distress

assigning the responsibility for the hostility between himself and Marius to the latter by declaring that Marius' unjustified envy was to blame for the onset of their dispute.

⁸ *RRC* 426.

⁹ Plut. *Sull.* 3.4. For Sulla's signet ring see Dijkstra/Parker (2007) 146 n. 46 with bibliography.

¹⁰ Plutarch discusses the effects of this ring in more detail in the *Marius* (10.5-6). In *Praecepta gerendae rei publicae* 12 (= *Mor.* 806d), Plutarch constructs this sequence of events differently. Rather than the ring simply causing annoyance then Sulla choosing to change his allegiances, Marius was so enraged at the ring that he cast Sulla aside, leaving the latter with little choice but to ally himself with Catulus and the Metelli. See also Val. Max. 8.14.4; Pliny *NH* 37.4.9.

to Marius, revealing the importance given to such imagery.¹¹ Similarly, Bocchus is said to have sent to Rome a statue group, which Sulla arranged to be set up on the Capitol, and which was also said to have exacerbated the hostility between Sulla and Marius.¹² Although we do not know precisely what this statue group was comprised of, Marius' reaction to it and the prominent location it was given strongly suggest that Sulla was deliberately emphasising the story of the surrender of Jugurtha within his public image. For this reason it is highly unlikely that Sulla would omit such an important and controversial story within his *Autobiography*, and we can safely conclude that despite Plutarch's omission of a reference to Sulla, and his choice not to tell the story in great detail, Sulla himself told the story at reasonable length.¹³

Moreover, while discussing the reasons for his *repulsa*, Sulla mentioned that the people knew about his friendship with Bocchus, stating that they wished for him to be aedile first, so that he would put on games with exotic wild animals, making the most of his connection with the Mauretanian king.¹⁴ This confirms that, in some form at least, Sulla must have narrated his role in arranging the surrender of Jugurtha. Plutarch's use of Sulla's *Autobiography*, while extremely valuable for the great volume of information it has preserved, cannot be used as evidence of any omissions on Sulla's part, nor can it be assumed that the narration of an event in the *Life of Sulla* in a brief manner implied a similarly brief treatment by Sulla himself.¹⁵

¹¹ Plut. *Sull.* 4.1. Due to the problems inherent in the delimitation of fragments, it is possible, although by no means certain, that Plutarch took this information from Sulla.

¹² Plut. *Sull.* 6.1.

¹³ It has been argued that the most detailed account of the surrender of Jugurtha, in Sallust's *Bellum Iugurthinum*, was heavily influenced by Sulla's own portrayal of the events in his *Autobiography*. Although we cannot know to what extent Sallust drew on Sulla's account, it is certainly the case that Sulla's role in Sallust's narrative is far more prominent than one would have expected from one in such a junior position. This does not, as has been suggested, imply that much of Sallust's version of events was lifted from Sulla (Bates (1983) 240-285), but it does suggest that Sulla's account has had a greater impact on the surviving tradition than just those few texts, such as the *Life of Sulla*, in which he is explicitly cited. Tatum (2011) 163-4 n. 10. The use that Sulla made of the story of the surrender of Jugurtha by Bocchus is explored more fully in the commentary on F7P.

¹⁴ Plut. *Sull.* 5.1 = F7P.

¹⁵ See further discussion in the commentary on F7P.

Commentary on F5P – Plut. Mar. 25.4-5 (= F8S, F5C) and F6P – Plut. Mar. 26.2-4 (= F9S, F6C)

F5P: *Sulla reports the figures and battle-lines of the Roman forces at the battle of Vercellae; Marius held the wings, while Catulus and Sulla were in the centre. Marius ordered this arrangement since he hoped that only his troops would engage the enemy, thus giving his own soldiers all the credit for the victory.*

F6P: *At Vercellae, Marius vowed a hecatomb to the gods and offered sacrifice, confident of victory. But despite Marius' apparent devotion to the gods, an event occurred which showed divine displeasure; a cloud of dust hid the two armies from one another, so that Marius and his forces missed the enemy, who engaged with only Catulus' troops. The Romans were favoured in this battle by the heat, and the glare of the sun, which was against the Cimbri.*

These two fragments form part of Plutarch's discussion of the battle of Vercellae, which brought to a successful conclusion the Cimbric war, and which was pivotal in the careers of its three most important Roman participants: Catulus, Marius, and Sulla.¹ Disentangling the story of this battle is notoriously difficult because following the battle there was some dispute between Marius and Catulus and their respective followers concerning the allocation of credit for the victory.² Plutarch's presentation of this battle raises several methodological and historiographical problems, most of which are present in both F5P and F6P; for this reason, and since the fragments appear to stem from one original narrative in Sulla's *Autobiography*, the two fragments are here discussed together. The logical and coherent flow of Plutarch's narrative seems to reflect what was, one may assume, a similarly easy progression of ideas in Plutarch's textual sources, chief among which appears to have been Sulla's writings; although F6P does not follow on directly from F5P, therefore, it will be demonstrated below that they reflect Sulla's original construction of Marius' role in the battle.

¹ There is surprisingly little bibliography on Vercellae, considering the battle's importance both for its participants, and for its implications for the safety of Rome and the Italian peninsula. General discussions: Holmes (1923) 37-40; Scullard (1959, repr. 2011) 44-49; Carney (1961) 37-39; Van Ooteghem (1964) 176-231; Demougeot (1978); Lintott (1992) 92-96; Evans (1994) 78-93; Sampson (2010). Location: Zennari (1958). Date: Plut. Mar. 26.4. For the importance of Vercellae within the self-representation strategies of Marius and Catulus in the years after the battle, see Noble (forthcoming).

² Bates (1983) 213-8. Catulus in the Cimbric campaign: Lewis (1974).

The military focus of F5P brings it in line with many of the other fragments – we are told the military tactics employed, and details including the numbers of the forces, the layout of the troops, and the plans for how Marius anticipated the battle would proceed. It is clear, however, that Plutarch has taken from Sulla's *Autobiography* more than simply the military data, since F5P and F6P reveal one of the ways in which Sulla constructed his portrait of Marius. Although Marius was, by this stage, an extremely experienced general, his conduct at Vercellae was, in Plutarch's presentation of events, marred by significant failings: his inability to predict how the battle would take place (note Plutarch's use of ἐλπίσαντα, emphasising that Marius' plans were based on hope rather than military knowledge and strategy – hope which would ultimately be proven unfounded),³ and his incorrect sacrificial procedure, which brought divine anger on Marius.

After Vercellae, Catulus and Marius each made competing claims that they had been the one responsible for attaining victory for Rome. This dispute may be seen in a number of different fields. Firstly, Plutarch preserves a story in which the soldiers of the two generals were fighting amongst each other concerning the division of the spoils of the battle. As a result of this argument, an embassy from Padua was brought in to arbitrate, who declared that the majority of spears had the name of Catulus engraved upon the shaft, and that the victory was therefore won by his men.⁴ Since Marius was the elder statesman, however, the credit for the victory was given to him,⁵ and he was accorded the right to hold a triumph, although he later capitulated and decided to share it with Catulus.⁶ The dispute concerning the individual to whom credit ought to be given for the victory seems to have continued, however, with each man embarking on a number of building projects which would ensure that they were remembered as having been the one who was truly responsible for the victory at Vercellae and, by extension, for having saved Rome and Italy from the threat posed by the Cimbri.⁷

³ It is highly likely that ἐλπίσαντα was used by Plutarch to represent a similar word used in Sulla's account (perhaps *spes?*), since Plutarch ties this verb very closely to the citation: καὶ φησι τὸν Μάριον ἐλπίσαντα... Plut. *Mar.* 25.5.

⁴ Plut. *Mar.* 27.4.

⁵ Plut. *Mar.* 27.5.

⁶ Plut. *Mar.* 27.6. Valgiglio (1956) 117, 120; Carney (1961) 38-39, with n. 190; Evans (1994) 89-90; Beard (2007) 135, 91 fig. 19, with 354 n. 39.

⁷ This dispute was also reflected in their building projects, which used and displayed the spoils of this war, and asserted each man's claim to victory. Catulus: *Aedes fortunae*

It is therefore apparent that Vercellae was the object of significant debate in the years after the battle, and that, by engaging with different reconstructions of the battle, Sulla and other writers could display their political agenda, as well as contributing to the ongoing renegotiation of the recent past. Sulla's own version of Vercellae seems to have been unique in its focus on the religious aspect, that is, on the sacrifices carried out by the two generals before the battle, as was customary, and the resulting divine retribution against Marius. In F6P, after Catulus had carried out his sacrifice, Marius made a vow to the gods, promising them a hecatomb, and made a sacrifice. After the victim had been brought to him, however, Plutarch, citing Sulla, claims that Marius declared Ἐμὴ ἡ νίκη, 'The victory is mine!' Although Plutarch does not spell out why this was so problematic, it would be clear to any of Sulla's contemporary readers that Marius had here contravened proper religious practice. A magistrate could carry out the sacrifice and examine the remains, and even declare *litatio*, stating that the sacrifice had been accepted by the gods, but it was up to a religious expert, such as a *haruspex*, to determine whether any further predictions may be made. Any doubts as to whether Marius was acting correctly are dispelled by the contrasting presentation of Catulus' sacrifice.

Furthermore, the reaction of the gods is immediate: while the centre of the battle-line, where Catulus and Sulla were stationed, engaged the enemy, Marius' troops on the wings were engulfed in a huge cloud of dust (κονιορτοῦ γὰρ ἀρθέντος... ἀπλέτου), which prevented them from seeing the Cimbri, and led to Marius wandering up and down the battlefield for some time.⁸ Not only does this reveal Marius' incompetent leadership and that his hopes were misguided, but it is stated that this was a sign of divine displeasure with Marius (πρᾶγμα νεμεσητὸν παθεῖν τὸν Μάριον), according to the interpretation of Sulla (οἱ περὶ Σύλλαν ἱστοροῦσι).⁹ This may be observed in the effects of the cloud since, although large clouds of dust were to be

huiusce diei (LTUR 2.269-270); *Porticus Catuli* (LTUR 4.119). Marius: *Aedes Honoris et Virtutis* (LTUR 3.33-35); *Tropaea Marii/Monumenta Mariana* (LTUR 5.91).

⁸ Plut. *Mar.* 26.3.

⁹ Plut. *Mar.* 26.3. Although this has sometimes been taken as a reference to other unnamed pro-Sullan historians (eg. Tatum (2011) 163-164, n. 10), this is a mis-reading of the phrase. Pelling (1988) 137 on Plut. *Ant.* 9.3: 'in later Greek, 'οἱ περὶ X.' can simply mean 'X.''; see also Plut. *Per.* 14.1, with Stadter (1989) 181.

expected in battles around the Mediterranean, Marius' failure to cope with the situation was extreme,¹⁰ and also in the size of the cloud which was immense (ἀπλέτου).¹¹

The contrast between Marius and Catulus is deepened by the subsequent account of Catulus' actions in the battle and the apparent pleasure of the gods with him and his troops, for not only were they unaffected by the cloud of dust, but the weather conditions actually helped them to win the battle.¹² Catulus offered a vow to the gods at the same time as Marius, but his is not rejected, and he received no negative consequences of his vow. Indeed, although Catulus also fails to consult a *haruspex* (or if he did, this is not mentioned), the focus of his sacrifice is not on himself and his victory, but the gods. His vow was to dedicate a temple of *Fortuna huiusce diei* (τὴν τύχην τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης) on the successful outcome of the battle, which he went on to fulfil.¹³ Sulla was stationed with Catulus, following his earlier transfer of allegiance away from Marius narrated in Plutarch's *Life of Sulla*.¹⁴ Because he was alongside Catulus, Sulla was in the part of the battle-line that was able to engage with, and conquer, the enemy. By emphasising Marius' religious failings in this way, Sulla also implicitly drew attention to his own dealings with the gods, which, in the *Autobiography* at least, were presented as ideal, and visible in his possession of *felicitas*. All the Romans except for Marius alone were favoured by the gods at Vercellae, including Sulla. By presenting Marius as having behaved incorrectly towards the gods and having suffered the consequences, Sulla could not only demonstrate the failing of his great enemy, but also illustrate his own exemplary relationship with the gods.¹⁵

¹⁰ Plut. *Mar.* 26.3: οἶον εἰκός. Dust in ancient warfare, and at Vercellae in particular: Echols (1952); Bates (1983) 216; Sampson (2010) 173-174.

¹¹ Bates (1983) 216: "Such a cloud must be unparalleled in the annals of military history."

¹² In usual circumstances, this would not necessarily imply divine favour, but the effect is created here since we are told that the gods are directly controlling the weather conditions on the battlefield.

¹³ Plut. *Mar.* 26.2. On the *Aedes Fortuna huiusce diei* in the Largo Argentina, identified with reasonable certainty as the temple Catulus built in fulfilment of his vow at Vercellae, see Richardson (1992), 156; *LTUR* 2.269-270.

¹⁴ F4P.

¹⁵ The presentation of these events in a number of ancient sources (Plut. *Mar.* 25.2-26.4, Flor. *Ep.* 1.38.14-15, Front. *Strat.* 2.2.8, Oros. 5.16.14-16, and Polyæn. *Strat.* 8.10.3) may be seen to reflect elements of the dispute between Marius and Catulus that arose in the wake of the battle, preserved in part in the Livian tradition. See Noble (forthcoming).

Although Plutarch's account of Vercellae does make clear one of the subtle ways in which Sulla constructed his public image, by creating a comparison with the failings of his enemy, it also presents one insurmountable problem: the role of Catulus in the development of the different traditions concerning Vercellae. While we may be certain that Sulla's *Autobiography* lies behind at least some of the anti-Marian narrative, there is another source that Plutarch appears to have consulted. The biographer cites the autobiography of Catulus on two or three occasions in the course of his account of the Cimbric War in the *Life of Marius*: 25.6, defending his own conduct in the battle; 26.5, extolling the reactions of his soldiers to the adverse conditions during the battle; and, arguably, 27.4, in which we are told that Catulus relied on the fact that the spoils of battle were brought to his camp as proof that the victory was won by his own troops.¹⁶ On the face of it, it might appear that Catulus had a significant impact on Plutarch's narrative of Vercellae. Due to the dispute between himself and Marius concerning the allocation of credit for the victory at Vercellae, it would not be surprising to find an account of the battle in Catulus' autobiography. However, examination of the nature of the citations of Catulus suggests an alternative conclusion. The verbs used by Plutarch to refer to the two autobiographical sources differ. For details taken from the *Autobiography* of Sulla in F5P and F6P, he uses γέγραφε (25.4), φησι, (25.5) and οἱ περὶ Σύλλαν ἱστοροῦσι (26.3), whereas Catulus is referred to only in *oratio obliqua*: τὸν Κάτλον αὐτὸν ἀπολογεῖσθαι περὶ τούτων ἱστοροῦσι (25.6) and ὡς τὸν Κάτλον αὐτὸν ἱστορεῖν λέγουσι (26.5). It has therefore been suggested both that Plutarch may have been using Catulus not directly, but through an intermediary source – possibly Sulla's *Autobiography*.¹⁷ If this was the case, then it has important implications concerning the methods Sulla employed in the composition of his *Autobiography*, since it posits a situation in which Sulla was not only using his own notes as a source, but also either remembering or referring to the works of other people.

However, while it is an attractive proposition to suggest that the citations of Catulus in these passages demonstrate that Sulla quoted his former ally in his *Autobiography*, it is not possible to determine whether or not this was really the case,

¹⁶ On Catulus' autobiography see the Introduction.

¹⁷ Bardon (1952) 120; Bates (1983) 207. If Plutarch was only reading the account of Catulus as reported in the work of Sulla, this has some implications for the understanding of Plutarch's historical research. It is implausible that the references may have been recalled, implying either that Plutarch was writing with the texts of Sulla before him, or that he was working from notes taken during research undertaken at an earlier juncture.

since the approaches of both Catulus and Sulla are likely to have been very similar to one another. In recounting Vercellae, each of these authors will have wanted to present themselves as having played important roles in attaining the victory, consequently reducing the role of Marius. The political outlook of these two men was so similar that the views expressed in their autobiographies are unlikely to have been contradictory. Since so little has survived, and since the political interests of Catulus and Sulla shared many points of contact (not least enmity towards Marius), it is no longer possible to discern from Plutarch's account where he has taken information from Catulus rather than Sulla or another pro-Sullan account, except where a specific citation is given.¹⁸ Nonetheless, these two fragments provide a striking example of Sulla revealing himself to be favoured by the gods, even when it is only implicit, and when it is as part of a Roman army rather than as an individual. The presentation of Marius as lacking *felicitas* and imperial competence serves to draw a distinction with Sulla, pointing out a marked contrast between the two men.

¹⁸ Bates (1983) 211-212 believes that much of Plut. *Mar.* 23 is also taken from Catulus: a plausible suggestion, but not one that may be verified without further material securely attributed to Catulus as a point of comparison.

Commentary on F7P – Plut. Sull. 5 (= F10S, F7C)

Sulla stood for election to the praetorship following his return from the Cimbric War, thinking that his military reputation would be enough to gain him the post. He was unsuccessful, because the people knew of his friendship with Bocchus and wanted him to put on extravagant games in the post of aedile using animals sent by Bocchus.

This fragment is extremely difficult to delimit. Only the extract summarised above is cited as having been taken from Sulla's *Autobiography* (φησι), but it is frequently argued that much of the rest of the chapter must have derived from that source too: Russo correctly argued, for example, that the beginning of this passage, in which Plutarch reports what Sulla expected to happen, may have derived from the *Autobiography*.¹ Peter captured this uncertainty simply with 'κτλ', since it is very difficult to define the boundaries of Plutarch's reference here.² Indeed, almost all of this chapter of Plutarch's *Life of Sulla* may have derived from Sulla's *Autobiography*.³ For this reason, the rest of the chapter is summarized here, and the relevant sections are discussed in the commentary below.

After his praetorship, Sulla was sent to Cappadocia, for the real (hidden) reason of checking the activities of Mithridates Eupator. He drove out Gordius, and reinstated Ariobarzanes as king of Cappadocia. Near the Euphrates, Sulla received a Parthian envoy Orobazus, an ambassador of Arsaces; this was the first instance of the Parthians seeking friendship and alliance with the Romans; it was counted as part of Sulla's great good fortune that he was the man chosen by the Parthians for this meeting. At the meeting of Sulla, Orobazus and Ariobarzanes, Sulla had three chairs set up, and he himself took the middle chair and gave audience. Orobazus was later executed for acting subserviently towards Sulla, while Sulla himself received mixed reactions for his attitude on this occasion. A Chaldaean in the retinue of Orobazus carefully studied Sulla's face, mind and body, and declared that Sulla must become the greatest man in

¹ Russo (2002) 284.

² Peter (1914) 197.

³ Valgiglio (1975) 271.

the world. When Sulla returned to Rome he was indicted by Censorinus, but the charges were dropped when the latter did not appear at the trial.

The incident of the surrender of Jugurtha to Sulla by Bocchus⁴ is one that played a pivotal role in the development of Sulla's self-representation, as discussed above in the commentary on F4P. If we are to believe Sallust's presentation of Sulla in the Jugurthine War, then he, as *quaestor*, acted with far greater authority than would ordinarily be expected of someone of his rank.⁵ As has been pointed out, this is not necessarily an entirely accurate representation of the historical facts, since it is likely that Sulla's *Autobiography* lies behind this character portrait.⁶ Although it is extremely likely that Sulla exaggerated his role in the Bocchus affair, it is implausible to suggest that it was entirely fabricated; such outright lies would be difficult to sustain in the autobiographies of this period, since the readership would often be aware of the truth concerning these relatively recent events.⁷

In this fragment, we see another way in which Sulla used the Bocchus story in order to portray himself in a positive light. He had been unsuccessful on his first attempt to stand for the praetorship, shortly after his return from the Cimbric War.⁸ Such a *repulsa* could have been extremely damaging to his reputation, and it was important for Sulla to explain this in a way that did not imply any weakness on his part. In order to avoid such accusations, he chose to argue that the people knew of his friendship with Bocchus and wanted him to be aedile, since in that post he would be able to put on games using wild beasts provided by the Mauretanian king. Sulla did indeed later put on an extravagant animal hunt, which is attested as having featured one hundred maned lions, loose and unchained, and spearmen sent by Bocchus.⁹ It is interesting to speculate whether or not Sulla put on this animal hunt in order to provide an excuse for his failure to be elected praetor, or whether this explanation struck him later, when he had already

⁴ Sall. *Iug.* 113.

⁵ Sallust ascribes this to Sulla's charismatic personality and his relationship with the troops, as well as his friendship with Marius: *Iug.* 96.1-3.

⁶ Bates (1983) 240-285.

⁷ Cf. Moles (1988) 197 on Augustus' apparent inclusion in his *Autobiography* of his request for help from Cicero in order to attain the consulship: "he can only have included it because he had to, i.e. because it was widely known to be substantially true."

⁸ Plutarch has apparently misunderstood his source here, since he states that Sulla stood for the post of *praetor urbanus* (ἐπὶ στρατηγίαν πολιτικὴν ἀπεγράψατο), when he would simply have stood for the praetorship; specific responsibilities would have been allocated by lot after election to the role: Sherwin-White (1977b) 177.

⁹ Sen. *Brev.* 13.6; Pliny *NH* 8.20.

given the games; we may also wonder whether this story was circulated at the time of Sulla's *repulsa*, or first appeared in the *Autobiography*.¹⁰ The wide range of venues in which Sulla used the story of the surrender of Jugurtha does not seem to have been limited to the early stages of his career, therefore, when he had few achievements to his name, but recurred in an exculpatory manner in his *Autobiography*.

A similar idea may be found in the so-called Bocchus monument, a group of statues sent to Rome by Bocchus and erected on the Capitol, which celebrated the surrender of Jugurtha.¹¹ The statues depicted in gold Bocchus himself, Sulla, and Jugurtha, and they were said to have been surrounded by Victories carrying trophies.¹² We may assume that this monument was either voted, or approved, by Sulla himself and by the Senate, due to its extremely prominent location.¹³ It is apparent that this monument exacerbated the friction between Sulla and Marius,¹⁴ and the close connection between the scene depicted in the statue group and the picture on Sulla's signet ring is unlikely to be accidental;¹⁵ there is clear evidence here of the use in different media of a consistent picture in order to disseminate a particular message about its subject.¹⁶

¹⁰ It is also possible that this was part of Sulla's attempt to construct the relationship between himself and his ancestor P. Cornelius Rufus Sibylla, who had been instrumental in the institution of the *Ludi Apollinares*, of which lion hunts were one aspect: Livy 24.12.3-15, 27.23.5; Macrob. *Sat.* 1.17.27.

¹¹ Bertoldi (1968); Hölscher (1980); Clark (2007) 131-133; Santangelo (2007a) 2-3; Giardina (2012); Kuttner (2013).

¹² Plut. *Sull.* 6.1; *Mar.* 32.2.

¹³ Cf. the approval needed for the dedication of a statue in Cic. *De Dom. Sua* 136; see also *De Dom. Sua* 127; 130; 137.

¹⁴ It has been suggested that Marius (or Cinna) tore down Sulla's monuments in 88-7, although there is no secure evidence on which to base this claim. Santangelo (2007a) 3 n. 7. Sulla, on the other hand, is known to have treated Marius' own monuments badly, since Suetonius records that Caesar restored or rebuilt these monuments much later. Suet. *Caes.* 11. The serious nature of the destruction or burial of a victory monument, which would have been dedicated to the gods, should not be overlooked here: see for example Caesar's reluctance after the battle of Zela to destroy the trophy of Mithridates, which led him to set up a bigger trophy, but leave the Pontic one intact: Cass. Dio. 42.48.2.

¹⁵ Plut. *Sull.* 3.4.

¹⁶ Kuttner (2013) 270-271 argues that the Faustus coin of 56 BC (*RRC* 426/1) does depict the scene of the surrender of Bocchus as engraved on Sulla's signet ring, but suggests that this could not have been the same image as the Bocchus monument, since it shows Bocchus in too subservient a position. I am not convinced by this argument since permission would surely not have been granted for a statue depicting a foreign ruler to have been set up in Rome's most important sacred precinct if he were shown in

The Bocchus monument has, unfortunately, been lost. The well-known Sant'Omobono monument, long thought to have been the one dedicated by Bocchus, has been convincingly shown to belong to an earlier date, probably to the mid-second century BC.¹⁷ Kuttner has argued that it should be connected with Scipio Aemilianus; while this is certainly a possibility, the iconography of the Sant'Omobono monument is not sufficiently distinctive to allow us to identify with any certainty the individual with whom it was connected, and whose achievement must have been celebrated in its iconography. The use of crowns, trophies, eagles and other images do indeed call to mind elements of Sulla's self-representation, but they are in no way exclusively Sullan.¹⁸ Moreover, there is no believable explanation for the location in which the Sant'Omobono monument was found, if it were the Bocchus monument; there are no marks on the stone that suggest that it had been moved, or that it had rolled down from the Capitol, where our sources are explicit that it was originally placed, and not in the Temples of Mater Matuta or Fortuna.¹⁹

Later in this chapter, Plutarch narrates another story that is likely to have been taken from the *Autobiography*: Sulla's meeting with a Chaldaean in the retinue of Orobazus, an ambassador of the king of Parthia.²⁰ The Chaldaean performed a ritual examination of Sulla's face, and the movements of his mind and body, and declared that he must become the greatest man in the world, and that it was surprising that he consented not to be so already, at this early stage in his career.²¹ Plutarch narrates this story immediately after his narrative of the meeting that Sulla conducted between the recently restored king of Cappadocia, Ariobarzanes, and Orobazus, an ambassador of the king of Parthia; the story is introduced by ἱστορεῖται. It is not clear whether this is a citation of a specific source or not. Plutarch freely uses ἱστορέω in the active in order to

a manner that suggested that he could be a threat to Rome. Although it is unlikely that such a grouping of figures would have been used in Mauretanian artistic depictions of the event, there is no reason to doubt that Bocchus would have chosen the images carefully, as he negotiated his relationship with Sulla, with the Senate, and with the People.

¹⁷ Kuttner (2013); see also Clark (2007) 133, who argues that the Sant' Omobono monument is likely to have celebrated a *foedus*, and to have been located in the nearby temple of Fides.

¹⁸ Giardina (2012).

¹⁹ See discussion in Kuttner (2013) 255-256.

²⁰ On whose presentation in the *Autobiography* see below.

²¹ Plut. *Sull.* 5.5-6.

refer to specific sources, but his use of the passage voice is more likely to suggest an unknown source, or common knowledge.²²

The narrative of the incident contains a number of features that are strongly reminiscent of the fragments of the *Autobiography*, however, so the possibility that Plutarch had taken the story from that source must be considered. The story gives reasonably specific details of the circumstances of the ritual procedure,²³ representing Sulla in an extremely positive light, to an extent that could invite accusations of exaggeration,²⁴ in a narrative focalised through Sulla himself; we find out each stage of the divinatory process in the order in which they occurred, representing accurately, at least in chronological terms, Sulla's original experience. Moreover, the passage shows Sulla not only engaging with the divine, but also with religious experiences and divinities that did not fall within the usual spectrum of religious practices in Rome in this period.²⁵ For this reason, the experience is presented as somewhat mystical and mysterious; it is not entirely clear whether Plutarch (or perhaps the author whose work he is using as a source) has understood the nature or purpose of the ritual. The combination of these details with the citation ἱστορεῖται strongly suggests that Plutarch's presentation of this incident was highly influenced by Sulla's *Autobiography*.

If this was indeed the case, then there are certain important implications for Sulla's self-representation in the *Autobiography*. As well as admitting to have associated with religious traditions that were not located within the usual remit of traditional Roman practice, Sulla also engaged with the concept of destiny;²⁶ the Chaldaean prophesied not just that he would become the greatest of all men, but that he must. The idea of inexorable fate, or pre-destination, was alien to religious practice in this period. When reporting the word of the Chaldaean in his *Autobiography*, therefore, it was necessary for Sulla to tread carefully. The political usefulness of being destined to become the greatest of all men was not something that Sulla would have wanted to omit, yet if he claimed to have believed this prophecy then he could be accused of too

²² Plutarch uses ἱστορέω to refer to Catulus' autobiography in the *Life of Marius*; see the Introduction and the commentary on F5P and F6P.

²³ See the commentaries on F13P and F19P.

²⁴ See the Introduction for allegations of exaggeration and mendacity in the *Autobiography*.

²⁵ See the commentaries on F8P, F15P, and F18P.

²⁶ For the role of Chaldaean lore within Roman religious practice see the commentary on F21P.

great an association with foreign, and particularly Eastern, ideas that clashed with the normal functioning of religion in Rome.

It seems that Sulla circumvented this problem by treating the prophecy in a similar manner to the physiognomical examination from which it resulted: the stories are told in enough detail to allow the reader to understand the events, but without giving too much information or committing to the idea that the ritual was legitimate and the prophecy true. He reports the ritual and the prophecy in as neutral a tone as possible, without going on to say that he believed it, or pointing out that it was proven to be true by his later career, something which his readers would, of course, be aware. Since this story illustrated one aspect of Sulla's relationship with the gods, and the idea that he was destined for greatness due to the consistent support of the divine, even expressed through such a strange medium as this ritual, it is possible that the location of this incident in the *Autobiography* was within the thematic introduction on the theme of *felicitas*, rather than in its chronological place within the broader narrative of Sulla's career. Without any further information, however, we can only speculate on this point. The connection of this story with the theme of *felicitas* would, however, bring Sulla's connection with Eastern religious practices back within the realm of Roman experiences of the divine, and thus render it less problematic within Sulla's public image.

The remaining parts of this chapter do not contain references to the *Autobiography*, and there is no need to assume that they represent Sulla's account of these events. However, the citation φησὶ at the beginning of this chapter might be taken as a reference to more than simply the explanation for Sulla's *repulsa*, since the contents of almost all of the chapter consist of the types of information frequently contained in the fragments of the *Autobiography*: military narrative (5.3); communication and diplomacy with foreign leaders (5.4); praise of Sulla, whether implicit or explicit (5.5-6); and, most importantly, a positive interaction with the divine, in the course of which Sulla is singled out as being a man of special status (5.5-6). It is evident that not all of the chapter was taken from the *Autobiography*: one need only look at the story of Caesar's retort to Sulla that he had bought his praetorship through bribery to note the presence here of a tradition that was hostile to Sulla, and that is unlikely to have been set out in the *Autobiography*.

In a similar vein, perhaps, is Plutarch's account of Sulla's indictment and trial after his return from the East in 92/1 BC.²⁷ One might not expect Sulla to mention such an indictment, if it were seen as a political embarrassment. However, it was very common for politicians to face such prosecutions in Rome upon returning from a province or a posting overseas. The fact that Censorinus, his accuser, is recorded as not having attended the trial, but rather dropped the impeachment, perhaps reveals that the case was not problematic for Sulla, since it was dropped. There has been some debate as to what Sulla was accused of; the terminology employed by Plutarch is sufficiently vague as to allow various interpretations. He states that Sulla had a suit against him for bribery (δίκτην δώρων), with the allegation that he had collected large sums of money illegally from a 'friendly and allied kingdom' (ὡς πολλὰ χρήματα συνειλοχότι παρὰ τὸν νόμον ἐκ φίλης καὶ συμμάχου βασιλείας). This could fall under the categories of prosecution for corruption through having accepted gifts,²⁸ extortion, or *spoliatae provinciae crimen*.²⁹ It is possible, therefore, that Sulla had to admit that he had been prosecuted upon his return from the East, but that he chose to emphasise the collapse of the case and the failure of his opponents to secure a conviction. This passage of the *Life of Sulla* could have stemmed from the *Autobiography*, even though it concerns a subject that might, at first glance, be deleterious for him to choose to mention. Without a citation, however, it is impossible to tell whether the *Autobiography* was indeed the source here.

The final two aspects of this chapter contain features which strongly suggest that they would have been present in the *Autobiography*, although the lack of citation means that we cannot be certain that the presentation preserved here mirrors the ways in which Sulla constructed the events in the *Autobiography*: Sulla's mission to reinstate Ariobarzanes to the throne of Cappadocia, and his meeting with an envoy of the king of Parthia, Orobazus. After this praetorship, Plutarch tells us that Sulla was sent to the Greek East.³⁰ The chronology of Sulla's career is discussed in the Introduction. One aspect should be noted here, however: Sherwin-White is correct in his argument that the

²⁷ For the dating of Sulla's magistracies see the Introduction. On this trial see Gruen (1966) 51-52; Gruen (1968) 231-233; Alexander (1990) 48.

²⁸ *MRR* 2.18.

²⁹ Gruen (1966) 51 n. 116. See Bertinelli (1997) 314-315 for an excellent discussion of this complex issue.

³⁰ There are a number of different constructions of the chronology of events in the Greek East at this stage. See Brennan (1992) for an excellent summary of the most important bibliography, including the contributions of Reinach (1890), Badian (1959), and Sherwin-White (1977a), Sherwin-White (1997b).

assertion in Plutarch that Sulla attempted to gain election to the praetorship immediately after his return from the campaign against the Cimbri does not necessarily reflect Sulla's own account of the affair. The use of εὐθὺς and similar terms in order to "sharpen [the] narrative" is typical of Plutarch's style, and need not be taken as a literal statement of the length of time between the end of the Cimbric War and Sulla's first candidacy for the praetorship.³¹ Sulla's dealings with Mithridates were undoubtedly narrated in considerable detail and at great length in the *Autobiography*; it stands to reason that this, one of the first interactions between the two men, albeit indirectly, would have been presented in that work.

Sulla's dealings with Parthia would, similarly, have been included in the *Autobiography* but, unlike Plutarch's presentation of his journey to reinstate Ariobarzanes, there are significant reasons to believe that Plutarch's account reflects a Sullan source, albeit without a specific citation. Sulla's meeting with Orobazus, an envoy of Arsaces, the king of Parthia, marked a significant new stage and status in the relationship between Rome and the Greek East, since this was the first official contact between Parthia and Rome.³² The meeting was not without problems. When Orobazus arrived, he was given an audience with Sulla and with Ariobarzanes. According to Plutarch's account, Sulla arranged for three chairs to be set up, and took the middle seat in order to negotiate between the three parties. Both Sulla and Orobazus suffered repercussions for this act. Orobazus was killed by Arsaces since he had submitted to the authority that Sulla assumed.³³ The reactions that Sulla received varied between those who criticised him for behaving in a royal manner and displaying considerable arrogance, and those who praised him for having taken this attitude towards the foreign kings.³⁴ Two aspects of the presentation of this story in Plutarch lead one to suspect that Sulla's *Autobiography* might lie behind it: firstly, while the negative reaction that Sulla received is mentioned, it is balanced with the corresponding praise that he was also given. It is possible that this reflects Sulla's own presentation of the reaction he received, since it was common for him to admit criticisms that had been levelled against

³¹ Sherwin-White (1977b) 177-178.

³² Plut. *Sull.* 5.4.

³³ Plut. *Sull.* 5.5.

³⁴ The idea that Sulla at times engaged with royal imagery, of which this episode is the most striking illustration, has been thoroughly and persuasively examined by Gisborne (2005).

him, before going on to refute them and offer his own interpretations of the events in question.³⁵

Secondly, rather than simply noting the prominent role that Sulla played in arranging the first official contact between Rome and Parthia, Plutarch connects with Sulla's μεγάλη τύχη,³⁶ one of the terms he also uses in F8P to refer to Sulla's *felicitas*.³⁷ Plutarch's phrasing here suggests that he might have been taking this assertion from another source, since he states not that it was part of Sulla's great good fortune, but that it seemed to be so: τοῦτο τῆς μεγάλης δοκεῖ Σύλλα τύχης γενέσθαι.³⁸ This is strongly reminiscent of other phrases used by Plutarch to refer to episodes that Sulla seems to have ascribed to his good fortune, in whatever sense, such as his good working relationship with Metellus.³⁹

F7P thus presents a complex series of brief narratives, many of which appear to have been derived from the *Autobiography*, although only a few are given specific citations. We may be certain that Plutarch drew on other sources for the *Life of Sulla*, not least the work of Livy,⁴⁰ but the references to subjects that we know interested Sulla and discussion of topics that we may be certain were included in the *Autobiography*, presented in quick succession, strongly suggests that it was from this source that the biographer was drawing for the majority of this chapter.

³⁵ For Sulla's apologetics in the *Autobiography* see the commentary on F17P and the Conclusion.

³⁶ Plut. *Sull.* 5.4.

³⁷ See the commentary on F8P (a).

³⁸ Plut. *Sull.* 5.4.

³⁹ Plut. *Sull.* 6.5 = F8P (c).

⁴⁰ Plut. *Sull.* 6.10.

Commentary on F8P – Plut. Sull. 6.4-5 (= F11, 12, 13, 14a, and 15S, F8C)

(a) Sulla's attitude to *Τύχη* is presented in contrast with that of the Athenian general Timotheus. Sulla accepted and encouraged the idea of his having received divine help. Of all his dealings, those undertaken *πρὸς καιρὸν* had turned out best. (b) He considered himself better suited for *τύχη* than for war, and attributed more to *τύχη* than to his own excellence, (c) even considering Metellus' alliance and friendship a manifestation of *εὐτυχία*. (d) He advised Lucullus to trust most of all in divine instructions imparted in dreams. (e) A significant portent of a flaming chasm near Laverna was interpreted to mean that Sulla would seize government and free the city from troubles. (f) Plutarch ends this passage with the phrase “ταῦτα μὲν οὖν περὶ τῆς θεϊότητος”, “So much, then, regarding his attitude towards the divine”.

This passage provides evidence for Sulla's attitude towards luck, fate and fortune in as close to his own words as has survived and, as such, is crucial for our understanding of Sulla's approach to religious matters. The nature of the passage in Plutarch's biography has led to the conclusion that there may have been a thematic discussion on the subject in Sulla's *Autobiography*.¹ We are also given striking insights into Sulla's view on how *τύχη* (on the translation of which see below) had a major impact on Sulla's life. However, it is clear that F8P does not preserve one original lengthy section of Sulla's *Autobiography*, but a series of separate comments, which may or may not have been taken from one discussion of *τύχη*. Sulla is cited repeatedly throughout Plutarch's digression and, although Peter and Chassignet treat the passage as one long fragment, it is clear that it is in fact a string of short fragments, presented one after another.² I have therefore divided this passage into sections (a) to (f), as noted above in the summary. Before the discussion of each section, I have noted the beginning and ending of the relevant passage in the Greek original, for ease of reference.³

¹ Lewis (1991a).

² This appears to be the conclusion of Smith, who has separated the fragment into 5 individual fragments, F11-15, adding a parallel passage from Plut. *Luc.* 23.6 (their F14b). For Smith's defence of this choice see *FRH* 3.293. Due to the strong possibility that these comments stemmed from one discussion in Sulla's *Autobiography*, however, they are kept under the same fragment number in this thesis, although separated into sections (a)-(f).

³ Plutarch's terminology for the concepts related to *τύχη* are, however, set out together in section (a), since they must be considered as one problem.

While introducing the theme of Sulla's attitude towards τύχη, Plutarch sets up a contrast between Sulla and another individual in whose life and career τύχη was said to have played a significant role: Timotheus. This fourth century Athenian general had an impressive career, which ended in prosecution, exile, and disgrace.⁴ However, during his lifetime his successes attracted envy and, because of this, it was claimed that it was not really Timotheus who was responsible for his own achievements, but Τύχη.⁵ A story is recorded in which painters mocked him by depicting him sleeping while Τύχη cast her net around cities, to which he angrily retorted that he was the one responsible for his victories.⁶ Timotheus is an interesting choice of comparison with Sulla; there were closer, and indeed Roman, examples that Plutarch could have chosen, such as Scipio Africanus.⁷ It is possible that, as well as forming a counterpoint to Sulla's attitude towards Τύχη, Timotheus was chosen because he was famously compared to Lysander (the subject of the *Life* parallel to that of Sulla) by Isocrates in his eulogy of Timotheus.⁸ There is no evidence that Sulla was ever compared to Timotheus during his lifetime. Rather, it is quite clear that the comparison to Timotheus originated in Plutarch, rather than being taken from Sulla's *Autobiography*, both because it allowed the biographer to compare a specific aspect of Sulla's character with a famous Greek example who had

⁴ For Timotheus' career see Isoc. *Antid.* 15.101-139; Nep. *Timoth. passim*. K. Klee, s.v. Timotheus, n.3, *RE VI A 2* (1937) 1324-1329. Tuplin (1984); Bianco (2007). He was repeatedly praised by Cicero as a learned man, in the circle of Plato, and a very strong leader: Cic. *Tusc.* 5.100; *Off.* 1.116; *Orat.* 3.139.

⁵ Throughout this discussion of Timotheus I have used the capitalised term Τύχη, since the central story features the goddess, τύχη personified. The distinction between Τύχη and τύχη is, however, to a large extent the result of modern discussion and does not necessarily capture a debate that was ongoing in the ancient world. For Τύχη/τύχη see Walbank (2007).

⁶ Aelian *VH* 13.43; Plut. *Mor.* 187c; cf. Plut. *Sull.* 6.3.

⁷ Scipio Africanus and the divine: Séguin (1974); Gabba (1975). Alternative Greek comparisons existed, including, for example, Timoleon, whose attitude towards τύχη is described by Plutarch himself (*Tim.* 36.5) as follows: καίτοι πάντα γ' ἐκεῖνος εἰς τὴν τύχην ἀνῆπτε τὰ καταρθούμενα. Plutarch was, of course, interested in finding parallels between famous Greeks and Romans, so it is possible that a Greek counterpart appealed for that reason.

⁸ Eulogy: Isoc. *Antid.* 15.101-139; comparison at 128: καί τοι χρὴ στρατηγὸν ἄριστον νομίζειν οὐκ εἴ τις μᾶ τύχη τηλικούτων τι κατώρθωσεν ὥσπερ Λύσανδρος, ὃ μηδενὶ τῶν ἄλλων διαπράξασθαι σθμβέβηκεν, ἀλλ' ὅστις ἐπὶ πολλῶν καὶ παντοδαπῶν καὶ δυσκόλων πραγμάτων ὀρθῶς ἀεὶ πράττων καὶ νοῦν ἐχόντως διατετέλεκεν: ὅπερ Τιμοθέῳ συμβέβηκεν. When the characters and achievements of the two men are juxtaposed, Isocrates gives Timotheus the preference.

also been compared with Lysander, and because Plutarch uses the story of Timotheus and Τύχη elsewhere.⁹

This example is, however, useful in pointing out the most significant character of Sulla's attitude to τύχη: whereas Timotheus was angry when people claimed that τύχη alone was responsible for his success, Sulla encouraged and added to such claims. It does not seem that Sulla stated outright in his *Autobiography* that he had this attitude since Plutarch is left to deduce that he did this either out of boastfulness (κόμπῳ χρώμενος) or because he held such a belief in τὸ θεῖον. Rather, this is Plutarch's interpretation of Sulla's approach, based on the *Autobiography* in general and on the specific passage which he cites at this point: καὶ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς ὑπομνήμασι γέγραφεν ὅτι τῶν καλῶς αὐτῷ βεβουλευσθαι δοκούντων αἱ μὴ κατὰ γνώμην, ἀλλὰ πρὸς καιρὸν ἀποτολμώμεναι πράξεις ἔπιπτον εἰς ἄμεινον. "For in the *Autobiography* he wrote that, of the things which seemed to him to have planned well, the deeds which turned out better were not those undertaken after careful reflection, but on the spur of the moment." This is a perhaps unexpected statement for Plutarch on which to base his interpretation of Sulla's attitude to τὸ θεῖον, since the phrase πρὸς καιρὸν does not directly relate to τὸ θεῖον. However, it is clear that Sulla's approach to καιρός *was* connected within his views on the role of the divine in his life.¹⁰

Since Plutarch implies that this latter phrase (τῶν καλῶς αὐτῷ βεβουλευσθαι δοκούντων αἱ μὴ κατὰ γνώμην, ἀλλὰ πρὸς καιρὸν ἀποτολμώμεναι πράξεις ἔπιπτον εἰς ἄμεινον), rather than the earlier (Σύλλας δὲ οὐ μόνον ἠδέως προσίεμονος τὸν τοιοῦτον εὐδαιμονισμὸν καὶ ζῆλον, ἀλλὰ καὶ συναύξων καὶ συνεπιθειάζων τὰ πραττόμενα, τῆς τύχης ἐξῆπτεν), is the citation from Sulla, then the interpretation of τῆς τύχης is less problematic, since it is likely to have been written by Plutarch, rather than to have been translated from a Latin phrase of Sulla's. However, it is worth considering Plutarch's terminology throughout F8P, in order to establish whether it is possible to determine Sulla's original Latin vocabulary choices corresponding to the following terms and phrases, regarding fortune and the divine. This is particularly important if we are to

⁹ Brenk (1977) 313. Plut. *De Herod. malign. 7: Mor.* 856b. Valgiglio (1975) 263 states that the Timotheus analogy came from a source other than the *Autobiography* and not from Plutarch himself, although he gives no arguments for this conclusion. There is no reason to doubt that Plutarch might have been the one to note and discuss the similarity between Timotheus and Sulla. It is not necessary to assume that everything in Plutarch's *Lives* was taken from other sources.

¹⁰ See below for Sulla's attitude towards the idea that Plutarch renders (or conceptualises) as καιρός.

argue that the work opened with (or contained) a lengthy discussion regarding such matters. The terminology relating to the concepts of fate, luck and fortune in this passage may be grouped under the following headings:

- ἡ τύχη – F8P (a), (b)
- τὸ θεῖον – F8P (a)
- ὁ δαίμων – F8P (b)
- ἡ εὐτυχία – F8P (c) - εὐτυχίαν τινὰ θεῖαν
- τὸ δαιμόνιον – F8P (d)
- ἡ θειότης – F8P (f)¹¹

Scholarship on Sulla's attitude towards the divine has, understandably, focused on the use of the terms *felicitas* and *Felix*.¹² It is worth considering these terms in the light of Plutarch's citations of Sulla here, and asking whether there is a single Greek term that appears to approximate to Sulla's *felicitas*.¹³ Without any direct quotations in the original Latin in which Sulla discussed the divine, it is difficult to come to firm conclusions regarding the specific terminology. However, the wealth and variation of terms used by Plutarch are telling. While he starts by talking purely about τύχη, he moves on to mention many other aspects of the divine. Even when discussing what we may broadly define as 'luck' or 'fortune', Plutarch does not stick to τύχη, but discusses εὐτυχία and εὐτυχία τις θεία. It is likely that this tendency does not purely stem from a desire on the part of Plutarch to create a varied and interesting discussion,¹⁴ but also reflects themes and arguments that were set out in Sulla's own writings. It also implies that Sulla did, inevitably, mention *felicitas* in his *Autobiography*, and, more importantly, that he did not limit himself to this concept alone, or to this term alone. As has been

¹¹ See also the discussion of καίρος – F8P (a) – below.

¹² Most importantly: Ericsson (1943); Erkell (1952); Balsdon (1951); Thein (2009).

¹³ However we interpret Plutarch's method of work in the *Lives*, this question is pertinent: if he was working with his source material (including Sulla's *Autobiography*) before him, then it is likely that he chose a Greek term to correlate to Sulla's Latin; if he was working from notes, then it is likely that he had written down Sulla's exact wording; if he was working from memory, then it is still likely that he would have taken particular notice of Sulla's words regarding the divine, since Plutarch himself states that it was important to Sulla.

¹⁴ Plutarch used a wide range of terms for matters relating to fortune, and used τύχη both in the sense of a source of good luck that acting as a guiding force within a man's life, and as capricious chance. For an excellent summary of Plutarch's attitudes to τύχη, and his choices of vocabulary to discuss such matters, see Swain (1989b), with a list of *exempla* at 506 nn. 11 and 12.

suggested by Lewis, and as I argue in this thesis,¹⁵ it is likely that Sulla included in the opening book of the *Autobiography* a discussion of his attitude towards *felicitas*. As part of his discussion of the term, he must have defined precisely what it was that he understood the word to mean; to do so, he would have had to have used some of the alternative, related, terms for the concepts of luck, fate, fortune, and a relationship with the gods. The diversity of terminology in Plutarch must, therefore, reflect not a lack of precision on his part or on Sulla's, but rather the depth and scope of Sulla's discussion, which covered *felicitas*, but also considered the broader semantic scope of the term, the breadth of which Plutarch captures as τὸ θεῖον and, later, ἡ θειότης.

The occurrence of ὁ δαίμων and τὸ δαιμόνιον within this fragment is striking. These are Greek concepts that have been employed by Plutarch to capture the meaning (if not the exact words) of Sulla's original Latin. For this reason, it is difficult to determine what the original might have been. Τὸ δαιμόνιον in particular appears to have been taken directly from a quotation of Sulla, in the dedication to Lucullus.¹⁶ Even if it was a paraphrase and not a direct translation of a Latin term, it is clear that Sulla used some word or phrase to refer to an abstract divine presence that might be either one specific god, or act as a representative of divine power in general, and may have been defined in great detail or only loosely. The term might thus have been *deus* in the original Latin, or, more probably, *numen* or *genius*, but it is not possible to determine the exact terminology on the sole basis of Plutarch's account.¹⁷ It is perhaps significant that, in a section also arguably derived from the *Autobiography*, Appian uses the term δαίμων to refer to the entity that communicated directly with Sulla, calling to him, which Sulla interpreted to mean that his life was at an end.¹⁸

It is tempting to ask whether, in Sulla's case, the terms might have referred to a personification of an aspect of fortune. In section (b), ὁ δαίμων is used apparently in an

¹⁵ See the commentary on F2P, and the Conclusion.

¹⁶ See the commentary on F1P.

¹⁷ By the time in which Cicero was writing a few decades later, there was a rich vocabulary available to Roman philosophical thinkers and public figures for dealing with and defining the divine, such as may be observed for example in the *De Divinatione*. While it is not always possible to use the writings of Cicero as evidence for the Sullan age (see Ridley (1975); Diehl (1988)), it is likely that a similar variety was available to Sulla, and that Sulla himself played into this variety: Gildenhard (2011) 256. Both *numen* and *genius* were used in the Sullan period, but became more common under Augustus. Weinstock (1949) 167.

¹⁸ App. *BC*. 1.105. This term is customarily translated into English as "Genius": White (1913); Giardina (2009).

effort to avoid repeating ἡ τύχη, but refers to the same concept or divine entity. This is relatively unproblematic, since the terms were very closely linked to one another in the Hellenistic period, and Plutarch frequently used the term δαίμων as an equivalent to or a personification of τύχη.¹⁹ Later in this fragment, however, in section (d), a related phrase appears in Sulla's admonition to Lucullus regarding the importance of the messages imparted to sleepers in their dreams. The messages are said to come from τὸ δαιμόνιον. Since the term is so closely related to ὁ δαίμων, and appears very soon afterwards, it is difficult to imagine that Plutarch did not intend for his reader to draw some connection between the two. And, moreover, since ὁ δαίμων was used to refer to ἡ τύχη (that is, *felicitas* or *fortuna*), this also implies that τύχη is being presented here as having some role in the imparting of messages in dreams. If this reflects a similar connection in the original text of Sulla's *Autobiography*, then it is remarkable, since it implies not only that a person might receive special favour and information due to a close relationship with the gods (expressed through *felicitas*), but also that the messages and information might stem from the *felicitas* of the recipient.

In Sulla's conception of *felicitas*, there is little suggestion that the term is used as an abstract deity, a 'divine quality'.²⁰ That is to say that at no point is it suggested that Sulla's relationship was with Felicitas, rather than *felicitas*.²¹ If Plutarch's choice of words here was deliberate (which it must have been), then it is at this point that Sulla comes closest to referring to Felicitas as a deity rather than purely a concept associated with the gods in general and Sulla's relationship with them. Plutarch's language here does not give strong enough evidence to suggest that the δαιμόνιον that imparts messages to Sulla was Felicitas. It does, however, strongly suggest that Sulla saw the receiving of such guidance and knowledge through dreams as an aspect of his *felicitas*.

¹⁹ Brenk (1977) 145-183. The best example of this may be *De tranq. anim.* 15 (*Mor.* 474b-c), in which Plutarch compares a comment by Menander on τύχη with one by Empedocles on δαίμονες; for further examples see Brenk's discussion.

²⁰ Clark (2007), 21-28 on this term; see 225-234, 245 on *felicitas*.

²¹ Anna Clark's method of dealing with this problem is to give all divine qualities in small capitals. While on the one hand this is extremely useful since the problem of capitalizing for the quality that received cult is largely one of modern scholarship, keeping them separate (as "Felicitas" for the object of cult and *felicitas* for the concept) does allow us to examine the two distinct aspects of the quality, for the purposes of this discussion.

This, in turn, has the important implication that Sulla saw Lucullus, too, as a man who possessed (or who might possess) *felicitas*.²²

Two of the terms used by Plutarch in this passage – τύχη and εὐτυχία – are, to some extent, more problematic. It is tempting to assume that either τύχη or εὐτυχία, or both of these terms, were used to represent *felicitas* in Sulla's original text. Sulla's choice to take the *cognomen* Felix is definitive proof that he wished to draw a close connection between himself and the concept of *felicitas*. It does not prove, however, that this was the only term used by Sulla to describe his relationship with the divine, or concepts relating to luck and fortune. Moreover, while it was customary to refer to a general's τύχη – and this term does not necessarily imply a particularly close relationship with the divine – Plutarch's use of εὐτυχία is more unusual, and it is possible that Plutarch used this word in order to capture an original occurrence of *felicitas* in the *Autobiography*, particularly in the unconventional combination εὐτυχίαν τινὰ θεῖαν. Although Plutarch was not writing in an age in which good fortune was necessarily seen to have been given directly by a god or gods, as we find in Homeric models, it was nonetheless not imperative for Plutarch to specify that the εὐτυχία might be θεία. This was rarely specified by classical authors. Plato on one occasion described εὐτυχία as θεία, in a phrase denoting chance which had been guided by the gods,²³ while Aristotle uses it in a sense close to Plutarch's usage here, in which he distinguishes between two types of εὐτυχία, one of which is said to be divine, θεία, and the other which derives from a person's innate nature (φύσις).²⁴ Plutarch's decision to use this phrase, therefore, in a part of the passage that purports to be a paraphrase of Sulla's work indicates that Sulla was also explicit on this point; that is to say that Sulla stated that his *felicitas* (or good fortune otherwise defined) stemmed directly from the gods.

This supports the conclusion drawn by Lewis, and maintained here also, that a significant section of Sulla's *Autobiography* took the form of a thematic discussion of *felicitas*, in which the author took the time to describe and carefully define his own

²² Lucullus is indeed recorded as having received divine messages in his dreams. Plut. *Luc.* 23.3-4 records one such instance, on which see further below in section (d).

²³ *Laws* 798a-b: οἷς γὰρ ἂν ἐντραφῶσιν νόμοις καὶ κατὰ τινα θεῖαν εὐτυχίαν ἀκίνητοι γένωνται μακρῶν καὶ πολολῶν χρόνων.

²⁴ *Eud. Eth.* 8.1248b: φανερόν δ᾽ ὅτι δύο εἶδη εὐτυχίας, ἥ μὲν θεία... ἥ δὲ φύσει. All other usages are (according to the *TLG*) by Christian writers, using θεία to signify that the εὐτυχία came from (the Christian) God.

understanding of the concept.²⁵ Plutarch's use of εὐτυχίαν τινὰ θεῖαν is the outcome of such a discussion and definition. This evidence is not strong enough to lead to the conclusion that Plutarch was translating a Latin phrase, and that Sulla at any point used a phrase such as *felicitas divina*. *Felicitas* was always made possible by the gods' favour, so such an expression would be redundant. It is more likely that Plutarch's phrase expresses the ideas that Sulla conveyed concerning his *felicitas*, since he focussed on his possession of *felicitas* as a representation of his relationship with the gods. If Sulla took the time to specify and spell out this arrangement, then εὐτυχίαν τινὰ θεῖαν was arguably Plutarch's way of capturing Sulla's interpretation and presentation of *felicitas*.

Moreover, section (a) of this passage also shows how Sulla's attitude towards the divine was not a private matter; far from it. It is clear that he also engaged with the subject in his political dealings and in the construction of his public image. Sulla is, in Plutarch's formulation, not the individual responsible for starting the story that he was somehow blessed by a divine entity, but that it was said of him by other people: Σύλλας δὲ οὐ μόνον ἠδέως προσιέμενος τὸν τοιοῦτον εὐδαιμονισμὸν καὶ ζῆλον, ἀλλὰ καὶ συναύξων καὶ συνεπιθειάζων τὰ πραττόμενα. "Sulla not only accepted with pleasure such congratulation and jealousy, but also joined in increasing and ascribing his deeds to divine agency." Sulla's good fortune was widely recognized and aroused both congratulation (εὐδαιμονισμὸν) and jealousy (ζῆλον).²⁶ Once other people gave credit to ἡ τύχη for his achievements, Sulla encouraged and added to their statements, but he was not, according to Plutarch, the one who initiated this aspect of his public image. It is clear that Plutarch approved of this, since in the *De se ipsum citra invidiam laudando* he argued that attributing one's successes to Τύχη rather than speaking with pride was the right thing for a man to do.²⁷

²⁵ Lewis (1991a). See also the commentary on F2P.

²⁶ Εὐδαιμονισμὸν refers to the congratulatory reactions of other people to Sulla when they perceived that τύχη was acting so conspicuously in his life, but the term is particularly apt since it is related to δαίμων and δαιμόνιον, which appear later in the passage. Valgiglio (1967) 26. Ζῆλον captures the opposite reaction among those who recognized Sulla being favoured by τύχη: jealousy. The term is misinterpreted by Perrin (1916) 341, who translates "admiration", but taken correctly by Bertinelli (1997), who translates "Silla... non solo accettava con piacere che lo si ritenesse favorito dalla Fortuna e lo si invidiasse...".

²⁷ Plut. *De se ips. cit. inv. laud.* 11: *Mor.* 542e-543a. On this passage see Swain (1989b) 505.

In a similar vein, Plutarch's citation of Sulla here reveals the level to which a concern for his public image played a role in the way Sulla presented himself. Rather than simply saying that the action and the decisions he took πρὸς καιρὸν turned out for the better, he again refers to the way other people perceived him, by taking into account only τῶν καλῶς αὐτῷ βεβουλευῆσθαι δοκούντων. He discusses not those matters which actually turned out for the best, but only those which people thought had done so.²⁸ At the time of writing, Sulla had withdrawn from Rome to his new status as a *privatus*, and would have been able to reflect on the ways in which he deeds had in reality turned out, and whether γνώμη or καιρός had served him better. Such a discussion would have been well suited to an autobiographical composition. In this way, this citation stands as a powerful reminder of the central role that public perception had in Sulla's concerns.

Plutarch's paraphrase of Sulla does not minimise Sulla's military prowess, as was suggested by Balsdon. Indeed, Balsdon was so perplexed by this passage that he used it to suggest that, at the time of writing, Sulla was no longer mentally well.²⁹ It would certainly be perplexing for Sulla to have argued that, in matters of war, planning was not important. This is not what Sulla's statement is meant to imply, however. There is no suggestion in the fragments of the *Autobiography* that Sulla attempted in any way to play down his impressive military achievements; indeed, the number of fragments that refer to military matters suggests, on the contrary, that the bulk of the *Autobiography* was taken up with this type of material. It is implausible that Sulla did not include in those sections discussions of his planning and strategy, and illustrations of occasions on which his skilled and careful deliberation had led to victory. But it was at the moments when Sulla trusted in his *felicitas* above all else when things turned out for the best. Sulla's attitude to καιρός is thus an aspect of his complex and carefully constructed portrait of himself as a man favoured by the gods.

There is insufficient evidence to determine whether or not Plutarch was accurate in his statement that the recognition of Sulla's *felicitas* originated in other people, and was picked up by the politician as he received their diverse reactions. It is likely that, given the importance with which this concept seems to have been viewed within his career as well as within the *Autobiography*, Sulla was aware of the potential of the

²⁸ This forms an interesting parallel with F7P, in which Sulla discussed not what had been part of his 'great good fortune', but what seemed to have been (δοκεῖ); see discussion in the commentary on F7P above.

²⁹ Balsdon (1951) 2-3: "one cannot but wonder how sane he was when he wrote."

theme within his self-representational strategy before it was pointed out to him. If this was the case, then Sulla's claim that it was not he who started the dialogue but those around him served to remove from Sulla any allegations of arrogance. Sulla would thus have presented the connection between himself and fortune in the following terms: it was only when other people claimed that god-given good fortune was guiding his footsteps that Sulla agreed, and began to engage with the idea; Sulla himself had not made such an audacious claim until other people were talking about it. This is, of course, plausible, but it is more likely that Sulla not only initiated and encouraged the idea of his possession of *felicitas* from a relatively early date, but also that he claimed the opposite in order to avoid accusations of arrogance. In Sulla's own construction of the progression of his *felicitas*, therefore, it originated among Sulla's contemporaries, and he merely discussed their views without imposing his own interpretation.

Interestingly, bearing in mind that Plutarch claims to have had a fairly good understanding of Sulla's attitude towards the divine, since he chose to include the discussion in this passage and summarised it with ταῦτα μὲν οὖν περὶ τῆς θεϊότητος, the biographer does not assert that he had understood why Sulla encouraged the idea that τύχη was responsible for his successes. Plutarch gives two possible reasons for this: εἴτε κόμπῳ χρώμενος εἴθ' οὕτως ἔχων τῇ δόξῃ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον, "either resorting to boastfulness or having such a belief regarding the divine". Despite his familiarity with Sulla's writing and the ways in which the politician had discussed his relationship with the divine, Plutarch does not feel sufficiently confident to say why Sulla joined in ascribing his successes to divine agency. It is this brief statement that stands as the strongest argument against Lewis's theory that the first book of the *Autobiography* was a detailed discussion of Sulla's beliefs regarding the role of *felicitas* in his life. If Sulla had indeed written such a lengthy thematic introduction, then it is difficult to determine why Plutarch was unable to state whether or not Sulla actually believed in the role of luck and fortune.

This difficulty is nonetheless easily overcome. Plutarch does not state that Sulla made no statements regarding the attribution of his successes to τύχη, but merely that he was not sure whether it stemmed from boastfulness or genuine belief. Assuming that Sulla had written a lengthy thematic introduction on the subject of *felicitas*, and that Plutarch was reasonably familiar with the *Autobiography*, including this introduction, there is no need to stipulate that Plutarch's statement here reflects an unfamiliarity with Sulla's work. The biographer simply noted that he could not be sure of Sulla's

motivation for these claims. It is plausible, even likely, that even after reading Sulla's thematic introduction a reader might still not have been able to say whether it reflected Sulla's own views or whether it was the result of an arrogant claim to divine support. It is a commonplace of modern scholarship on ancient religion that we cannot know what people in the ancient world really believed. Here we have an instance in which Plutarch has come to the same conclusion: that whatever Sulla said about himself and his relationship with the gods, it was impossible to know whether his statements represented his true beliefs. The two possibilities that Plutarch gives here merely reflect this difficulty. Lewis' theory that the first book of the *Autobiography* was a thematic discussion of *felicitas* need not therefore be discarded on the basis of this statement of Plutarch.³⁰

The mention of *καῖρός* is also worthy of note. It is not a concept which played a particularly important role in Roman religion, and there is no straightforward way in which to render this term into Latin. Various suggestions have been made. Holden suggested that *πρὸς καιρὸν* was a translation of a Latin expression such as *ex tempore*, *prout tempus ferebat*, or *raptim*, rather than *opportune* or *tempestive*, while Giardina has suggested that this passage indicates that Sulla engaged with and discussed the role of the concept of *occasio* in his life and career.³¹ Although Giardina's suggestion of *occasio* as a parallel concept to *καῖρός* is attractive, there is no evidence for Sulla using this term in any other instance, and as such it is not possible to determine what Latin phrase of Sulla's Plutarch has translated or paraphrased. Since there is no direct Latin equivalent for this Greek concept, it is particularly striking to find it apparently being viewed with such prominence by Sulla in the *Autobiography*. It is possible that it was this aspect of Sulla's approach to the divine that so puzzled his contemporaries. Giardina has rightly used this reference to *καῖρός* as one way to interpret the failure of ancient authors to grasp the nature of Sulla's personality. He argues that the apparent inconsistency in Sulla's character stemmed from the fact that sometimes his actions were thoroughly planned, and sometimes they were undertaken *πρὸς καιρὸν*. Sulla himself would thus have seen no tension, but his contemporaries would have viewed his

³⁰ Calabi Limentani's argument that Plutarch had not actually read the *Autobiography* may be dismissed; the evidence to the contrary is compelling; see the Introduction. Calabi Limentani (1951).

³¹ Holden (1886) 76 n. 39, with references; Giardina (2009) 71 n. 30.

deeds as inspired by cunning:³² it was thus this aspect of Sulla's personality that led to the famous statement that Carbo was more vexed by the fox than the lion within Sulla.³³

For this reason, Giardina connects Sulla's attitude to *καιρός* or *occasio* with his "piety".³⁴ It is clear, however, that in whatever manner Sulla described his attitude to *καιρός* in his *Autobiography*, Plutarch took it to be in the same vein as his comments on the divine, and he considered it to be an aspect of Sulla's approach to τὸ θεῖον.³⁵ This has important repercussions for the way in which we interpret the term. It is plausible that Sulla discussed this in his thematic introduction, since there are strong connections between this interpretation of *καιρός* and Sulla's interpretation of *felicitas*. Indeed, it seems that the two concepts are linked, since the deeds which Sulla undertook πρὸς καιρὸν might be said to have turned out for the better due to the favour of the gods, and Sulla's *felicitas*. It was only through his possession of *felicitas* that Sulla could trust in *καιρός*, since the gods were guiding his actions and could ensure that his deeds turned out for the best. It is, of course, not possible to know whether Sulla explicitly connected these two concepts, but the similarities between them suggest that he may have done so, or at the very least he might have discussed them in such a way as to point out the links between them, which would in turn inspire Plutarch to mention *καιρός* in his discussion of Sulla's attitude towards the divine.

(b) Plut. Sull. 6.5: ἔτι δὲ καὶ δι' ὧν φησι... καὶ ὅλως ἑαυτὸν τοῦ δαίμονος ποιεῖν. = F12S

The phrase within this section that appears to be a paraphrase of Sulla is (ἔτι δὲ καὶ δι' ὧν φησι) πρὸς τύχην εὖ πεφυκέναι μᾶλλον ἢ πρὸς πόλεμον..., '(and, moreover, from the things he said about) being by nature made for *τύχη* more than for war...'.³⁶ Given that the vast majority of the *Autobiography* seems to have been military narrative, describing Sulla's undertakings in a number of conflicts and focusing on his role in bringing them to a successful outcome, it is perhaps surprising that Sulla stated that he was by nature more suited to *τύχη* (probably *felicitas*; at any rate good fortune granted by the gods) than for matters of war.³⁷ Such a startling statement is no doubt intended to

³² Giardina (2008) 70-71.

³³ Plut. Sull. 28.3.

³⁴ Giardina (2008) 71.

³⁵ Plut. Sull. 6.4-5.

³⁶ For this use of φύω with πρὸς, see Xen. Mem. 4.1.2 (with ἀρετήν): LS 877; Valgiglio (1967) 27.

³⁷ The dichotomy between *τύχη* and contrasting attributes and concepts was a matter of interest to Plutarch; see for example the lengthy discussion in the *De fortuna*

demonstrate the depth of Sulla's belief in *felicitas*, since much of his fame derived from his military prowess, and the political successes that had followed. Sulla's military victories were, however, presented as the result not only of his own skill but also of divine support.³⁸ The statement that he was more suited by nature for τύχη rather than πόλεμος might therefore reflect a further element of his professed devotion to the gods. Since Sulla was known for having achieved a number of significant military victories, it was all the more notable that Sulla claimed that the responsibility for those victories was his only because he was favoured by the gods through his *felicitas*. Although it was apparently commonplace to spend the bulk of one's autobiography in this period discussing military matters, Sulla had an additional reason to do so, since he could use it to reveal all the more starkly the support he enjoyed from the gods. This conclusion is strengthened by Plutarch's statement that Sulla attributed more to τύχη than to his own excellence: τῇ τύχῃ τῆς ἀρετῆς πλέον ἔοικε νέμειν. It seems that this statement referred to Sulla's military achievements, as well as to his political career and the rest of his public life.

It does not appear from the content in the *Life of Sulla* that Plutarch's phrase ἔοικε... καὶ ὄλωσ ἑαυτὸν τοῦ δαίμονος ποιεῖν reflects a translation of an original Latin statement, but is the biographer's conclusion from the information contained in section (c), concerning his presentation of his relationship with Metellus. However, it is strongly reminiscent of another passage by Plutarch, in the *Moralia*, which does claim to be citing Sulla, although not necessarily the *Autobiography*. In his essay on the good fortune of the Romans, *De Fortuna Romanorum*, Plutarch states that Sulla used to declare openly that he was the son of Τύχη, quoting from Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*: ἄντικρυς οὕτος τῇ Τύχῃ μετὰ τῶν πράξεων ἑαυτὸν εἰσεποίει βοῶν κατὰ τὸν Οἰδίποδα τὸν Σοφοκλέους: ἐγὼ δ' ἑμαυτὸν παῖδα τῆς Τύχης νέμω.³⁹ The verbal echoes here (τῇ Τύχῃ/τῇ τύχῃ, εἰσεποίει/ποιεῖν) are not enough to determine with any certainty that Plutarch was taking both phrases from an original statement of Sulla's, yet such a conclusion is certainly tempting, not least because in the *De Fortuna Romanorum*

Romanorum, which distinguishes between those Romans who were men of τύχη and those who were men of ἀρετή. On this text see Swain (1989b). The distinction was, of course, artificial, since most prominent figures could be argued to have possessed both τύχη and ἀρετή, but the rhetorical arguments show that Plutarch was interested in exploring these themes. The contrast may also be found in Sulla's stated reasons for the selection of the gods to whom he dedicated the Chaeronea monument: Plut. *Sull.* 19.5, = F15P. See the commentary on F15P for the Chaeronea dedication. *FRH* 3.293-294.

³⁸ See e.g. commentary on F15P.

³⁹ Plut. *De fort. Rom.* 4, citing Soph. *OT* 1080 (ending νέμων, rather than νέμω).

Plutarch claims that Sulla often used to repeat the quotation of Sophocles, even if the preceding statement is not attributed to him directly. There is no suggestion, however, that the quotation from *Oedipus Tyrannus* was featured in the *Autobiography*. Plutarch has merely read that Sulla used to cite the line of poetry, and found that it agrees with his assessment of Sulla's attitude towards τύχη, that is, that he has made himself entirely a creature of τύχη.

(c) Plut. Sull. 6.5: ὅς γε καὶ τῆς πρὸς Μέτελλον ὁμοιοίας... ἐν τῇ κοινωνίᾳ γενέσθαι τῆς ἀρχῆς. = F13S

Sulla benefitted greatly from his working relationship with Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius, with whom he shared the consulship in 80 BC.⁴⁰ Their friendship was cemented by family ties upon Sulla's marriage in 88 to a Metella, the daughter of L. Caecilius Metellus Delmaticus and thus the cousin of Metellus Pius.⁴¹ However, it is perhaps surprising that Sulla would describe this relationship as εὐτυχίαν τινὰ θείαν. We may take this as a reflection of the extent to which Sulla saw (or at least presented) the divine at work within his life and career: where we might expect the gods to appear assisting him in battle and (as we find in passage (e) below, F16P, and F18P) sending favourable omens to help to guide him in the right direction, here they are at work in Sulla's career in Rome.⁴² It was not unusual for portents and omens to be reported concerning a commander's time on campaign. When a commander had returned from the field, however, and no longer held *imperium*, he lost the special religious status and duties that they had enjoyed while outside the city. With Sulla, however, this fragment suggests that this was entirely not the case. Sulla's statement that his relationship with

⁴⁰ *MRR* 2.79. Metellus also benefited from the relationship: the political influence of the Metelli had been declining since the exile of his father Numidicus, but Sulla's championing of the Metelli allowed them to return to prominence; Syme (1939) 20. The opposite view is best expressed by Gruen (1974) 18, who argues that the Metelli were "long accustomed to being pillars of the Roman aristocracy", and that their return to the forefront of political life did not depend on Sulla.

⁴¹ Valiglio (1975) 263 argues that, despite the chronological position of this information within Plutarch's *Life of Sulla*, the judgement of Metellus stems from late in Sulla's career, after the consulship in 80. Since the *Autobiography* was composed after Sulla's retirement, however, it is no objection to this being an authentic passage of the *Autobiography*, and there is little evidence for such a late marriage to Metella. She and their young son had both died before 78, when Sulla dreamt of the boy calling him to see his mother and himself in the afterlife. See F21P, with commentary.

⁴² *Felicitas* was, in many respects, a concept profoundly connected with military matters, and an important aspect of a Roman military leader: Cic. *Pro Leg. Man.* 28.1: *Ego enim sic existimo, in summo imperatore quattuor has res inesse oportere, - scientiam rei militaris, virtutem, auctoritatem, felicitatem.*

Metellus was not merely ἡ εὐτυχία but also θεία implies that his connection with the gods remained meaningful even after the end of his campaigns. Sulla saw his *felicitas* as acting beyond the ordinary bounds of divine intervention. Divine support for Sulla was not restricted or limited, but at work throughout his life. Sulla's special status and connection with the gods was not directly connected with the offices that he held as an official within the Roman state, but with himself personally. This is an extraordinary claim.

It is clear that Sulla's attempts to cement his relationships with the Metelli were intended to help him to maintain mutually beneficial political links with Rome's elites. It has been argued that Sulla's friendship with the Metelli does not reflect political strength on his part, but in fact shows the opposite. If Sulla felt the need to ally himself with the Metelli, it suggests that his political connections in Rome were in need of bolstering. Sulla's claim that the relationship was part of his *felicitas* to some extent attests to this conclusion, since it shows that, after the end of his dictatorship and Rome's return to the usual constitutional magistracies, he would once again need the support of strong patrician families. Thein has used this passage as evidence that Sulla's power after the dictatorship was thus not as strong or absolute as has been previously suggested.⁴³ It is certainly the case that, although a number of prominent Sullan supporters held public office, challenges to Sulla's legislation swiftly appeared.⁴⁴ Opinions have varied on whether or not this meant that Sulla had lost control over the running of affairs in Rome, or if he had chosen to surrender control back to the traditional voting assemblies as part of the state's return to constitutional government.⁴⁵

⁴³ Thein (2006) 247: "Sulla recognised that his consulship would entail politics as usual, with all its difficulties and uncertainties."

⁴⁴ Supporters in power in 78: Q. Lutatius Catulus, *cos.* 78: *MRR* 2.85; Q. Metellus Pius, *procos.* of Hispania Ulterior: *MRR* 2.86; L. Cornelius Sisenna, *praetor urbanus et peregrinus*: *MRR* 2.86. Challenges arose from a number of quarters, and particularly from M. Aemilius Lepidus, *cos.* 78 (*MRR* 2.85), who at one time had apparently been a supporter of Sulla, working as *legatus* under him and being instrumental in the taking of Norba in 81, and holding the strategically important governorship of Sicily in 80. *Legatus*: App. *BC* 1.94, although this could have been the Lepidus that was consul in 77: *MRR* 2.76; governorship: *MRR* 2.80. Lepidus famously opposed the extravagant plans for Sulla's funeral (Plut. *Pomp.* 15.2), and Plutarch claims that Lepidus tried to gain for himself the powers that Sulla had held. On Lepidus' attitude towards Sulla before and after the latter's death see Gruen (1974) 12-13, 122-123.

⁴⁵ A recent exploration of this problem, of which a number of different assessments are possible, may be found in Steel (2013) 112-113.

Thein is surely correct to point out that Sulla's political connections must have played a role in helping him to exercise influence once he had stepped down from the dictatorship, and in his assessment of the importance of the Metelli within Sulla's efforts to maintain a strong coalition of supporters. On the other hand, however, Sulla's connection with the Metelli goes back to the early 80s (at least) through his marriage to Metella, and it is not clear that this shows that, at that early stage, Sulla was anticipating the need for political allies during the turbulent later periods of his career.⁴⁶ It is implausible that this was the motivation for his decision to marry into the family, and Thein does not note that the relationship had begun many years before the period he is discussing. Since the *Autobiography* was written towards the end of Sulla's life, it is therefore likely that the phrase in Sulla's text that Plutarch has paraphrased here shows not the motivations for Sulla's actions, but his later analysis of their outcomes, and his depiction of the matter in his *Autobiography*. This statement has much to reveal about Sulla's presentation of *felicitas*, and his interpretation of these events in hindsight; we may not take it as an illustration of an evaluative process, but we may not use the passage to examine Sulla's motivations at the time of his first association with the Metelli.

(d) Plut. *Sull.* 6.6: ἔτι δὲ Λευκόλλω... νύκτωρ τὸ δαιμόνιον. = F14aS

This fragment confirms the assertion of F1P that Sulla's work was dedicated to his associate, L. Licinius Lucullus.⁴⁷ Here, we are given more details about the phrasing of the dedication: Sulla has set out advice regarding how Lucullus should conduct his life. It is clear that this was more than a mere passing comment, but part of an in-depth discussion of Sulla's attitude towards the gods, and their role in his own career. F1P is almost universally ascribed to the first book of the *Autobiography*, and this is surely correct.⁴⁸ It is unlikely that the dedication would have been placed anywhere other than at the very beginning of the work. Since this fragment reveals that the dedication contained advice addressed to Lucullus concerning religious matters, it also provides strong support for Lewis' theory that the first book contained a detailed discussion of *felicitas*.⁴⁹ It seems that at least part of the thematic introduction was thus structured as

⁴⁶ Marriage to Metella: Plut. *Sull.* 6.11-12.

⁴⁷ For further details on F1P and the dedication to Lucullus see commentary above. The information is also repeated in Plut. *Luc.* 23.6 (=F14bS), where Lucullus is said to have remembered this advice that Sulla had given to him.

⁴⁸ *FRH* 3.294 unconvincingly suggests an alternative; see below.

⁴⁹ Lewis (1991a); see the commentary on F2P and the Conclusion.

the dedication of the work, or perhaps framed by instructions to the dedicatee. Smith has argued that we cannot eliminate the possibility that this advice was contained in a digression addressed to Lucullus at some unidentified point later in the *Autobiography*, not necessarily at the very beginning, and that we have insufficient evidence to come to a conclusion on this point.⁵⁰ However, since Plutarch mentions the dedication of the work to Lucullus here, it is more likely that this was where the biographer found the information. There is nothing to suggest that the dedication was anywhere other than at the very beginning of the work, and there is no need to be so sceptical on this point.

The reference to dreams in this context is revealing: dreams were not considered an integral part of Roman religion, and were not invoked with regard to state matters except in exceptional circumstances. In 90 BC, at the height of the Social War,⁵¹ a Metella, probably an unmarried daughter from this most prominent family, came to the Roman Senate to report a dream which she claimed was a communication from the gods.⁵² Although accounts of the dream are not explicit, it seems that Juno Sospita appeared to the sleeping Metella in order to complain that her temple was being polluted, and inform her that she had decided to leave.⁵³ The senate listened to Metella's report, consulted with religious experts,⁵⁴ and ordered that the correct *supplicationes* should be made, and that the temple of Juno Sospita at Lanuvium should be repaired.⁵⁵ The importance of this dream, and the seriousness with which it was viewed by the Senate, is shown by Cicero, who cites it as one of the few examples of *somnia graviora, si quae ad rem publicam pertinere visa sunt, a summo consilio neglecta sunt*.⁵⁶ Although modern scholars have focused on the fact that these actions were taken in response to a dream had by a woman,⁵⁷ it is also important to note that this was one of

⁵⁰ *FRH* 3.294.

⁵¹ On the dating of this dream see Kragelund (2001) 56 n. 9.

⁵² Santangelo (2013) 56.

⁵³ Obs. 55; Cic. *Div.* 1.4, 1.99. Kragelund (2001) 60-3; Wardle (2006) 104-106, 343. Cicero states that he was drawing on his own memory of the events, and on the account of Sisenna.

⁵⁴ It is possible that these were the *decemviri*, since they recommended *supplicationes*, but this is not certain. Kragelund (2001) 59.

⁵⁵ This might have involved restoration work, or even the rebuilding of the temple; our sources are not specific on the matter. Obs. 55: *aedem... refecit*; Cic. *Div.* 1.99: *templum... restitutum*. Although it is not clear whether the temple in question was one in Rome or the larger sanctuary of Juno Sospita at Lanuvium, Kragelund (2001) 64-68 has persuasively argued that it was probably the latter, due to the importance of that site.

⁵⁶ Cic. *Div.* 1.4.

⁵⁷ An excellent discussion of this event may be found in Schultz (2006) 26-28.

the earliest instances (possibly even the very first) in which the Roman Senate was moved to action by the reports of a dream of a private individual.⁵⁸

Within a decade, however, when Sulla came to greater prominence in Rome, dreams were a common feature of the way in which he discussed his relationship with the divine. Plutarch's biography contains many references to dreams, and Sulla's stated belief in their messages is one of the most notable aspects of his religious attitudes, regardless of whether we may think the belief, or even the reported dreams, were truthful. And Plutarch is not alone in discussing them.⁵⁹ Appian reports that, on the night before he died, Sulla dreamt that his δαίμων was calling him, from which he determined (correctly) that he was about to die.⁶⁰ It is clear that the sources used by Plutarch and Appian for the life of Sulla, including but not limited to the *Autobiography*, set out many instances in which Sulla received a message in a dream, or the report of a dream from another individual, and trusted that message as divine, prophetic, and accurate. These instances include not only private affairs (such as the two dreams reported as having taken place immediately before his death),⁶¹ but also public and political matters, such as the conduct of a particular battle.⁶²

Although an individual could, in a private capacity, consult a dream-interpreter in Rome or take action inspired by a dream, such as making a dedication, there was no provision for dreams within Roman state religion.⁶³ On occasion, individual Romans had taken actions that they claimed were the result of dreams, but this was a rare occurrence; the frequency with which Sulla seems to have discussed his dreams, and the fact that he mentions dreams which inspired him to take actions that concerned the public business of the state, is remarkable.⁶⁴ Some of the objections to the use of dreams

⁵⁸ Schultz (2006) 27: "There can be no doubt... that the Romans immediately understood the importance of the dream: the Senate... treated the vision with all seriousness, entrusting the refurbishment project to no one less significant than the consul of the year." It is possible that a dream reported in 105 (Gran. Lic. 33.22-33) was also expiated at the order of the Senate, although it cannot be established whether or not the Senate were involved: Kragelund (2001) 58.

⁵⁹ 9.4; 17.1-2 = F16P; 28.4 and 6; 37.2 = F21P. Plutarch regularly included in his *Lives* epiphany dreams (see below for definition and use of this term), which could add to the prestige of the individual concerned: Harris (2009) 54.

⁶⁰ App. *BC* 1.105.

⁶¹ Plut. *Sull.* 37.1-2 = F21P; App. *BC* 1.105.

⁶² Such as Plut. *Sull.* 28.4, fulfilled at 28.6.

⁶³ Kragelund (2001) 80.

⁶⁴ A prominent example of a Roman from this period using references to dreams in a public context is Gaius Gracchus who, according to Cicero, made widely known a

in a public context in Rome stemmed from the questionable extent to which dreams could be considered reliable, since one had to depend entirely on the unsubstantiated honesty of the one reporting it. Dreams were known to have allowed some potential for dishonesty and deception.⁶⁵ The form of dream most susceptible to fabrication was the ‘epiphany dream’ (as classified by Harris).⁶⁶ In dreams of this sort a god, a supernatural being, or a human acting in a supernatural capacity, would appear to the sleeper and impart some specific message. All the dreams mentioned regarding Sulla were of this type. Epiphany dreams were apparently common, and Plutarch included many such dreams in his biographies – forty-five are described in detail – perhaps to add to the prestige of the recipient. If the gods chose to impart specific wisdom to an individual, it implied that the individual was worthy of receiving such an honour.⁶⁷

The reliability of the messages imparted to humans in their dreams was evidently presented by Sulla as absolute. His statement that there was nothing as secure as these messages (μηδὲν οὕτως ἠγεῖσθαι βέβαιον ὡς ὅ τι ἂν αὐτῷ προστάξει νύκτωρ τὸ δαμόνιον) is remarkably strong, considering that his Roman audience would, as a whole, not have been as receptive to the idea of dreams being the most reliable form of divine communication. It is unclear how this was viewed by Sulla’s contemporaries. There was a growing trend of rationalism among the educated elites in Rome throughout this period, and it is possible, as Harris has suggested, that the senatorial and equestrian classes would have viewed Sulla’s claims with disbelief, while his troops may have been more susceptible to his reported dreams.⁶⁸ However, we ought to allow for a more nuanced picture here. Although the philosophical writings of the late Republican period suggest a willingness to consider the non-existence of gods, for example, the serious manner with which omens and portents were treated indicates that religious matters such as Sulla’s dreams would not have been dismissed lightly by all of his contemporaries. According to some reconstructions of religious and intellectual developments in this period, it is even possible that mysticism, inspired by Rome’s

dream in which his elder brother appeared to him and told him that he could not avert his own death. Cic. *Div.* 1.56 with Wardle (2006) 247-249.

⁶⁵ Harris (2009) 5.

⁶⁶ Harris (2009) 23-90. Other systems of dream classification are possible, such as the ancient distinction between dreams which were symbolic, visionary, or oracular, the latter of which equates to Harris’ epiphany dream. Harris’ terminology is employed here. Ancient dream classifications: Macrobian *Somn. Scip.* 1.3.2; Artemidorus 1.2.

⁶⁷ On Plutarch’s use of dreams in his *Lives* see Brenk (1975), with useful bibliography in 336 n. 1.

⁶⁸ Harris (2009) 179-180.

interactions with the East, had begun to influence large numbers of the senatorial elite.⁶⁹ It is not possible to state that, if this were true, these men would have disbelieved Sulla's stories simply because they concerned dreams or supernatural phenomena. It is not the case that individuals hold one view for all of their lives or that such viewpoints are entirely uniform. Even if it were an accurate reconstruction to say that, in the late Republic, rationalism was increasingly influential, this would not preclude all belief in prophetic dreams.

Moreover, while Sulla was well known by posterity for the central role he gave to dreams, epitomized by his advice to Lucullus, it is not clear whether the information was circulated widely during Sulla's active career, or whether it was only in the *Autobiography* that Sulla first began to promote his prophetic and epiphany dreams so conspicuously. All of the ancient sources which record Sulla's dreams are also those which were written by men who appear to have read the *Autobiography*, or works influenced by the *Autobiography*. It is therefore possible that the traditions which record the frequent occurrence of dreams throughout the stories of Sulla's lifetime were inspired and influenced by his own presentation of the matter in that text.

One of the most striking of Sulla's dreams was reported concerning Ma-Bellona, who appeared to Sulla in a dream and placed a thunderbolt in his hand, naming the enemies she wished for him to strike, and watching them fall and vanish.⁷⁰ This is the first known appearance of this goddess in a Roman context, and it is not clear whether Plutarch's ἦν τιμῶσι Ῥωμαῖοι παρὰ Καππαδοκῶν μαθόντες is meant to imply that Sulla's knowledge of the goddess also came from the East, and thus presumably stemmed from his time in Asia Minor as governor of Cilicia. We do not know whether she was worshipped or widely celebrated in Rome at this date, but it is possible that her worship was mostly restricted to the lower classes, rather than the senatorial elite.⁷¹ Alföldi believed that the goddess on *RRC* 292.1 was Ma-Bellona, implying that her cult

⁶⁹ For the most important statement of this argument see Alföldi (1976).

⁷⁰ Plut. *Sull.* 9.4. Plutarch is apparently unsure as to which goddess was meant: λέγεται δὲ καὶ κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους αὐτῷ Σύλλα φανῆναι θεὸν ἦν τιμῶσι Ῥωμαῖοι παρὰ Καππαδοκῶν μαθόντες, εἴτε δὴ Σελήνην οὖσαν εἴτε Ἀθηνᾶν εἴτε Ἐνυώ. The combination of the attributes of these goddesses, however, strongly suggests that it was Ma-Bellona who appeared in Sulla's dream. Kragelund (2001) 92. Others have argued that she was Cybele: Perrin (1916) 352. Kragelund argued that the nameless god who sent signs of imminent success to Sulla before the second march on Rome was also Ma-Bellona, but since Plutarch simply describes the deity as τοῦ θεοῦ, it is not possible to reach any firm conclusions. Plut. *Sull.* 27.3 = F18P.

⁷¹ Keaveney (1983a) 65.

was fairly widespread in the first century BC, but there are important and convincing challenges to this view.⁷² At the very least, we may be sure that she was fairly widely honoured in Rome before 48 BC, when a temple dedicated to her was destroyed.⁷³ Ma-Bellona reappeared in Sulla's *Autobiography* in his account of the Civil War when at Silvium in 83, a slave of Pontius spoke with a prophetic message from Ma-Bellona. Sulla was promised military success and victory (κράτος πολέμου καὶ νίκην), but predicted that if he did not hurry, the Capitol would be burnt.⁷⁴

The violence of the dream of Ma-Bellona must stem from its dramatic date: on the night before Sulla's march on Rome in 88. The men that were being struck with the goddess' thunderbolt were Roman citizens.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, the nature of Plutarch's description of this dream means that it is unclear whether or not it was taken from Sulla's own writings; the biographer simply reports that it was said to have happened (λέγεται). Opinions have varied widely on whether the dream was recounted in the *Autobiography*. In the absence of a definite citation we may not be certain, but since the dream fits in well with the other dreams which certainly did stem from the *Autobiography*, it seems very likely that this dream did too.⁷⁶ The political usefulness of

⁷² Alföldi (1976) 149-151. The opposing view is best stated in Crawford (1974) 306-307, who argues (convincingly) that the head is that of Roma. Alföldi's view is founded upon his central argument that Roman religion was undergoing significant changes in this period under the influence of the Greek East; within this framework, the presence of the Eastern Ma-Bellona in Rome makes sense. Since this interpretation of the influence of the East on religion (and political life) in Rome in the late Republic has not gone without challenges, alternative interpretations of the identification of this goddess involve refuting Alföldi's central thesis, either explicitly or implicitly, and for this reason has not been attempted as frequently as one might expect.

⁷³ Cass. Dio 2.26.2.

⁷⁴ Plut. *Sull.* 27.6 = F18P. See commentary below.

⁷⁵ Kragelund (2001) 93: "In historiographical terms Sulla's dream of Ma-Bellona is, as it were, a blueprint for all that followed. It projects onto a symbolic level what now became political reality... As opposed to Scipio of old, Sulla invokes divine guidance not when attacking Rome's enemies, but when marching upon Rome herself. The dream of a Roman general no longer prophesied Roman victory, but the murder and exile of fellow Romans."

⁷⁶ Kragelund (2001) 93 argued that there was no way to tell, but Plutarch's citation made it unlikely. The frequent use of λέγεται for the citation of a specific text, such as the citation of Catulus' autobiography with ιστοροῦσι in Plut. *Mar.* 25.6 and λέγουσι in Plut. *Mar.* 26.5, shows that the word need not imply that Sulla was not the source of the story here. Harris (2009) 179-180 is more positive: "This story is probably authentic, in the sense that Sulla himself spoke of it, and it is reasonable to guess that he spoke of it to some of his troops". Vitelli (1898) 369 and Valgiglio (1975) 267 argue that the story came directly from the *Autobiography*. The probability of this dream coming from the *Autobiography* is increased by the immediately preceding passage, which includes a

the dream is quite clear. The killing of Roman citizens during Sulla's march on Rome was a highly controversial matter, since it was in effect an act of civil war. By describing this dream, therefore, in which the responsibility for the killing of the citizens was placed on the goddess (since it was her thunderbolt and she was telling him which enemies to strike), Sulla could remove from himself some of the accountability for his actions.⁷⁷ This goes beyond the usual functioning of Sulla's *felicitas*. His actions here were not merely favoured by the gods, but directly ordained and guided by them, in a manner that is seldom attested in late Republican religion,⁷⁸ and reveals one of the ways in which Sulla broke away from the religious conventions of the period.⁷⁹

Moreover, while there had been many historical dreams in which commanders received prophetic visions before a battle, according to our sources it had been more than a century since the last Roman commander had claimed to have had one.⁸⁰ However, it is not possible to determine whether stories of this dream were circulated in 88 and shortly afterwards, and were thus a feature of the way in which Sulla discussed his march on Rome in its immediate aftermath, or whether it first came to light when Sulla wrote about the matter in the *Autobiography* (or spoke about it later in his life),

prophetic declaration by the haruspex Postumius, who is known to have featured in the *Autobiography* (the sacrifice at Nola in F9P).

⁷⁷ There is no way, however, to use this dream to determine what Sulla may have 'believed' about the divine or the power of dreams. Keaveney (1983a) 54 pointed out that since Sulla had already been advised by Postumius to join battle before he had the dream, it was the latter in which Sulla placed most trust, thus confirming that Sulla himself followed the advice that he had given to Lucullus. The evidence is not strong enough to determine whether or not this was really the case, but it does suggest that Sulla depicted himself in the *Autobiography* as conforming to the precept that nothing was so secure as the revelations sent by the gods in dreams. It is not as Keaveney declares, however, "a spectacular illustration of this belief" (sc. in the power of dreams). We know nothing of what Sulla believed in this regard, merely how he wrote about himself in the *Autobiography*. Nor is Keaveney (1983a) 58 right to say that if Sulla was not 'a devout man' and his 'religious fervour was nothing more than a sham or an empty fraud', then this advice to Lucullus 'was nothing more than a piece of breathtaking cynicism'. What matters is not what Sulla may or may not have believed, which can never be reconstructed, but the presentation of his religious attitudes in literary form. And here, the picture is consistent.

⁷⁸ The gods rarely appeared in Roman epiphany dreams. Brenk (1975) 343 notes that when the gods do appear, it is frequently when the dreamer is in Greece or the Greek East. This is not the case with Sulla's dream of Ma-Bellona, however.

⁷⁹ Gildenhard (2011) 256 argues that Sulla came up with a new understanding of religious affairs in which the gods played a much more direct role in human action that was traditionally held.

⁸⁰ Kragelund (2001) 92. The previous recipient had been L. Scipio Africanus, on which see Kragelund (2001) 83-86.

and was the product of his more fully developed expression of his religious ideas following his retirement.⁸¹

In a similar vein, immediately before the battle of Sacriportus, Plutarch reports that Sulla dreamt that the elder Marius was advising his son, whom Sulla was then opposing, to beware of the next day.⁸² There is no citation of Sulla's *Autobiography* at this point, although, since we know that Plutarch consulted the *Autobiography* as a source for this battle (see F19P) it is highly likely that he drew this story from it.⁸³ Interestingly, while there is nothing explicitly divine about the dream, Plutarch makes it clear that it had been sent by a god or gods since, when the battle took place, it became apparent that the premonition had been correct.⁸⁴ The revelation of the accuracy of the dream is described in divine terms: it was a deity (ὁ δαίμων) who fulfilled the predictions. There is a marked similarity between this statement and the advice to Lucullus in the dedication of the *Autobiography*.

Another dream of Sulla's is recorded by Appian. Sulla is said to have sent a dedication of a golden crown and axe to Aphrodisias (a city in Caria and the location of an important sanctuary of Aphrodite), accompanied by an inscription in verse, probably at the end of the Mithridatic War.⁸⁵ The inspiration for this dedication was, according to Appian, twofold: a dream, in which Sulla saw Aphrodite fighting alongside him and helping him to defeat his enemies, and an oracular response. It is surprising, given its

⁸¹ Harris (2009) 179. It has been suggested that a coin issued by L. Aemilius Buca in 44 BC (*RRC* 480/1), and a glass paste found in Copenhagen represent this dream: Breitenstein (1937). Crawford (1974) 493 argues that the Victory with a staff stands for the thunderbolt of the dream, and Luna stands for the goddess Ma-Bellona in disguise. However, while Plutarch's version of this story did suggest Selene (although the manuscripts have the otherwise unknown Semele) as one of the possible identifications of the goddess, the imagery is not sufficiently strongly connected to the story of the dream, and there are likely to have been other, similar stories on which moneyers could draw. It is unclear why, if the coin did indeed depict the dream, so many details had been changed. Ma-Bellona was, for example, traditionally a solar goddess: Proeva (1992) 330-331. It is possible that the coin and glass paste instead depict Endymion: Fears (1974) 29-37. For bibliography see Kragelund (2001) 94 n. 119.

⁸² Plut. *Sull.* 28.4.

⁸³ Kragelund (2001) 93 and Behr (1993) 18-19 agree.

⁸⁴ Plut. *Sull.* 28.6.

⁸⁵ App. *BC*. 1.97: ἔπεμψε δὲ καὶ στέφανον χρύσειον καὶ πέλεκυν, ἐπιγράψας τάδε· τόνδε σοι αὐτοκράτωρ Σύλλας ἀνέθηκ', Ἀφροδίτη, ᾧ σ' εἶδον κατ' ὄνειρον ἀνὰ στρατὴν διέπυσαν τεύχεσι τοῖς Ἄρεος μαρναμένην ἔνοπλον. For the dating of this to the Mithridatic War see Giardina (2009) 77. Marinoni (1987) 223-232 argues that the oracular consultation probably took place in 86 BC, while Sulla was still in Greece following the battle of Chaeronea.

apparently Delphic connection, that Plutarch makes no mention of the dream, the oracular response, or the dedication. There has been much speculation as to whether Appian's text draws on the *Autobiography* for this episode. It certainly came from a detailed source, since Appian is able to record the text of the inscription and the oracular response that inspired it, but the only citation in this section of the *Bellum Civile* is of an unknown γραφή, which does not appear to be the *Autobiography*.⁸⁶ It is argued below that this γραφή was not the source of the story, and that it probably did come from the *Autobiography*.

The nature of the oracular consultation which led to the dedications at Aphrodisias is not clear. The response certainly features Delphi prominently: μή λήθεο τῶνδε· Δελφοῖς δῶρα κόμιζε.⁸⁷ This has led almost all scholars to conclude that it was the sanctuary at Delphi which Sulla consulted, and which instructed him to dedicate the axe at Aphrodisias.⁸⁸ As Marinoni has pointed out, however, it was possible, and indeed likely, that oracular centres would recommend that dedications be made at other sanctuaries, just as here Sulla was advised to send a dedication to Aphrodisias.⁸⁹ Moreover, analysis of the text of the oracular response has revealed that a large proportion of the words and features appear in no other known Delphic response.⁹⁰ Most significantly, this would be the only known oracular consultation of Delphi by a Roman between the end of the Second Punic War and the first century AD.⁹¹ If the response did come from Delphi, then it would represent an anomaly in this period, and thus be even more surprising that the story was not related in Plutarch's biography.

Marinoni's suggestion on this point is not entirely convincing. He argues that, since Plutarch drew heavily on the *Autobiography*, the biographer's failure to mention

⁸⁶ Marinoni (1987) 217-8. Baldson (1951) 8 n. 92 argues that the γραφή was a text preserved at Rome than Appian had read, but Plutarch had not.

⁸⁷ App. *BC.* 1.97.

⁸⁸ Baldson (1951) 8. Gabba (1958) 265; Hinard (1985a) 237-238.

⁸⁹ Marinoni (1987) 206.

⁹⁰ Marinoni (1987) 204-209, using the texts of the responses recorded in Parke-Wormell (1956). The response contains many features and vocabulary traditionally associated with epic and lyric writing, and one adjective, περιμήκετος, which is only ever applied to a city on this one occasion. However, since there are many features which do commonly recur in Delphic responses, Marinoni suggests that we cannot use this as a criterion for determining whether or not the text was Delphic. Marinoni does conclude that the response probably was from Delphi, but reaches this conclusion on the basis of different criteria.

⁹¹ Marinoni (1987) 203 n. 16. For Roman consultation of the Delphic oracle see Bouché-Leclercq (1879) 675-683.

the events must be due to Sulla himself not discussing the matter in the *Autobiography*. This is likely to have been the case if the story was a later fabrication, or if it represented an aspect of himself that Sulla did not wish to promote.⁹² Even if this were true, however, and Sulla had consulted Delphi but decided not to mention it in his *Autobiography*, it is nevertheless probable that an extremely unusual consultation of the Delphic oracle in this period would have been mentioned elsewhere, and that Plutarch, who had a particular interest in the history of the sanctuary where he was himself a priest⁹³ and who paid special attention to the stories of Sulla's interactions with the gods, would have come across this story.⁹⁴ Plutarch's decision not to mention the story of Sulla's alleged Delphic consultation must, therefore, be for one of three reasons: the consultation was of an oracular centre other than Delphi, the story was historically accurate but not included in the *Autobiography*, or the story was a fabrication.

If the reason for the story's absence in Plutarch was that the consultation was of an oracular centre other than Delphi, there are a number of possible candidates for the true location. Sulla is known to have visited other oracular centres; he rebuilt the sanctuary of Fortuna at Praeneste, and he claimed in his *Autobiography* to have received important information from the oracle of Trophonius at Lebadeia.⁹⁵ It has been suggested that Lebadeia might have been the source of the oracular response, and that this might have been the reason why Plutarch was less interested in recording it.⁹⁶ However, this theory fails to account for Plutarch's decision to record an oracular proclamation from Lebadeia which he had found in the *Autobiography*. There is no reason to suggest that Plutarch would have recorded the story of the consultation that led to the dedication of the axe if and only if it was Delphic in origin. It is clear that, whether or not it came from Delphi, this was not the reason for the story's absence from Plutarch.

⁹² Marinoni (1987) 217-219.

⁹³ Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* 7.2.1 = *Mor.* 700e.

⁹⁴ Plutarch did not, of course, include all of the instances in which Sulla reported his interactions with the gods in his *Autobiography*, so it is not necessarily troubling to find the presence of a supernatural event in the tradition that seems to have come from the *Autobiography* but is absent from Plutarch's account. Its absence is surprising, since it apparently concerned Delphi.

⁹⁵ Praeneste: Santangelo (2007a) 137-146, with bibliography. Lebadeia: Plut. *Sull.* 17.1-2; F16P.

⁹⁶ Marinoni (1987) 219.

The second possibility, that the story of the Delphic consultation and dedication at Aphrodisias was historically accurate but not included in the *Autobiography*, was posited by Marinoni.⁹⁷ If this was the case, then some explanation needs to be found for Sulla's decision not to recount the story. Marinoni's suggestion, that Sulla omitted the incident because he considered it detrimental to the image he was building of himself, does not stand up to scrutiny. There are many details in the story that touch upon themes well established within Sulla's self-representation. The action is inspired by a dream and confirmed by the consultation of religious experts; the relationship between Greece and Rome is couched in terms that refer to Rome's legendary ancestor Aeneas; Aphrodite is associated with Ares, just as in the inscription on the monument erected after the battle of Chaeronea.⁹⁸ Moreover, there is no detail in Appian's account that would be out of place within Sulla's self-representation strategy, and there is little to suggest any criticism or negative portrayal of Sulla. Only one aspect of the story might have opened Sulla up to opprobrium. In the oracular response, Sulla was not only instructed to send the axe to Aphrodisias, but to make yearly gifts to all the gods, and not to forget to make contributions to Delphi. It is possible that, if the incidents really happened, Sulla might not have wished to draw attention to his somewhat problematic relationship with this sanctuary. Although it is not made explicit, it is possible that the instruction to send gifts to Delphi was at least in part motivated by Sulla having taken Delphi's treasures during the Mithridatic War, as part of an attempt by Delphi to regain some of the resources that they had lost.⁹⁹ If this was the case, then it could potentially have played some role in Sulla's decision to leave out the events. On the other hand, there is no reason to believe that Sulla did not discuss his other, more problematic dealings with Delphi, and if he dealt with the removal of Delphi's treasures and the reparations with the Theban lands, it is implausible that this much less conspicuous reference to Sulla's actions at Delphi would have led him to omit this story.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Marinoni (1987) 219.

⁹⁸ On the dream and on the description of Aphrodite see below, and the commentary on F15P.

⁹⁹ Plut. *Sull.* 12.4-5 and 19.6; see below. This would date the oracular consultation to between the seizing of Delphi's treasures and the reparations he made with land taken from Thebes. It has also been suggested that it took place as soon as Sulla arrived in Greece, or on his journey to Cilicia. See Balsdon (1951) 8.

¹⁰⁰ It is also unclear whether Sulla's actions at Delphi would have been perceived as negatively as has been suggested in the past. He was certainly willing to make it well known that he used to carry with him a golden image of Apollo, apparently taken from or given by Delphi. See Plut. *Sull.* 29.6, which has been taken by some to imply a

The final possibility, that the entire story was a fabrication by Sulla himself or by another writer, is more plausible, and has not yet received sufficient scholarly scrutiny. The argument that the story was falsely attributed to Sulla or to this period by another writer, and not Sulla himself, rests largely on the identification of the γραφή mentioned by Appian. Marinoni argued that this appears to have been a source unknown to Plutarch, and therefore not the *Autobiography*.¹⁰¹ It is important to consider Appian's source citation, however. Appian mentions the γραφή for the information that Sulla was called *Epaphroditos* by decree of the Senate: ἤδη δέ που γραφῆ περιέτυχον ἡγουμένη τὸν Σύλλαν Ἐπαφρόδιτον ἐν τῷδε τῷ ψηφίσματι ἀναγραφῆναι.¹⁰² After discussing the meaning of *Epaphroditos*, and comparing it to *Faustus* (which he seemed to think was another name taken by Sulla), Appian then moves on to talk about the oracle: ἔστι δ' ὅπου καὶ χρησμὸς αὐτῷ δοθείς ἐβεβαίον τάδε σκεπτομένῳ τὰ μέλλοντα.¹⁰³ The phrase ἔστι δ' ὅπου acts as a clear marker that, although the topic under discussion has not changed, namely Sulla's *cognomina* and *Epaphroditos* in particular, the oracular response is not directly related to the preceding information. It indicates a shift to the next piece of evidence that Appian is considering in his discussion and, as such, there is no indication that it was also taken from the γραφή. This means that, although it is unlikely that Sulla said in the *Autobiography* that the name of *Epaphroditos* was given to him by senatorial decree,¹⁰⁴ and thus unlikely that the γραφή was the *Autobiography*, it is still possible for the text of the oracular response to have been taken from Sulla. Whatever the source referred to by Appian as the γραφή, it was not the source of the story of the oracular response. Once this has been established, there is no further evidence for Appian having taken the story from any source other than Sulla himself. Other than Plutarch's omission of the incidents, there is no further basis on which to argue that Sulla did not talk about the Aphrodisias dedication. It is suggested below that the story may have been a fabrication; if this was the case, it originated in Sulla's self-representation and, as shall become clear, Plutarch's omission is no proof that Sulla did not talk about the events in his *Autobiography*.

genuine belief in the Pythian Apollo: Bouché-Leclercq (1879) 676. See the commentary on F15P for Sulla's treatment of Delphi.

¹⁰¹ Marinoni (1987) 217-218.

¹⁰² App. *BC*. 1.97.

¹⁰³ App. *BC*. 1.97.

¹⁰⁴ It is highly unlikely that any such decree was ever made; see the Conclusion for Sulla's *cognomina*.

The key to solving this problem, therefore, lies in recognising the inconsistencies between the two sections of Appian's narrative. After describing the oracular response, Appian then states that Sulla really did send a golden crown and an axe to Aphrodisias: ἔπεμψε δὲ καὶ στέφανον χρύσειον καὶ πέλεκυν, ἐπιγράψας τάδε. The inscription which follows, however, differs in several important ways from the instructions in the oracular response. While Sulla was instructed to send an axe, he in fact sent both an axe and a golden crown. Moreover, within the inscription, Sulla stated why he had sent these gifts: he has seen Aphrodite fighting alongside him in a dream. There is no mention of a Delphic consultation, or of any stage in between having had the dream, and having decided to send the dedications. What Appian records, therefore, may in fact be two distinct pieces of evidence. Once this is established, it may be posited either that Appian took two distinct elements and conflated them into one story, or that both the response and the dedications were included in the *Autobiography*, but the response was the result of Sullan fabrication. The oracular response appears unconnected to the succeeding gifts, contains a large number of vocabulary choices found in no other Delphic response, and was omitted by Plutarch. The most likely candidate for the fabrication of the response is surely Sulla himself, in the composition of his *Autobiography*.¹⁰⁵

The omission of the information is therefore likely to have been Plutarch's choice. There are two potential reasons for this; either Plutarch thought that the response was a fabrication, or he thought that it did not fit with his presentation of Sulla's dealings with Delphi. Plutarch was certainly interested in establishing a clear picture of Sulla's dealings with Delphi, recording Sulla's decision to take money from the temple during the Mithridatic War, and his subsequent compensation with lands taken from Thebes.¹⁰⁶ As part of this account, Plutarch records a minor incident which in fact reveals much about Sulla's attitude to the sanctuary, and indeed to religious matters in general. Caphis, a Phocian sent by Sulla to Delphi to seize the sanctuary's treasures, was told by the Amphictyons that they had heard Apollo's *kithara* sounding in the inner sanctuary.¹⁰⁷ Caphis apparently believed their tale, and wrote to report this to Sulla. Sulla replied with an alternative interpretation of the omen: that the noise was an

¹⁰⁵ Contrary to what is usually argued in this thesis. See the Introduction for Sulla's mendacity and truthfulness in the *Autobiography*.

¹⁰⁶ Plut. *Sull.* 12.4-5 and 19.6.

¹⁰⁷ Jones (1971) 41-42 has suggested that this story may have piqued Plutarch's interest since one of his closest associates came from the same Phocian town, Soclarus, and may even have been descended from Caphis.

indication of the god's joy, not anger, which signified that Apollo was glad to give his treasures.¹⁰⁸ Although at first glance this appears to be an instruction, with a hint of a rebuke, from Sulla to one of his followers, another interpretation is possible. Sulla was told that the religious experts at Delphi had experienced an omen, which they, who were uniquely qualified to comment on such things, took as an indication of the god's anger. He rejected their authority, however, and imposed his own view of the matter. Despite not having heard the *kithara* himself, and despite knowing that the priests in question were experts, he nevertheless stated that his own interpretation was the correct one, and that Caphis (and, implicitly, the priests at Delphi) had to bow to his superior authority in religious matters such as this. This is not the attitude of a man who thought that Delphi was a sanctuary to be taken seriously. Although it is possible that Sulla's attitudes towards the cult at Delphi changed during over time, the rejection of the religious authority of the Delphic priests displays a stark difference from the apparently appropriate and correct behaviour acknowledged in the response. It is possible that, when Plutarch came across a passage of the *Autobiography* narrating the Delphic consultation mentioned in Appian, he decided not to include the story since it did not tally with the picture he was creating of Sulla as a man who rejected the authority of the priests at Delphi and had no concern for their desire not to lose their treasures to Sulla's war effort.

On the other hand, it is also possible that Plutarch decided to omit the story because he knew, from his privileged position as a priest at Delphi, that the story was false: a later fabrication, probably at the hand of Sulla himself, and possibly no earlier than in the composition of his *Autobiography*. The oracular response in Appian is written in elegant Greek, but it displays a range of features (particularly vocabulary choices), that have been found in no other Delphic response.¹⁰⁹ Sulla was widely recognised for his skills in the Greek language, and it is possible that he composed the response recorded in Appian, as part of an attempt to remove from himself blame for his treatment of Delphi; it is still possible that he had the dream mentioned in this dedicatory inscription, and that he consulted religious experts in order to determine its meaning, but that he added the Delphic response when composing the *Autobiography*. If Plutarch read such an account, he would no doubt have been aware that Sulla did not

¹⁰⁸ Plut. *Sull.* 12.4-5.

¹⁰⁹ If the response was written by Sulla, a non-native (although competent) speaker, this might explain the extremely unusual occurrence of *περιμήκετος* to refer to a city. Marinoni (1987) 207.

consult Delphi; this would be easy to ascertain for a priest of Delphi, either from a written record or from an oral tradition of the events in question among his fellow priests. Since there are no other known Delphic consultations by Romans in this period, it is likely that the story, if true, would have been notable, and thus mentioned in Delphi's own records. Moreover, if Plutarch knew that the first part of the story was untrue, he might have assumed that the second part, the dedications at Aphrodisias, was also false, which might explain Plutarch's decision to omit all of the episode, rather than just the reference to Delphi.

This interpretation of the story preserved in Appian, which argues that Sulla had invented a Delphic response and presented it in his *Autobiography* alongside the genuine details of a dedication at Aphrodisias, requires Sulla to have been willing to create such fabrications in his literary work. It is a common criticism of Sulla's *Autobiography* that it was full of such fictional tales; Sulla is accused of mendacity by Lewis and Bates, among others.¹¹⁰ It is argued in this thesis that such criticism is largely unfounded or, rather, that we have insufficient evidence to make such claims about a work of which so little survives, and that resorting easily to this type of argument is unwise. The fragments that have survived do not, on the whole, support these accusations, and, despite a lack of significant proof, a number of criticisms of mendacity in Sulla's work have been put forward by a number of scholars. It is much more important to ask deeper questions concerning Sulla's literary and historiographical choices, rather than simply stating that he was either being truthful, or not.¹¹¹ In fact, although the evidence for the fabrication here is substantial, it is far from conclusive. This discussion has illustrated, however, that Plutarch's omission of this story is a major problem in our interpretation of the story preserved in Appian, and that although it is a strong possibility that Sulla had fabricated the oracular response in the *Autobiography*, this may not be determined with absolute certainty.

It is thus likely that the two pieces of information recorded by Appian were presented together in Sulla's *Autobiography*, one historically accurate, and one fabricated at a later date in order to better suit Sulla's purposes in his self-representation strategy. This means that the dream referred to in Appian's report of the inscription at Aphrodisias was included in the *Autobiography*. This dream of a goddess went even

¹¹⁰ Lewis (1991a) 511: "Sulla's unhesitating mendacity"; Bates (1983) 226-361: chapter entitled "Sulla Mendax".

¹¹¹ See the discussion of this point in the Conclusion.

further than the earlier dream of Ma-Bellona. In the latter, Sulla was helped by the goddess, who gave him the weapon and told him whom to strike. In the dream of Aphrodite, however, he envisaged the goddess actually fighting on his side, and striking down his enemies. This was an astonishing and exceptional claim for Sulla to make, and, as Kragelund points out, was alien to the way in which a Roman commander usually presented himself.¹¹² The dream of Aphrodite is a far cry from Sulla's more cautious and measured connections with the goddess in the carefully thought out dedication of the victory monument at Chaeronea and, although it has been suggested that the dedication at Aphrodisias was sent at the same time as the erection of the Chaeronea trophy, immediately after the battle, the recurrent presence of the same goddess does not necessarily imply that they occurred more or less simultaneously, even though they were both connected with Ares.¹¹³

Indeed, while the Aphrodite on the Chaeronea trophy appears to have stood for Venus and represented one aspect of the relationship between Greece and Rome, and this was referred to in the oracular response that led to the dedication at Aphrodisias, the Aphrodite that appeared to Sulla was a highly unusual manifestation. She was said to be armed, and to have taken part in the fighting, and to some extent Sulla's dedication of a *πέλεκυς* plays into this image. Although this does occur briefly in the *Iliad*,¹¹⁴ warlike qualities and accoutrements were not often attributed to her cult practice, and while this dream and inscription have been interpreted to signify that the Aphrodite of Aphrodisias was an armed goddess, there is no other evidence to support such a claim. It is true that the doubled headed axe was traditionally associated with a number of cults in Caria and Crete, which might be taken as the inspiration for Sulla's dedication if he had been prompted to make a dedication to this goddess having come across her cult while governor of Cilicia.¹¹⁵ There is simply not enough evidence, however, to determine whether the armed Aphrodite was mentioned since she was the form of the goddess found at Aphrodisias, or whether this was a personal interpretation of the goddess, as

¹¹² Kragelund (2001) 93.

¹¹³ Gabba (1958) 267; Santangelo (2007a) 208. At Chaeronea, the names of Aphrodite and Ares appeared together, while in the dream Aphrodite was said to be wearing Ares' weapons.

¹¹⁴ Aphrodite was wounded in battle in Hom. *Il.* 5.334-342. At 5.428-430 Zeus advises Aphrodite that she should not concern herself with the affairs of war, but leave them to Ares and Athena.

¹¹⁵ Vanschoonwinkel (2004).

seen by Sulla in his dream; there is nothing in the oracular response to suggest Aphrodite in any guise other than her role as the ancestress of the Roman race.¹¹⁶

Sulla may not have been as fervent in his attitude towards Venus/Aphrodite as some have claimed, but he does seem to have shown a consistent tendency – when she does appear – of referring to her in her guise as ancestress of the Romans, and placing himself implicitly or explicitly in the role not of Sulla the individual, but Sulla the Roman magistrate.¹¹⁷ It is certainly not possible to state, as Balsdon did, that this story is evidence of a Sullan cult of Aphrodite in the East.¹¹⁸ This passage of Appian is the first occasion on which Aphrodisias occurs in the literary record. It is unclear how prominent the cult had been before this date, but given the sanctuary’s geographical remoteness and isolation and, at that stage, small size, it is unlikely that it was widely known.¹¹⁹ Laumonier argued that Sulla’s dedication implied that the sanctuary had gained a large following by this date,¹²⁰ while Schilling suggested that the Delphic oracle instructing Sulla to make the offering contained only what Delphi already knew Sulla wished to be told.¹²¹ Reynolds has posited that, if the Aphrodite described in Sulla’s dream was the usual representation of the goddess at Aphrodisias, then Sulla must have heard of the cult during his governorship in nearby Cilicia in the 90s.¹²²

The origins of the decision to send the dedications to Aphrodisias are, however, more likely to be found in the political sphere. During the Mithridatic War, Caria had shown itself to be comprehensively loyal to Rome.¹²³ The *senatus consultum* from Stratoniceia, for example, mentions the role that the city had played in resisting Mithridates.¹²⁴ The temple frieze in the sanctuary at Stratoniceia, portraying an Amazon

¹¹⁶ App. *BC*. 1.97. *πείθεό μοι, Ῥωμαῖε. Κράτος μέγα Κύπρις ἔδωκεν Αἰνείου γενεῆ μεμελημένη.*

¹¹⁷ Santangelo (2007a) 199-213.

¹¹⁸ Balsdon (1951) 8. See the commentary on F15P below.

¹¹⁹ Reynolds (1982) 3. Santangelo (2007a) 50 has suggested that this episode reveals that Aphrodisias must have been rich enough to be able to afford to send envoys to “Sulla and/or Delphi”.

¹²⁰ Laumonier (1958) 480-483.

¹²¹ Schilling (1954) 281-285.

¹²² Reynolds (1982) 3.

¹²³ For Rome’s relationship with Asia Minor during and after the Mithridatic War see Magie (1950) 1.199-258; Weinstock (1955) 187 and Santangelo (2007a) 50-66.

¹²⁴ *RDGE* 18. As with Aphrodisias, Stratoniceia’s relationship with Rome seems to have been strengthened by the importance of its sanctuary; it certainly played a significant role in Roman expressions of gratitude, since the inscription records that *asylia* was granted to the sanctuary of Hekate Lagina; see Santangelo (2007a) 51-53.

and a warrior shaking hands, arguably symbolizes the relationship between the city and Rome.¹²⁵ Aphrodisias famously had the proconsul Q. Oppius as its patron, as attested by a letter that he sent to Plarasa and Aphrodisias after the end of the Mithridatic War, thanking them for their assistance in the siege of Laodiceia, and declaring that he would assist the cities wherever possible and ensure that Rome was aware of the help they had provided.¹²⁶ Moreover, epigraphic evidence suggests that Sulla had at least some Carians in his retinue while in Greece. An inscription found at Delphi records Hermias, a Stratoniceian, who had persuaded him not to sack the Phocian city of Daulis, revealing the presence of a Carian at Delphi in this period – perhaps an additional reason for the naming of the sanctuary in the Delphic response.¹²⁷ It is therefore likely that Sulla’s decision to send the dedication to the sanctuary at Aphrodisias was not motivated by a desire to encourage a Sullan cult of Aphrodite there, but undertaken for political reasons, in order to strengthen the ties between Rome and this area of Asia Minor that had played such an important role in resisting Mithridates during the war, and whose loyalty Rome could not afford to lose to the Pontic king, due to the continuing instability in the region even after the end of the war.

Sulla reported one further dream in his *Autobiography*, at its very close. This dream, in which his deceased son appeared to him, foretold his death, and told him not to be concerned about dying but to come peacefully to join himself and his mother Metella, was added to the *Autobiography* shortly before he died.¹²⁸ Appian too recounts a dream that Sulla apparently had shortly before his death in which Sulla was again called to death, but by ὁ δαίμων.¹²⁹ While there are some similarities between the two stories, and it has been suggested that they might refer to the same event, this does not appear to be the case.¹³⁰ Instead, it seems that there were two divergent traditions on the last dreams of Sulla. Whether or not Sulla had one such dream or two, it is notable that the importance that he placed on such messages lasted until his deathbed, and it seems

¹²⁵ Santangelo (2007a) 52.

¹²⁶ Q. Oppius, pr. 89: *MRR* 1.42. Eilers (2002) 23-5, 241-2.

¹²⁷ *SEG* 1.175. Santangelo (2007a) 52: “The loyalty of Stratonicea must have been very strong indeed, and its relationship with Rome quite exceptional, if the advice of one of its citizens could be received so well by Sulla.”

¹²⁸ Plut. *Sull.* 37.1-2 = F21P.

¹²⁹ App. *BC* 1.105.

¹³⁰ Giardina (2009) argues that the dreams refer not to the end of Sulla’s life but of his political career, and his decision to give up the dictatorship at the end of 81.

that Sulla took the time to mention them while finishing his *Autobiography* in the days between these dreams and his death.¹³¹

A common element of the dreams said to have been dreamt by Sulla is that they happened at points of crisis. It has been argued that dreams that were held to have some significance for the dreamer tended to happen at moments of anxiety.¹³² Interpreting such dreams as an indicator of anxiety is, however, risky, since we know little of Sulla's state of mind. If the reporting of a dream might have significant political benefits, then the state of mind of the dreamer is surely largely irrelevant. We are certainly unable to use the occurrence of numerous dreams in Sulla's *Autobiography* and Plutarch's *Life* as evidence that on each occasion Sulla was anxious.¹³³ It is better to focus on the dramatic circumstances in which the dreams were narrated: they tend to occur at critical moments, turning points in the narrative, and before important decisions. This does not necessarily mean that we have to interpret the dreams as inspired by anxiety. Rather, in Sulla's lifetime at least, the dreams occur when the dreamer is on the verge of making an important decision, and represent the favour that was shown to him by the gods, since they had chosen to intervene in order to guide the dreamer towards the right choices. If epiphany dreams were thought to have been an expression of anxiety and uncertainty, then it would be unclear why Sulla would make them the object of such intense focus in the *Autobiography*. If we take them as proof of the acknowledgement on the part of the gods of the favour in which they held the dreamer, it is apparent that Sulla would wish to encourage such associations. Plutarch's attitude towards dreams is famously difficult to pin down, since he displays both "an implicit faith in the veracity of dreams" and a "tendency to take great liberties when reporting them".¹³⁴ It has even been argued that Plutarch mentions Sulla's advice to Lucullus on two occasions since he was himself in sympathy with the conclusion that epiphany dreams were of the utmost reliability.¹³⁵

By referring constantly and consistently to his dreams, Sulla brought dreams into the realm of mainstream public religion for the first time. Where earlier figures had occasionally mentioned and used dreams in their self-representation, he made them the

¹³¹ Pliny also refers to Sulla's *supremum somnium*: Pliny, *NH*. 7.138. For a full discussion of the problem of Sulla's final dream(s), see commentary on F21P below.

¹³² Brenk (1975) 343.

¹³³ Keaveney (1983a) argued that Sulla's dreams indicated anxiety.

¹³⁴ Brenk (1975) 347.

¹³⁵ Brenk (1975) 347-348.

cornerstone of his relationship with the divine, as may be determined from the prominent location of his advice to Lucullus in the very dedication of the *Autobiography*. The dreams either featured the gods directly, or were confirmed to have been divinely inspired by their outcomes. The relationship that this implies between Sulla and the gods was much closer, much more personal than had been seen before. It is unclear exactly how these dreams were viewed by Sulla's contemporary audience. Since dreams were outside the conventional practice of Roman religion, and played no role in the functioning of the state except under extraordinary circumstances, when Sulla referred to them frequently while in his public capacity as a Roman magistrate, we do not know how his senatorial colleagues would have reacted. It has been suggested that the rank and file of Sulla's troops would have been more likely to believe (or accept) these stories, but it was not these people who formed the *Autobiography's* readership.¹³⁶ Although many scholars have argued that there was nothing out of the ordinary in Sulla's approach to religious matters, but that they were simply the usual convictions and practices of the Roman state cult in this period, the frequency with which Sulla not only mentioned his dreams, but used them as important influences for his public acts proves that this was not the case. Sulla's presentation of his religious attitudes, no matter what he actually thought or believed, strayed very far indeed from the established practices.¹³⁷ The importance which he placed on his dreams, and which the reader of his *Autobiography* encountered right from the start, set him apart from his peers. Even if during his active political career Sulla placed less emphasis on the role of these dreams, and even if he did not place them in such prominent focus at the time when they were said to have occurred, the prevalence of the stories of these dreams in the traditions on Sulla's life make it clear that this was a man whom the gods favoured, whose special support was manifested in the dreams through which they communicated. The gods did not merely assist Sulla in his actions but granted him foreknowledge of events when he needed it. And since this came directly from τὸ δαιμόνιον, it was the most secure form of communication between himself and the divine.

(e) Plut. *Sull.* 6.6-7: ἐκπεμπομένου δὲ αὐτοῦ μετὰ δυνάμεως... μετὰ πράξεις καλὰς οὔτω καὶ μεγάλας. = F15S

¹³⁶ Harris (2009) 179-180 with 180 n. 333.

¹³⁷ Contrary to the arguments that Sulla's religious thought was standard for his age in Ericsson (1943) 80; Keaveney (1983a) 74; Behr (1993) 105. See Gildenhard (2011) 256.

This episode, which seems to have taken place in 90 BC, has presented modern scholars with considerable problems.¹³⁸ In particular, the name of the location of the prodigy is difficult to establish. The manuscripts record either Λαβέρνην or Λαβέρνιν in this sentence, but the identification of this site has proven problematic.¹³⁹ ‘Laverna’ is not the exact name of any known place, but of a Roman goddess, the goddess of thieves. There are two main cult sites that have connections with Laverna: a *lucus* on the Via Salaria, and a Porta Lavernalis in Rome.¹⁴⁰ Neither of these would be a likely location for a prodigy such as is recorded at this juncture, and the cult of Laverna is not one with which a prominent politician in a position such as Sulla’s would wish make a special effort to associate himself publically. The cult of Laverna was for the most part practised by thieves, who were even called *laverniones* in honour of the goddess.¹⁴¹ Moreover, neither of those sites is elsewhere referred to simply with the name of the goddess, and neither of these is in the Samnite territories, which is where other sources suggest the prodigy took place.

These difficulties have led to a number of suggestions for alternative readings, inspired by the presence of references to a very similar event, probably the same, in two authors in the Livian tradition: Orosius and Julius Obsequens both state that the incident took place in the previous year, 91 BC. Orosius states that it was *in Samnitibus*, while Julius Obsequens records the toponym *Aenaria*.¹⁴² However, Aenaria, an island at the North of the Bay of Naples (modern Ischia), was not *in Samnitibus*. An alternative reading has been suggested of *Aenariae* as *Aeserniae*, the name of a Latin colony in Samnium which did have a significant role in the Social War, and where Sulla is known to have served while under L. Julius Caesar.¹⁴³ However, such a drastic emendation of Λαβέρνην to Αἰσερνίαν is not an attractive suggestion, particularly since it is not necessary. The existence of a town in Samnium named Lavernae has been proven by an

¹³⁸ The dating is assumed from Plutarch’s statement that the prodigy occurred ἐκπεπομένου δὲ αὐτοῦ μετὰ δυνάμεως εἰς τὸν συμμαχικὸν πόλεμον. This places it in 90 BC when Sulla was serving under L. Iulius Caesar (*cos.* 90): App. *BC.*1.40; Cic. *Font.* 43. *MRR* 2.25, 29.

¹³⁹ Bertinelli (1997) 317.

¹⁴⁰ Chassignet (2004) 243; *FRH* 3.294. *Lucus*: *LTUR* 3.188. *Porta*: *LTUR* 3.329.

¹⁴¹ *TLL* 7.2.1047.

¹⁴² Oros. 5.18.5: *In Samnitibus vastissimo terrae hiatus flamma prorupit et usque in caelum extendi visa est.* Obs. 114: *Aenariae terrae hiatus flamma exorta in caelum emicuit.*

¹⁴³ Peter (1914) 1.198; Flacelière (1971) 330-1; Chassignet (2004) 243. Sulla at Aesernia: Front. *Strat.* 1.5.17; Oros. 5.18.16.

inscription found near the modern town of Prezza, which attests to this toponym.¹⁴⁴ It is much more sensible to assume that the prodigy occurred at Lavernae, and that Livy either recorded the date incorrectly or, as Smith suggested, that Sulla moved the event to 91 in his re-telling, so that it would be seen to have taken place when he was in active command,¹⁴⁵ since this was a more suitable dating considering his interpretation of the predictions that were made as a result of the portent.

The prodigy itself seems to have been a remarkable event: first, a chasm opened up in the earth. Then, from the chasm, a large column of fire poured out, reaching up towards the sky. Fire was a common feature of prodigies, and certain divinatory practices relied entirely on the observation of fire and flames. Chief among these were the closely connected practices of pyromancy and empyromancy.¹⁴⁶ When fires spontaneously appeared, or performed in a way that was unexpected or inexplicable, then they might be seen as a portent. The spontaneous opening of a chasm in the ground, and an outpouring of fire, would certainly be seen as the manifestation of a message from the gods, which religious experts would have to interpret. In this case, the prodigy was interpreted by τῶς μάντις, a term habitually used by Plutarch to refer to the *haruspices*, who are therefore likely to have been the interpreters here, although we may not be certain that this was the case. There are a number of instances illustrating Sulla's connection with haruspicy; he was known to have taken one particular haruspex with him on campaign and, while it was not uncommon for a haruspex to travel with a commander, this was had the unusual honour of being known and referred to by his own name, Gaius Postumius.¹⁴⁷

Regardless of who this body of religious experts were, their interpretation of the prophecy was of great importance to Sulla. They declared that the fire foretold that a man who was outstanding in his courage and appearance would seize power and free the

¹⁴⁴ *CIL* 9.3138; *ILLRP* 57. Keaveney's suggestion, that the manuscripts are correct and simply refer to an otherwise unknown sanctuary of Laverna, may be rejected, given the existence of Lavernae. Lavernae may have been named for the goddess, and had a sanctuary there; the scant epigraphic evidence only records honours for Bona Dea, although that is inconclusive. Keaveney (1983a) 52 n. 42, 55.

¹⁴⁵ *FRH* 3.294.

¹⁴⁶ A distinction was not always drawn between these two; where a distinction did exist, it centred on the focus of the two practices. Empyromancy chiefly concerned the movements and actions of objects placed into flames, and the observation of the smoke, while pyromancy more properly concerned the observation of the flames themselves. Bouché-Leclercq (1879) 142-143.

¹⁴⁷ See the commentary on F9P.

city from its current disorder. Sulla decided that this prophecy referred to himself, since his unusual blonde hair (κόμην χρυσοπόν) gave him a striking appearance, and his bravery had been proven by his fine and great achievements (πράξεις καλάς... και μεγάλας).¹⁴⁸ Plutarch discusses Sulla's appearance on two occasions. It is clear that Sulla was not necessarily an attractive man, but one with a striking appearance. He famously had a red and blotchy face, which made him the object of ridicule. One of the suggested derivations of his *cognomen* was that it referred to his complexion, despite him not being the first Sulla to bear the name. When Sulla was besieging Athens, it is recorded that he was mocked by those on the walls with the line συκάμινόν ἐσθ' ὁ Σύλλας ἀλφίτῳ πεπασμένον, "Sulla is a mulberry sprinkled with barley".¹⁴⁹ This, combined with his piercing grey eyes and his golden hair, could certainly be argued to give him an appearance that was διάφορος. It is perhaps unexpected that Sulla would have taken the time to record this story, in which his unusual appearance was emphasized. However, while the reference may have reminded the reader of the mockery that was leveled at Sulla on account of his looks, the potential political capital of the prophecy here was apparently significant enough to convince Sulla to include the incident.

At this stage in his career, in the late nineties, Sulla was well known and had held both the praetorship and a governorship in Cilicia. During his governorship he had met with Orobazus and received another startling prophecy from a Chaldaean seer in the Parthian's retinue who, after conducting a physiognomical examination of Sulla, declared that he must become the greatest of men, and that he was amazed that Sulla could bear not being the first among men.¹⁵⁰ It is clear that this earlier episode played an important part in the way that Sulla conceived his future career. Even from this relatively early stage, before Sulla stood for the consulship, he had been assured that he would hold this power. It is unlikely that it was at this stage interpreted as a reference to the dictatorship which Sulla would later hold. However, Sulla's meeting with Orobazus would certainly have appeared in the *Autobiography*, and it is possible that Plutarch's account draws on that source, particularly since he mentions that the meeting was

¹⁴⁸ Plut. *Sull.* 6.7.

¹⁴⁹ Plut. *Sull.* 2.1. See commentary on F2P for a discussion of Sulla's *cognomen*.

¹⁵⁰ Plut. *Sull.* 5.5-6: εἰπεῖν ὡς ἀναγκαῖον εἶη τοῦτον τὸν ἄνδρα μέγιστον γενέσθαι, θαυμάζειν δὲ καὶ νῦν πῶς ἀνέχεται μὴ πρῶτος ὄν ἀπάντων.

thought to have been part of Sulla's good fortune.¹⁵¹ Now, at the start of the Social War a few years later, Sulla had continued to show himself to be a skilled military leader, although he was serving under others.¹⁵² The occurrence of this second prophecy, confirming the earlier pronouncement, could be very valuable to Sulla's public image. Although it was possible to be skeptical about a non-Roman ritual performed a long way from Rome and by someone in the retinue of a Parthian king, a striking prodigy that occurred very close to Rome itself was harder to ignore.¹⁵³ And its interpretation added to Sulla's by now established conception of himself as a man who must become the first among his contemporaries.¹⁵⁴ When it came to the *Autobiography*, Sulla's readers would know how his career progressed, and that these predictions had indeed turned out to be true. By including them in his writing, Sulla could thus strengthen his central contention: that throughout his life he had enjoyed the special favour of the gods, and that it was inevitable that a man with such *felicitas* would become the most powerful in Rome.¹⁵⁵

(f) Plut. *Sull.* 6.7: ταῦτα μὲν οὖν περὶ τῆς θεϊότητος. = F15S

This short remark is used by Plutarch to draw a line under the digression in the *Life*, and return to his narration of Sulla's career. Since there are very many more references to the divine in the *Life of Sulla*, it is clear that the biographer believed that the examples included in the preceding passage were sufficient to outline and summarize his subject's attitudes towards religion and ἡ θεϊότης. Plutarch, who drew heavily on the *Autobiography* for Sulla's dealings with the gods and the divine, implies that the statements he had made were sufficient to summarise Sulla's 'beliefs'. Although this passage is relatively brief, therefore, it is possible to determine from this statement that F8P contains examples of the most important types of religious occurrences with which Sulla engaged, and that he presented in his *Autobiography*.

¹⁵¹ Plut. *Sull.* 5.4: ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦτο τῆς μεγάλης δοκεῖ Σύλλα τύχης γενέσθαι. See the discussion of this incident in F7P.

¹⁵² Probably L. Julius Caesar, see above.

¹⁵³ The exotic nature of the physiognomic ritual is emphasized in Plutarch's account: Plut. *Sull.* 5.5-6. Even the fact that it is described in full attests to its strangeness, since the biographer apparently did not expect his readers to be familiar with the process of a Chaldaean physiognomic examination.

¹⁵⁴ The use of the phrase ὡς ἀναγκαῖον is very unusual, since the concept of predestination and inescapable fate was alien to Roman religious practice. See the Conclusion for Sulla's innovative approach to religious matters in the *Autobiography*.

¹⁵⁵ For Sulla's use of prodigies to confirm and emphasize this point see also the commentary on F18P.

Since *felicitas*/τύχη, dreams, prodigies, and prophecies – the topics discussed in F8P – are indeed the themes that recur throughout the *Life of Sulla* (as well as in the other accounts of Sulla’s life), it seems reasonable that this statement of Plutarch’s implies that he has taken prominent examples of each of the key themes of Sulla’s attitude towards the divine.

F8P is therefore enormously valuable for attempts to reconstruct Sulla’s self-representation strategy, for it is within these categories that Sulla had decided to locate himself in his presentation of his own life. With the exception of dreams, these are central categories of religious experience and engagement of Roman state cult and, while Sulla may be seen to be an extreme example of an individual to whom religious phenomena occurred more frequently than any other and to whom the gods showed exceptional favour, this was expressed through the conventional religious channels. When it came to Sulla’s dreams, however, his statement to Lucullus that they should be trusted above all else is reflected in the frequency with which they recur throughout the stories of his life, and the account of it that he produced. Sulla seems to have maintained his controversial and unconventional attitude towards his dreams throughout the *Autobiography*, from the dedication to the final entry before his death. To a great extent, the frequency with which Sulla reports prophetic or divinely inspired dreams could also be seen to be an aspect of his *felicitas*. Sulla’s dreams were only seen as trustworthy because they revealed messages sent to him directly by τὸ δαιμόνιον; this, in turn, happened only because he was a man whom the gods favoured. Sulla’s decision to discuss his dreams made himself vulnerable to criticism, since, unlike other manifestations of divine communications in prodigies and omens, there was no way to verify their authenticity, or even the honesty of the one who experienced and then reported the dream. Since Sulla had chosen to portray himself as enjoying the special favour of the gods, however, he was uniquely placed to use dreams in his public life freely and regularly. Sulla Felix could trust in his dreams because they contained direct communications from the gods and, by expressing this idea through the conventional Roman concept of *felicitas*, Sulla could show himself to be extraordinary in a way that his peers and contemporaries would understand.

Commentary on F9P – Cic. *De Div.* 1.33.72 (= F17S, F9C)

As an example of conjectural divination, a section of Sulla's Historia is cited, in which a snake emerged from an altar while Sulla was sacrificing at Nola. Gaius Postumius, the haruspex, urged Sulla to march at once; Sulla followed his advice, and successfully captured the Samnite camp near Nola.

This fragment is found in Cicero's *De Divinatione*, and revolves around an anecdote that is cited by Quintus as an example of *coniectura*, a type of 'artificial' divination.¹ This episode seems to have been selected for several reasons: its illustration of *coniectura*, the similarity of its content to the preceding example, that of Calchas in Homer, in which a snake also features (see below), and the fact that Cicero was allegedly present when the episode took place.²

There has been some disagreement regarding the date of the incident.³ Quintus' insistence that Marcus was present when it occurred strongly suggests that it took place in 89, since Marcus Cicero served under Pompeius Strabo after Sulla's return to Rome to stand for the consulship.⁴ If, on the other hand, it had taken place in 88, then an

¹ Cic. *Div.* 1.72. Cicero distinguishes between natural divination, which was unskilled and untaught, and required no technical knowledge, and artificial divination, which was taught and studied. Cic. *Div.* 1.11: *duo sunt enim divinandi genera, quorum alterum artis est, alterum naturae. Coniectura* was the branch of artificial divination that concerned prodigies and portents for which there was no precedent or exact parallel: Wardle (2006) 165. On Cicero's choice and use of sources in the *De Divinatione* see Wardle (2006) 28-36.

² The naming system used in this commentary follows the convention established by Beard (1986) 33 n. 2, in which 'Cicero' refers to the author of the *De Divinatione*, and 'Marcus' to the character that appears in the dialogue.

³ Plutarch, Livy (omitting the detail of the snake), and Valerius Maximus place the incident in 88, during Sulla's consulship and immediately before his march on Rome, the date accepted by Smith in *FRH* 3.295, and Keaveney (2005) 48. Plut. *Sull.* 9.3; Livy frag. 19 = Aug. *Civ. Dei* 2.24; Val. Max. 1.6.4. Appian, however, states (*BC* 1.50) that the incident took place in 89, before Sulla had returned to Rome to stand for the consulship, the date accepted by *MRR* 2.36; Behr (1993) 17; Chassignet (2004) 243; Wardle (2006) 284. The Valerius passage bears striking verbal similarities to Cic. *Div.* 1.72. Valerius' use of Cicero is widely recognised, and it seems most likely that Valerius has taken the story from him, rather than separately from Sulla, although the latter possibility cannot be ruled out categorically: Helm (1940) 243-4. It is similarly possible that Valerius took this incident from Livy, and that Plutarch did too; this would imply that if 88 is the incorrect date, it originated in Livy and was merely adopted by later writers: Valgiglio (1975) 264 n. 48.

⁴ Cicero's military service under Sulla is confirmed by Plut. *Sull.* 3.2: μετέσχεν ὑπὸ Σύλλα περὶ τὸν Μαρσικὸν πόλεμον. Since this episode took place in 89, Cicero cannot

attractive parallel is set up between Sulla's preparations for his two marches on Rome, since he also received haruspical responses from Postumius in 83 at Tarentum, shortly after returning to Italy.⁵ However, it would be misleading to use this potential parallel as an argument for the placing of the incident described in this fragment in 88, since it is more likely to reflect a rhetorical or historiographical choice, rather than a historical coincidence.⁶

If Augustine is correct in his statement that Gaius Postumius was with Sulla in both 89/8 and 83, then it seems that he was in Sulla's retinue and that he had travelled with Sulla and the army for a long time. Although it was common practice to have a haruspex with an army and to consult him before major events, this implies that the connection between Sulla and Postumius was particularly strong.⁷ This may be taken as evidence that Sulla was interested in engaging with religious themes in his self-representation from a relatively early stage in his career, understanding the potential

have spent much time under Sulla, since the latter returned to Rome in this year to stand for the consulship of 88. See Mitchell (1979) 9. The absence of Cicero's name from Pompeius Strabo's decree of Asculum (*CIL* I² 709; *ILS* 8888) may suggest that Cicero was not with this army at the time, but there is no definitive evidence. See the discussion in Criniti (1970) 262-266.

⁵ *Aug. Civ. Dei.* 2.24; the favourable sacrifices at Tarentum are also reported at *Plut. Sull.* 27.3-4, without mention of Postumius.

⁶ That Marcus does not dispute Quintus' statement that he was present at the incident may be taken as proof that he was, indeed, present. Quintus frequently cites events at which Marcus had been present and witnessed things which may only be explained by genuine divination, or times at which Marcus had defended aspects of divination in his career. See for example, Quintus recounting a prophetic dream had by Marcus himself (*audivi equidem ex te ipso*) at *Div.* 1.59; this epiphany dream consisted of Marius appearing to Cicero and giving him encouragement. See commentary in Wardle (2006) 252-256.

⁷ Haruspicy in the late Republic and the relationship between haruspices and politics: Thulin (1906); Rawson (1978) 140 and *passim*; Rüpke (2008) 293-302; Torelli (2011) 137-144; Santangelo (2013) 84-114. It was relatively rare for an individual haruspex to be named. References would instead usually be made to 'the haruspices', without naming any individual members of that group. A notable exception to the usual anonymity of haruspices is Spurinna, who worked for Caesar. Spurinna seems to have acted in a different capacity however: while Postumius worked for Sulla while he was on campaign, as was customary, Spurinna worked in Rome, too. Moreover, where it is clear that Sulla mentioned divinatory responses and even named his haruspex in his *Autobiography*, Caesar does not mention a single haruspical response in the *Commentaries*, even though we may be sure that the correct sacrifices were carried out, according to custom. Spurinna: Haack (2006) 110-112. Postumius: Haack (2006) 99-101. The first instance in which a haruspex was referred to by name, and had a close relationship with a politician, was Herennius Siculus, who worked for C. Gracchus and committed suicide upon his death. *Val. Max.* 9.12.6; *Vell. Pat.* 2.7.2. Haack (2006) 61-63.

benefit to his public image of having a favourable interpreter by his side.⁸ This fragment is strongly reminiscent of Plut. *Sull.* 9.3, in which Sulla sacrifices near Nola during his march on Rome in 88, and Postumius declares in very strong terms that an attack would turn out well for Sulla. Although there are slight differences in the details of the passages, it seems clear not only that the Plutarch passage is discussing the same incident as this fragment, but also that we may safely surmise that Sulla's *Autobiography* was the source of that text also, given the fact that Postumius is referred to by name,⁹ and the attitude of the gods towards Sulla, displayed through the omens interpreted by Postumius.¹⁰ After examining the signs conveyed by the entrails (καταμαθὼν τὰ σημεῖα), Postumius does not merely tell Sulla that he should attack, but begs that he should be bound and taken prisoner, and even put to death if his prediction were to be proven false.¹¹ This suggests that there was no uncertainty about the omens, but that they were completely clear, and therefore also that the attitude of the gods towards Sulla at this juncture was absolutely positive. The sacrifice was apparently a routine one, designed to obtain *litatio* before a military engagement. It was therefore not an expiatory sacrifice in response to an unfavorable omen, but a conventional ritual, from which an extraordinary pronouncement was made.

Prodigies involving animals were far from uncommon in Republican Rome; monstrous births and animals eating one another are noted on many occasions.¹² Certain animals were associated solely with favourable, or unfavourable outcomes. Predators such as lions and wolves, were seen as unfavourable, while domestic and farm animals

⁸ Marastoni (2008) 331-2.

⁹ It was rare for haruspices to be named; their pronouncements would be attributed to 'a/the haruspex' or 'the haruspices'; see above.

¹⁰ Valgiglio (1975) 264 n. 48; Russo (2002) 294-5. Behr (1993) 58 n. 290 argues that there is no more need to equate the two victims than there is to accept Münzer's assertion ((1897) 157) of an intermediary source between Sulla and Cicero. Despite the close proximity of *Sull.* 9.3 to the Cicero fragment I have not treated it as a fragment due to the lack of citation. For the methodology employed for the identification of fragments in this thesis see the Introduction.

¹¹ The physical details here are apparently intended to create dramatic effect, and it is highly likely that they stem from an eyewitness account. It is possible that this was someone other than Sulla himself, although his *Autobiography* is the most likely source.

¹² The lists of Julius Obsequens are full of such prodigies ascribed to the Sullan period, including snakes: (47, 98 BC) *apud aedem Apollinis decemviris immolantibus caput iocineris non fuit, sacrificantibus anguis ad aram inventus*; as well as cattle (47, 98 BC); birds (50, 95 BC) and goats (44a, 101 BC), among many others.

such as sheep, cattle or goats were seen as favourable.¹³ Snakes, however, might be interpreted as favourable or unfavourable, depending on the context of their appearance and the decision of the haruspex.¹⁴ Two well-known examples of snake prodigies in recent history involved the Sempronii Gracchi, in both of which the appearance of the snakes heralds death and destruction. In 212, while Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus (*cos.* 215, 213) was conducting sacrifices before leaving Lucania, two snakes appeared and ate the liver of the victim.¹⁵ Taking the advice of the haruspices, Gracchus repeated the sacrifice, and twice more the snakes appeared and ate the liver, before escaping.¹⁶ The haruspices announced that this foretold a great danger for Gracchus, who was killed very soon afterwards.¹⁷ Another Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus (*cos.* 177, 163), the father of the tribunes, is said to have found two snakes in his house, one male and one female.¹⁸ On consulting haruspices in a private context, he was told that if he released

¹³ Animals appear in a number of favourable omens during Sulla's career; for example, two he-goats were seen fighting in battle formation before rising into the air and dispersing like smoke, near Mount Tifata in Campania: Plut. *Sull.* 27.4 = F18P. It has been argued that the snake prodigy was particularly important to Sulla, since it appears that Cicero alludes to him as such in his *Marius*, a fragment of which survives in *De Divinatione* 1.106; see Courtney (1993) 175-6. Wardle (2006) 364 suggests that the 'multi-coloured neck' (*varia... cervice*) is a reference to Sulla's 'prominent red facial disfigurement', the same interpretation as Pease (1923) 292, who claims that the snake has become a lucky sign to Sulla (*fausta que signa*), while Courtney suggests that the snake refers to the Sullans massacred by Marius. Sulla's facial redness: Plut. *Sull.* 2.1. However, the augural symbolism present is sufficient to mean that, as Wardle admits, an allegorical interpretation is not necessary. For an analysis of this symbolism see Krostenko (2000) 381-2; Krostenko argues that the snake could represent Sulla simply because it appears in F9P, but since a snake symbol appears nowhere else in surviving literature or iconography regarding Sulla, this is not a safe assumption.

¹⁴ Guittard (2009) 98-99. The majority of interpretations of snake prodigies recorded in our sources are negative but, as the Sullan example shows, the opposite was also possible.

¹⁵ Ti. Sempronius Ti. f. Ti. n. Gracchus: *MRR* 1.253-4.

¹⁶ The liver was, of course, the first place at which a haruspex would look, and the main organ on which unusual shapes or colourings would indicate divine favour or opposition. See Maggiani (1982); Van der Meer (1987); Jannot (2005) 18-21 on the model of a liver found near Piacenza.

¹⁷ Livy 25.16.1-4. Other snake prodigies that were taken to portend an unfavourable outcome include Livy 1.56.4 and Dio Cass. 58.7. In these cases the snake emerges from a column or statue, in much the same way in which Sulla's emerges from the altar. The reason for the wildly different interpretations is not clear from our sources. See Vigour (2001) 95, 213 and 312 (Suet. *Aug.* 94.4; Cass. Dio 44.1.2); 115 and 325 (Tac. *Ann.* 14.12.2); 117 (Justin 11.11.3); 133 (Cass. Dio 50.8.4); 270 and 347 (Cass. Dio 45.4-8); 279 and 397 (Tac. *Ann.* 4.58); 430 (Tac. *Ann.* 11.11.3; Suet. *Nero* 6.8) for discussion of more snake prodigies from the late Republican period onwards.

¹⁸ Ti. Sempronius P. f. Ti. n. Gracchus, father of Ti. Sempronius Gracchus (tr. pl. 133): *MRR* 1.397-8, 440.

the female snake, he would die, and if he released the male, his wife would die. He released the female, thus saving the life of his wife, and he died a few days later.¹⁹

However, snakes did not always herald doom; as in our Sullan example, snakes could also be interpreted as representing a positive outcome. The appearance of the snake in this fragment calls to mind the notable Homeric example, cited by Cicero immediately beforehand, in which the prophet Calchas gave his interpretation of the appearance of a snake during the Greek's sacrifices at Troy. The snake is said to have appeared from beneath or between an altar, and darted to the nearest plane tree, where it was found in the nest containing eight baby swallows. It ate the chicks, and then the mother, before being turned to stone by Zeus. Calchas interpreted this prodigy to mean that the war would last a long time, but that after nine years of fighting the Greek army would take Troy in the tenth.²⁰ A number of parallels are drawn between the Homeric and Sullan examples; in each case, the snakes appear during a routine sacrifice carried out in a military context, and they emerge from beneath the altar being used for the sacrifice.²¹ It seems that Cicero also draws a comparison between the role of Calchas and that of Postumius. However, the interpretation of the two omens is significantly different, since Calchas is able to predict the length of the war and its eventual outcome from the snake's behaviour, while Postumius gives little detail, but is emphatic that the snake's appearance foretold great success for Sulla.²² It is of course possible that Sulla drew a parallel between his own prodigy and the Homeric example of Calchas in his

¹⁹ Cic. *Div.* 1.36. The appearance of the snake in Gracchan and Sullan traditions shows that the animal was not associated particularly strongly with *optimates* or *populares*.

²⁰ Homer *Il.* 2.361-90. At *Div.* 1.72 Quintus gives only an outline of the legend: *ut apud Homerum Calchas, qui ex passerum numero belli Troiani annos auguratus est*. The episode recurs in greater detail in the response of Marcus at 2.63-4, where we learn the *passerum numerus* was in fact the number eaten by a serpent, *draco*, in a translation of the Homeric passage into Latin, apparently by Cicero (*ut nos otiosi convertimus*). Although Quintus does not refer to the serpent at 1.72, this was a well-known story from the *Iliad*, and we may suppose that the audience would be aware of the details.

²¹ There is to a certain extent a verbal echo with the Homeric phrase βωμοῦ ὑπαίξας. Pease (1923) 219 argued that it was due to this echo that Cicero decided upon the transition between the Homeric and Sullan examples.

²² Since Cicero does not claim that he is quoting Sulla directly, we may not conjecture that his choice of vocabulary reflects any such choice on the part of Sulla, although it is safe to say that he may be reflecting the essence of Sulla's message. The striking repetition of the prefix in *expeditionem exercitatem educeret* may, then, reflect emphasis of this point by Sulla, although Sulla's methods are now lost. Pease (1923) 219 argues convincingly that Cicero uses this expression in order to point out the connection between the actions of the snake and those demanded of the army, the one symbolizing the other.

Autobiography, or at the time of the prodigy, either explicitly, or in the way he narrated the story. If this was the case, Cicero must have found (if explicit) or noticed (if implicit) the association of the two events, and presented his version with a similarly strong connection.

It has been suggested that Cicero may not have used Sulla's *Autobiography*, since he did not consult Roman historians directly in the preparation of the *De Divinatione*, but preferred to use epitomes.²³ However, there is no mention in antiquity of an epitome of Sulla's work, and there is no need to posit on such scant evidence that the Sullan fragment may have come from an epitome of the *Autobiography*. We must assume that Cicero had either seen the *Autobiography* directly, or had read a work in which sections of the *Autobiography* were quoted or paraphrased. As Wardle says, "it is ridiculous to deny to someone with Cicero's education and training in rhetoric a broad and deep knowledge of Roman *exempla*."²⁴

The use of this passage by Cicero in the composition of the *De Divinatione* is highly suggestive of the way in which Sulla was seen after his death. If Sulla was not considered a reliable or respectable source (for matters regarding divination, or as a historical source in general), we may expect that Marcus would have replied to Quintus by pointing out the unsuitability of the example and its source. However, he does no such thing, but addresses only the points contained within the story. It has been argued that the views expressed by Quintus in Book 1 of the *De Divinatione* probably reflect the views on religion of many members of the political elite.²⁵ If this is the case, then

²³ Pease (1923) 27-8. Cicero requests to borrow Atticus' copy of an epitome of Coelius in *Att.* 13.8.

²⁴ Wardle (2006) 30.

²⁵ At the very least, Quintus' views fit comfortably within the precepts of Stoicism. As Marcus points out, Quintus' arguments defend the Stoic viewpoint, and are themselves set out in a Stoic manner: *Cic. Div.* 2.8: *Stoice Stoicorum sententiam defendisti*. Schofield (1986) 52. The role of Quintus within the *De Divinatione* is a complex issue. It has been asserted that Quintus is not intended to be taken seriously, since he was the younger brother, and since his somewhat chaotic case for divination relies on anecdote rather than argument. However, Beard and Schofield are surely correct in their assertions that the choice of Quintus as a character is intended to present the equality of the views set out in *Div.* 1 and 2, since they are given by a set of brothers. See Santangelo (2013) 18-20 for a more sceptical view, stressing the somewhat strained relationship between the two brothers, and the argument that, by the end of the work, the voices of Marcus the character and Cicero the author have become one. Marcus' acknowledgement of the high quality of Quintus' case in the introduction to *Div.* 2 serves to show that the reader is to treat both sets of arguments as worthy of serious consideration. Beard (1986), esp. 44; Schofield (1986), esp. 52-53 and 60-61 on the role

there would be all the more reason for an apologetic comment by Quintus or a remark on Sulla's unsuitability by Marcus. The absence of either suggests that, by 44 BC, Cicero did not have qualms about citing Sulla, and expects his reader to accept the reference, without the need for an exegetical or apologetic comment. Similarly, Cicero's use of the example of Sulla and the snake at Nola adds to the discussion of the question of how seriously the political and cultural elites in Rome would have taken Sulla's repeated mention of such items in his *Autobiography*. While it is true that a number of members of the educated elite seem to have held philosophical views that led them to be sceptical of the traditional gods of mythology and state religion, it is clear that it was possible for a prominent political figure to talk about such omens and portents without undermining the credibility of his account.²⁶

of Quintus; Wardle (2006) 10-14 on the problem of the authorial voice and the identification of Cicero's 'beliefs' within the *De Divinatione*.

²⁶ Harris (2009) 179-180 has rightly raised this question when discussing Sulla's dreams, since these fell outside the traditional purview of Roman state religion. For Sulla's attitude to dreams see the discussion above in the commentary on F8P (d).

Commentary on F10P – Pliny, NH 22.6.12 (= F16S, F10C)

*Sulla wrote that he was presented with the grass crown (corona graminea) at Nola, when he was a legate in the Social War; moreover, he had this scene painted as a mural in his Tusculan villa, which was later owned by Cicero.*¹

The *corona graminea* was a rare military honour, presented only to one who had, according to Pliny, saved a significant number of soldiers, although it is not clear whether that would be a whole legion or the whole army.² Gellius gives a different account, stating that it was accorded to the individual responsible for the breaking of a siege, hence its alternative name, the *corona obsidionalis*.³ These two authors are our main source of information regarding this type of crown, and on most other points are in agreement with one another.⁴

Pliny lists all the individuals that he knew to have received the grass crown. These range from very early in Rome's history, with L. Siccius Dentatus,⁵ down to Augustus,⁶ who is the last known recipient. Pliny's list includes recipients in all three Punic Wars: M. Calpurnius Flamma⁷, Q. Fabius Maximus Verrucosus Cunctator⁸ and P.

¹ For a good, if brief, historical commentary on this passage, see André (1970) 83-85.

² Pliny, *NH* 22.4.7.

³ Gell. 5.6.8-10. The alternative title of *obsidionalis* is also given at Plin. *NH* 22.4.7; see also Festus 208.10. The most full modern discussion of the *corona graminea* is found in Maxfield (1981) 67-69.

⁴ Maxfield (1981) 46, who points out that, due to Pliny's own military experience, it is likely that he would have known the theory of military decorations such as the grass crown, even if he had never seen one awarded. There are few records of the *corona graminea* or *obsidionalis* being awarded after the late Republic, and it does not occur in awards granted during the Principate. Maxfield (1981) 69.

⁵ Tribune in 454: *MRR* 1.43. Dion. Hal. 10.36-49; 11.25. L. Siccius Dentatus was possibly a legendary figure; the high level of agreement among later sources regarding the details of Siccius' many military honours includes offices and honours that are thought to have been introduced much later. It is not possible to tell whether the anachronisms invalidate the claims that he was the first to receive the *corona obsidionalis*, along with 25 other crowns, and assorted other honours. No account exists dating to earlier than the first century BC. See Maxfield (1981) 43-45.

⁶ The situation in which Augustus received the honour seems not to have been typical; he received it after a grant from the senate, when Antony's death was announced in 30 BC. See Weinstock (1971) 148-152; Maxfield (1981) 67-69.

⁷ In 258 Flamma was killed while saving the army of the consul A. Atilius Calatinus in Sicily. Front. *Strat.* 4.5.10; Cato *Orig.* frag. 83 Peter = Gell. 3.7.

⁸ Given as just "Fabius"; the famous general responsible for the defeat of Hannibal in 203.

Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus Numantinus⁹ respectively; it contains two unusual grants of the *corona graminea*, to P. Decius Mus,¹⁰ who was the only man to receive the honour twice, and to Cn. Petreius Atinas,¹¹ the only centurion recipient.¹²

Pliny's inclusion of Sulla in this list is the only evidence that he ever received the *corona graminea* as general in the Social War; there are no other references to the event. Moreover, Pliny casts doubt on the story by highlighting that Sulla himself was the source of the information (*scripsit et Sulla dictator*, with *scripsit* heavily emphasised) and adding in the following sentence *quod si verum est*, before stating that Sulla's later actions proved that he was unworthy of the honour.¹³

Although Pliny makes no specific arguments beyond these oblique implications that the story was historically inaccurate, modern scholars have continued to cast doubt on the incident: Moore points out that the circumstances in which the *corona graminea* was granted do not seem possible in the context of Nola; although a siege may have been broken it was not one of sufficient importance to warrant this rare honour, and the

⁹ The granting of the *corona graminea* to Scipio Aemilianus apparently took place in 149: Livy *Per.* 49; Aur. Vict. *Vir. Ill.* 58.

¹⁰ P. Decius Mus (cos. 340: *MRR* 1.135) received one crown from his own army, and another from the troops that he saved, in 343 BC. Pliny's detailed account of this incident includes references to the sacrifices he made following the incident, and to his death, apparently a *devotio*. However, Salmon has argued that this story was taken from Ennius, a source Pliny is known to have used (cf. Pliny *NH* 7.101) and, moreover, that the stories are untrue, with Ennius fabricating the story of the grass crown, and Valerius Antias adding the detail of the *devotio* through a parallel with Decius' son's death in 295. Salmon (1967) 196-8 with 196 n. 3; 208 n. 1; cf. Livy 7.34 ff.

¹¹ According to Pliny, Cn. Petreius Atinas received the crown in 101 BC for his actions during the Cimbric War, while serving under Catulus; this fact is not recorded elsewhere. Pliny's chronology is confused here when he states that Marius and Catulus were both consuls at the time; Marius was in his fifth consulship in 101 BC, but his colleague was Manius Aquillius: *MRR* 1.570. Catulus had been consul in 102 (*MRR* 1.567) and held no further magistracies. See J. André (1970) 84-5 on §11. The nature of the requirements for the *corona graminea* are such that it is unlikely for any man to achieve it who was not in charge of a great number of soldiers, if not the whole army; Maxfield (1981) 68.

¹² Other ancient sources regarding the recipients of grass crowns repeat many of the individuals from this list, and none add any other, adding legitimacy to Pliny's account. See Maxfield (1981) 68.

¹³ It has been argued that Pliny's doubt springs from 'the strong emotions roused by the proscriptions': Smith (2009b) 69. While this may certainly have added to Pliny's doubt, the reception of Sulla in the subsequent centuries was complex and did not reflect the proscriptions alone. See the Conclusion for the later reception of Sulla and the role of the *Autobiography* in this.

recipient would have had to have experienced and overcome significant difficulties,¹⁴ which does not seem to have been the case.¹⁵ The story is conspicuous by its absence from other ancient sources.¹⁶ It is therefore sometimes argued that this story was a fabrication on the part of Sulla, related in his *Autobiography* when it was not true.¹⁷

If it is indeed a fabrication, this begs the question of why the *corona graminea* was chosen, rather than any other honour? Some evidence suggests that Sulla had a greater connection with the *corona graminea* than most men. For example, this honour was exceptionally rare, yet the most recent award had been during a war in which Sulla had fought; if Pliny's description of the circumstances in which Gnaeus Petreius Atinas was given the grass crown is correct, then the event was celebrated with pomp and ceremony. Atinas, a *primipilus* serving in the Cimbric War under Catulus, was allowed to perform sacrifices while wearing the *toga praetexta*, with both Marius and Catulus present.¹⁸ It is clear from the rarity of the award of the *corona graminea*, combined with the privilege bestowed upon Atinas and the assertion that both Marius and Catulus were present, that this event was one of much celebration; it is unfeasible to suggest that Sulla would not have been aware of the event and its background.¹⁹ In recent history, therefore, Sulla had either been present at, or at least fighting with an army that celebrated, the award of this unusual honour.

¹⁴ Pliny, *NH* 22.4.7.

¹⁵ Moore (1973) 14 points out that the situation would have had to be so difficult that he could persuade his troops to award him the *corona graminea*. Sulla's well-documented charismatic leadership and the fierce loyalty of his troops may have rendered this task easier than might be expected, however.

¹⁶ The epitome of Livy's account is brief, and does not suggest that a situation suitable for the award of the *corona graminea* might have been possible: *L. Cornelius Sylla legatus Samnites proelio vicit et bina castra eorum expugnavit*. Livy *Ep.* 75.

¹⁷ Eg. Moore (1973) 14. Accusations of mendacity against Sulla are rife in the scholarly traditions regarding his *Autobiography*; see the Conclusion. Moore notes an interesting parallel for Sulla's potential fabrication of this information: Pliny states (*NH* 7.30.115) that Varro won the *corona navalis*, information apparently derived from Varro's *De Vita Sua*, but other ancient historians claim that Agrippa was the only man to have won this honour: Livy *Ep.* 129; Vell. Pat. 2.8.3; Sen. *De Ben.* 3.32; Dio 44.14-3.

¹⁸ Pliny, *NH* 22.6.11: *invenio apud auctores eundem praeter hunc honorem adstantibus Mario et Catulo coss. praetextatum immolasse ad tibicinem foculo posito*. For a description of the usual ceremony associated with ordinary military decorations see Polybius 6.39.

¹⁹ Unsurprisingly, military rewards seem to have been the subject of considerable interest within the army, with many soldiers' tombstones mentioning their *dona* and decorations. Within the closed community of the army, such distinctions could act as a physical sign of the high status achieved through the decoration for an act of valour. See Goldsworthy (1996) 249, 252, 276-8.

Moreover, an earlier award of the *corona graminea* provides an interesting parallel with Sulla's predicament; P. Decius Mus had also won his grass crown for his role in a victory over the Samnites in 343 BC, the same people against whom Sulla's troops had later fought and who held the town of Nola at this time. It is plausible that Sulla was consciously and deliberately drawing a connection between himself and Decius Mus, and, consequently, between the current conflict and Rome's early struggles with the Italian people. In this way it may be argued that Sulla was implying that his own role was merely a continuation of that of his predecessor, and that Rome's struggles with Italian peoples, including the Samnites, had been unfolding since Rome's beginnings. An interesting comparison may be made with Sulla's treatment of the prisoners at Praeneste, in which the captives were separated into subdivisions (Romans, Praenestines and Samnites) and treated as different groups; the Praenestines and Samnites were killed, even though they were (at least in principle) Roman citizens, while the Romans themselves were spared.²⁰ Sulla's actions imply that the grants of citizenship were to be considered illegitimate, or that they had been nullified. Samnites and Praenestines were still to be treated as non-Romans.²¹ The potential connection with Decius Mus in this context reveals that Sulla may have sought to further strengthen the association between Rome's early wars against the Italian peoples, and the renewed hostilities of the Social War. This is likely to have been reflected in the presentation of the scene in the mural, which must have contained some representation of the conquered Samnites.

If the story was indeed a later invention, whether by Sulla or by another, then it also calls into question the report that Sulla had had this scene painted as a mural at his Tusculan villa. Although Pliny questions the reliability of the original story, he does not challenge the assertion that the mural existed. This can be determined from the means of citation in Pliny that this information was not taken from the same source as the original story; that is, Pliny found the story of the grass crown in Sulla's *Autobiography*, but found the record of the mural elsewhere. The mention of Cicero's later ownership of the villa serves to prove that it was a later source (either a later historian or writer, or perhaps Cicero himself) or that it was an interpolation on the part of Pliny himself,

²⁰ App. *BC* 1.94.

²¹ Santangelo (forthcoming).

drawing on common knowledge.²² We may therefore assume that the report is accurate; at any rate, Pliny did not feel the need to question it.²³

Consideration must therefore be paid to the motivations behind the selection of this as a mural in Sulla's villa. Whether this mural formed an independent piece of art, or part of a series of paintings depicting scenes from Sulla's life, similar to the images that may have been paraded in a triumph,²⁴ it is clear that it must have been a scene to which Sulla attached some importance.²⁵ Images of Sulla's greatest achievements, if they existed, form an interesting parallel with the *Autobiography*. However, it is more likely that this was a stand-alone piece, not connected with a wider mural, but rather to commemorate the event of Sulla receiving the crown. All other types of *coronae* were made of gold and precious metals, and would be displayed prominently by the recipient upon return from campaign. Since the *corona graminea* was made of vegetation picked from the site of the rescue that caused it to be granted, it would be perishable, and would not be suitable for permanent display. It is possible that the painting of the *corona graminea* incident was a way of allowing permanent display to be made of an impermanent object. It cannot be determined whether this was an innovation, or was common practice for those who received grass crowns.²⁶

Due to the prominent role of the private dwelling place of an individual without the political functioning of Roman society, the choice of artwork in one's own home

²² Cicero owned several villas, one of which was a villa at Tusculum. It is assumed from a few ancient references (such as Pliny in this fragment) that the villa was previously owned by Sulla. Cicero himself does not mention Sulla as an earlier owner of his villa, naming only Catulus and Vettius; *Att.* 4.5.2. This does not, however, preclude the possibility that Sulla owned it before Catulus. See Fortner (1934) 178; McCracken (1935) 262.

²³ If the report that the scene was painted as a mural in Sulla's villa is accepted as accurate, then it must be conceded that it is much more likely that it was also included in Sulla's *Autobiography*, regardless of whether or not we are able to establish the historical accuracy of the story.

²⁴ Fortner (1934) 178. Smith (2009b) 77 places this mural within the context of the images carried during a triumph, displaying the battles and victories in a visual format and adding to the pomp and spectacle.

²⁵ Moore (1973) 14.

²⁶ Maxfield (1981) 143-144. Cicero was fond of painting as an art form (*Ad Fam.* 7.23.3), so there is no need to suggest that Cicero might have removed this scene from the villa's walls. However, although mural painting was very fashionable both during Sulla's day and during Cicero's slightly later, their subjects were more commonly mythical scenes. Indeed, historical scenes and portraits were rare, making up only a very small proportion of surviving mural paintings from this period. See Ling (1991) 157-159.

could be politically loaded, since it would have been seen by a wide range of people. Although Sulla retreated to his villa following his retirement from active politics, it may be assumed that he owned the estate for some time before this.²⁷ Moreover, although Sulla appears to have followed through with his intention not to play any further role in Roman politics, there is some evidence of his involvement with municipal affairs at Puteoli.²⁸ The presence of politically-charged artwork in Sulla's villa was, therefore, something which ought not to be overlooked when considering his self-representation. The political significance this mural cannot be doubted. One ought also to remember the role of the private dimension; even if Sulla had regular visitors for public and political business, it was also his private house. It is dubious whether Sulla would have had this scene painted if it was not something that he wished to be reminded of regularly. Its primary use, however, seems to have been public, which was no doubt reflected in the account of the incident of his award of the *corona graminea* in the *Autobiography*.²⁹

²⁷ It is possible that Sulla was the first owner of the Tusculan villa, and therefore had it built for himself: Root (1920) 36. It is impractical to suggest that the villa was built only for his retirement, and not used previously.

²⁸ Such as the famous exchange with Granius at Puteoli, which Valerius Maximus surmises may have contributed to Sulla's death: Val. Max. 9.3.8. See D'Arms (1970) 30-31.

²⁹ One need only note the fact that Pliny mentions the mural; if the contents of the artwork in specific homes were commonly known, then it is doubtful whether considering artwork in one's home 'private' is useful, since such a term excludes its potential public role.

Commentary on F10aP – Plut. Mor. 786d = An sen. res pub. ger. sit 6.1 (= F26S, F11C)

Sulla wrote that on the night after he entered Rome after freeing Italy of civil wars, he did not sleep, since he was so joyful.

Plutarch cites Sulla's *Autobiography* on seventeen occasions in the *Lives* and *Moralia*, and the detail and frequency with which such references are made show beyond doubt that the author was very familiar with the work. However, this is the only occasion on which Sulla's *Autobiography* is referenced in the *Moralia*.¹ The appearance of citations from the *Autobiography* within the relevant *Lives* is unsurprising, but when Sulla is cited in the *An seni res publica gerenda sit*, a work for which it is unlikely that Plutarch read Sulla as part of his background work, it raises important questions regarding Plutarch's method of work, particularly his procedure for collecting and presenting materials and *exempla* in different parts of his scholarly output.² Did he remember the anecdote regarding Sulla from previous research, or did he look it up afresh having decided that a reference to Sulla would fit within this text? Moreover, if he had recalled the information on Sulla from previous research, did he re-read the *Autobiography* at this juncture, refer to notes that he made at an earlier date, or simply recall the item and not check it against his notes or a copy of the *Autobiography*? These questions do not, of course, have a simple answer, but the example of F10aP may add to the already substantial debate regarding Plutarch's working method. Pelling's theory, widely accepted, suggests that Plutarch composed note-books, *hypomnemata*, in which he recorded significant passages as he compiled his research, and then referred to these note-books during the course of his writing, rather than working purely from memory or referring to the original full texts.³ Although this technique may be seen most clearly in the *Lives*, there are also traces of it within the *Moralia*. It has recently been asserted that the notable points of similarity between the *An seni res publica gerenda sit* and the *Non*

¹ One citation appears in the *Lucullus*, three in the *Marius*, and twelve in the *Sulla*.

² Plutarch refers to Sulla elsewhere in the *Moralia*, most notably in the *De Fortuna Romanorum*, and it is possible that that text draws on Plutarch's knowledge of the *Autobiography*, but since the text is not cited, it would be unsafe to make this assumption. Interestingly, Plutarch there refers to a tradition in which Sulla is said to have quoted Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1080, declaring that he was the son of Τύχη: ἐγὼ δ' ἑμαυτὸν παῖδα τῆς Τύχης νέμω. Plut. *De Fort. Rom.* 4 = *Mor.* 318c-d. On this text see Swain (1989b), esp. 509; see also the commentary on F8P (b).

³ Pelling (2002) 1-44; 65-90; see also Van der Stockt (1999) 575-580.

posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum (most clearly seen through the recurrence of *exempla* in the two works) argue strongly in favour of the theory that Plutarch referred to *hypomnemata* while composing both texts.⁴ This tends towards one of two suggestions: either Plutarch was using *hypomnemata* produced during his research for the *Lives*, or he put together new *hypomnemata* for use in (this section of) the *Moralia*. In either case, it is likely that the *hypomnemata* contained references to Sulla's *Autobiography* and, while the note-books do not survive, we may expect them to have been reasonably accurate reflections of the sources he was reading. This, in turn, leads to the conclusion that the reference in the *Moralia* is as reliable, and subject to the same problems and methodological difficulties, as the references in the *Lives*.⁵

We may, therefore, be fairly certain that Sulla did say in his *Autobiography* that he was so joyful on the night after he entered Rome that he could not sleep.⁶ On the basis of what has survived, it appears that emotions were not commonly mentioned or discussed in Republican autobiographies. Autobiographies were primarily a vehicle for self-praise and self-defence; the character portraits that the authors drew of themselves had to demonstrate their *virtus*. It was neither appropriate nor desirable for a man to describe within his political autobiography the emotions he felt about particular achievements or events within his career, except on occasions where such emotions could add to the picture he was drawing of himself as a man of prestige. By telling the reader about the joy felt after a great achievement or victory, the author could make himself into a more highly coloured human character, making the achievement more vivid, and thereby encouraging the reader to view the author with greater respect. We may interpret this fragment as fitting within this category of emotional description.⁷

⁴ Xenophontos (2012).

⁵ That is to say that there is no reason to discount this fragment simply because it occurs in the *Moralia*, merely that it is subject to the same methodological and interpretational problems as fragments 1, 4-8, 11-17, 18-19 and 21. I discount the theory proposed by Balsdon (1951) 2 that Plutarch's frequent references to Sulla's *Autobiography* are the result of the biographer's familiarity with a copy of the *Autobiography* preserved for sentimental reasons at Chaeronea. Plutarch was evidently interested in the politics of the late Republic (as may be seen in the number of *Lives* concerned with this period), and had many friends within Rome's cultural elite; there is no need to doubt that he might have been able to obtain a copy of the *Autobiography* even if there were not a copy at Chaeronea.

⁶ It has also been argued that the simile 'ὡσπερ πνεύματος' might originally have come from Sulla's *Autobiography*. Cuvigny (1984) 140.

⁷ An example of this may be found in Augustus' *Autobiography* F4P = F1S, where Pliny introduces his quotation of Augustus as a symptom of the *gaudium* he felt –

Sulla's willingness to discuss his emotions on another occasion is, on the other hand, much more unusual. In F21P, Plutarch describes a dream of Sulla's, in which his dead son appeared, bidding him not to be anxious.⁸ The implication of this is, of course, that Sulla was anxious, either at his now imminent death, or at the appearance of his dead son. Sulla is displaying a degree of emotional vulnerability in F21P that is without parallel in Republican autobiographies. Some explanation ought to be found for this, particularly since the mention of such anxiety might be taken as a sign of weakness. It is possible that the willingness to mention emotions in this manner stems from the role of autobiography-writing as a form of *apologia*. Sulla avoids the accusation of having acted for cynical purposes by describing his joy in such a way that the readers may relate to his reaction. Similarly, Sulla makes the characterisation of himself in the *Autobiography* more rounded and believable through the mention of his anxiety at the appearance of his dead son.⁹

The context within which Plutarch sets out this fragment and Sulla's statement of his own joy are revealing of the way in which Sulla dealt with the description of the more controversial aspects of his career. Plutarch cites Sulla as an illustration of the point that there is no sound sweeter than praise¹⁰ and that there is most pleasure in having one's actions in benefit of the state being seen by all.¹¹ This fragment refers to Sulla's entry into Rome after the civil war in 82.¹² Discussion of civil wars, and particularly victory in a civil war, was a difficult undertaking in Roman historiography; traditional means of referring to the enemy could not be used lightly to describe an opposing Roman faction, for example, and celebrating a victory that involved the death of thousands of Roman citizens could not be undertaken without a considerable level of

although the word *gaudium* comes from Pliny, its use to introduce a fragment suggests that the emotion was demonstrated in the fragment too. On the whole, Republican autobiographies avoided mentioning emotions in other situations, although some authors did so more notably than others. Caesar, for example, famously showed little emotion in his *Commentarii*, while he was happy to describe the emotions of his fellow-soldiers. Hall (1998) 20.

⁸ F21P = Plut. *Sull.* 27.2: παύσασθαι τῶν φροντίδων. See commentary on F21P below.

⁹ *FRH* 3.291 argues that the emotional vulnerability displayed in this fragment is typical of Sulla within the *Autobiography*, citing F8P (a), Sulla gladly accepting the ascription of his achievements to τύχη, and F21P.

¹⁰ Plut. *Mor.* 786d: ἄκουσμα μὲν γὰρ ἔστω μηδὲν ἥδιον ἐπαίνου.

¹¹ Plut. *Mor.* 786d: θέαμα δὲ καὶ μνημόνευμα καὶ διανόημα τῶν ὄντων οὐδὲν ἔστιν ὁ τοσαύτην φέρει χάριν, ὅσην πράξεων ἰδίων ἐν ἀρχαῖς καὶ πολιτείας ὥσπερ ἐν τόποις λαμπροῖς καὶ δημοσίοις ἀναθεώρησις. This seems to have been a fairly common idea in antiquity: see Cic. *Cat. Maior de Senectute* 9; Plut. *Mor.* 477b; 820a.

¹² Not, as Peter suggested, 89. *FRH* 3.298.

awkwardness and controversy.¹³ This fragment reveals the manner in which Sulla dealt with this problem: he described his victory as the freeing of Italy from civil war,¹⁴ and mentions his excessive joy at the achievement, so great that he could not sleep. Sulla's victory is not set in terms of his own deeds or interests, but the freedom of the Rome and Italy. His joy stems not from having won, but from the benefit that Italy (and Rome) would gain from the victory and the end of civil war. Sulla frequently expanded on the importance of his military achievements by describing his prophetic dreams;¹⁵ there is a slight contrast here with the lack of sleep experienced in 82. It does not seem, however, that the reader is meant to draw any conclusions from this variation.

¹³ See the Conclusion for Sulla's management of this difficult topics.

¹⁴ Plut. *Mor.* 786d: τῶν ἐμφυλίων πολέμων τὴν Ἰταλίαν καθήρας.

¹⁵ See commentary on F8P (d) for a discussion of Sulla's dreams.

Commentary on F11P – Plut. Mar. 35.2-3 (= F18S, F12C)

When fleeing from the Sulpician riots in 88 BC, Sulla confounded expectations by running into the house of Marius, who is said to have later helped him to escape through a back door. Sulla claimed that he did not take refuge with Marius, but withdrew to his house to consult with him about Sulpicius; after this, Sulla went to the forum and suspended public business, as the Sulpicians had demanded, before leaving Rome for his army at Nola. The Mithridatic command was transferred to the elderly Marius, which sparked Sulla's return to and march on Rome.

Within the first few months of 88 BC, the tribune Sulpicius came to realise that he could not rely on the political support of the two consuls, Sulla and Q. Pompeius Rufus,¹ but instead began to ally himself with the now elderly Marius, who coveted the Mithridatic command, which had been allocated to Sulla, and who still enjoyed weighty political support. The significance of the events that followed can scarcely be overemphasized, since they led directly to Sulla's first march on Rome and a permanent change in Roman politics. For the first time, the enmity between Sulla and Marius spilled over into violence that engulfed the whole state. It is to be expected, therefore, that Sulla would not only describe the events of that year in his *Autobiography*, but also that within that work he would confront traditions and narratives of the events with which he took issue. Just as we can see with the Jugurthine War and with Vercellae, for example, Sulla used his *Autobiography* as a venue for the renegotiation of the recent past.² Because this incident was of such importance, it is not surprising that Sulla was not alone in his desire to set out his version of events. The extant sources on the meeting of Sulla and Marius in the latter's house are contradictory and in many places evidently confused. Tracing Sulla's own narrative against this background is therefore a difficult task. Certain details appear to be fairly safely reconstructed: when the unrest in Rome caused by opposing responses to the actions of the tribune Sulpicius descended into rioting, the son of Q. Pompeius Rufus, who was also Sulla's son-in-law, was killed, and the two consuls barely escaped with their lives. Sulla went to Marius' house, under considerable pressure from Sulpicius. While Sulla was there, he and Marius discussed a number of issues, and spoke for some time. After leaving the house of Marius, Sulla

¹ *MRR* 2.39-40.

² See the commentaries on F4P, and F5P and F6P.

rescinded the decree which had suspended business,³ and left for Nola, to meet his army.⁴ Sulpicius then proceeded to bring about legislation transferring the Mithridatic command from Sulla to Marius.

The events have been subjected to considerable scholarly scrutiny, due not least to the many contradictions between our surviving sources.⁵ It is evident that the ancient writers were confronted with a plethora of historiographical traditions, and so the task of analysing and amalgamating their source material was even more difficult than usual. Plutarch's account, for example, contains a number of inconsistencies. It has been argued that these stem from the biographer's failed attempts to reconcile contradictory accounts, and his confusion regarding different items within Sulpicius' legislative agenda, and even that the confusion is so severe that it is unlikely that *Plut. Mar.* 35.2-3 is a fragment at all.⁶ However, it is possible to use this complexity to a scholarly advantage, since one may determine the ways in which Sulla's account differed from the mainstream tradition, thus revealing the ways in which he chose to represent one of the more controversial points of his career. The key questions are as follows: did Sulla go to the house of Marius willingly and by free choice, or under duress and fleeing to safety from Sulpicius' gangs? Did Sulla rescind the suspension of public business willingly, or was that also brought about under duress through threats of violence? Did

³ Plutarch (*Mar.* 35.5) describes the suspension of business as ἀπραξίαι (τὰς ἀπραξίας ἔλυσσε), which usually translates *iustitium* (used by *FRH* 3.295; Allély (2012) 21; Golden (2013) 95), while Appian (*BC.* 1.56) gives ἀργία (ἐβάστασε τὴν ἀργίαν), the conventional rendering of *feriae* (used by Valgiglio (1967) 163; Levick (1982b) 508); it is not clear which of these had been enacted by Sulla. See Lintott (1971) 444-445 n. 4, with Lintott (1968) 140-141, 144, 153; Keaveney (1983b) 57-58. Bibliographical summary: Levick (1982b) 508, n. 43.

⁴ It has also been suggested (Seager (1994) 169) that Sulla had his headquarters at Capua, to which he would have travelled before moving on to Nola. This is certainly possible; at any rate, it has no bearing on how Sulla's actions were interpreted.

⁵ For the ancient evidence on Sulpicius' tribunate see *MRR* 2.39-42. Sulpicius' legislation: Valgiglio (1967); Mitchell (1975); Keaveney (1983b) 53-62; Powell (1990); Seager (1994) 165-173; Golden (2013) 93-102; Steel (2013) 89-95. It is possible that some of Sulpicius' legislative agenda was aimed at Sulla, such as the debt law, since it has been argued (Carney (1961) 54 n. 250) that Sulla was indebted to a significant degree. This is not, however, either mentioned or explained in the surviving accounts of 88 written by those with access to Sulla's *Autobiography* and accounts that drew heavily on Sulla's text (Plutarch, Livy, Appian). Lintott (1971) has argued that the picture of Sulpicius preserved in Plutarch, Appian, and Velleius Paterculus, was considerably influenced by Sulla's *Autobiography*. While this might be true, the absence of alternative accounts or *comparanda* make such a judgement difficult to maintain, and open to criticism.

⁶ Powell (1990) 452.

Sulla know when he left Rome to go to his army that Sulpicius intended to transfer the Mithridatic command (and troops) to Marius?

In terms of a historical reconstruction of events, scholars have come to tentative conclusions on these issues. It is claimed that the violence in Rome and the power of Sulpicius' gangs were such that, even if Sulla went to Marius' house of his own volition and agreed to rescind the suspension of public business, he probably had little choice in the matter.⁷ The fact that Marius had been exercising troops for some time, and had apparently been openly conspiring with Sulpicius, means that we may be sure that Sulla at least suspected that Marius had designs on the Mithridatic command, even if he could not be absolutely certain. However, for the purposes of this study, it is much more important to reconstruct Sulla's answers to these questions; that is, to establish through analysis of the surviving narratives what stories Sulla told about himself, rather than the historical truth concerning these incidents.

The prevailing view is that the section of Plutarch's *Marius* describing the Sulpician riots and the tumult of 88 stems largely from Sulla's *Autobiography*, and that Appian's account is taken from another anti-Marian, pro-Sullan account;⁸ the substantial differences between the two strongly suggest that we are dealing with more than one source, and the citation of Sulla in Plutarch ought to be taken as factual and not, as Powell suggests, an indication that the information was taken from an intermediate source (Livy), who in turn took his material from Sulla's *Autobiography*, while Appian preserves the Sullan view of the affair.⁹ It has been established with a sufficient degree of confidence that Plutarch read the work of Sulla and used it liberally, so there is no need to posit the involvement of Livy at this point where he is not named.¹⁰ Moreover, although there is some variation between their two accounts, Plutarch and Appian also preserve certain verbal echoes that suggest a shared source (most strikingly βουλευσόμενος at App. *BC*. 1.56 and Plut. *Mar*. 35.3).¹¹ It is most

⁷ Chiefly Valgiglio (1967), Lintott (1971), Powell (1990).

⁸ See eg. Valgiglio (1975) 263-7. The opposite view is expressed by Marastoni (2008) 56, who argues, unconvincingly, that Appian preserves Sulla's version of events, but Plutarch does not.

⁹ Powell (1990) 454. Valgiglio (1967) 165 argues that it was Appian who, in fact, based his account on Livy, while Plutarch preserves the Sullan point of view.

¹⁰ Plutarch is of course known to have referred to Livy's work for this period; see eg. Plut. *Sull*. 6.10.

¹¹ The significant verbal echoes between Plutarch's account of this episode in the *Marius* and the *Sulla*, noted at length by Valgiglio (1975) 264 n. 49, serve to prove what

likely that both Appian and Plutarch have constructed their accounts on the basis of a number of different sources, so that while certain aspects of Appian's narrative might seem more likely to have derived from Sulla's *Autobiography*, or to be closer to what we might have expected Sulla to say,¹² we need not rule out that possibility purely on the basis of Plutarch's citation of Sulla at *Mar.* 35.3. The existence of readily available alternative pro-Sullan accounts in this period, such as the work of Sisenna, and the lack of precise information regarding the source usage of Appian and Plutarch, mean that we cannot justify the rejection of Plutarch's citations of Sulla, either in general or here, without some compelling reason. Although Appian seems to have preserved some of the arguments contained within Sulla's *Autobiography*, he does not cite it at any point, and it is far from certain that he read the work first-hand. *Plut. Mar.* 35.2-3 must, therefore, stand as a fragment. It is possible that Plutarch also had access to another source, since he gives both Sulla's version of events and the alternative reconstruction of events against which Sulla was arguing in the *Autobiography*. However, the story in which Sulla took refuge in Marius' house would, we may assume, have been recounted in detail in the *Autobiography*, even if it were mentioned as a point of comparison with Sulla's own interpretation of events.¹³ Valgiglio's view that this was a pro-Marian account is probably not correct; rather, it would seem that this was the version of the story in common circulation, and although we cannot be certain from where Plutarch derived the story, a pro-Marian account, while possible, does not seem necessary.¹⁴

It thus remains to consider what this passage tells us about the ways in which Sulla was choosing to present himself and construct a public image in the *Autobiography*. We can construct Sulla's answers to the questions above as follows:¹⁵

is clear from the many points of contact between the two: that if Sulla's *Autobiography* was behind *Mar.* 35.2-3, then it was also behind *Sull.* 8.2-4.

¹² Powell (1990) 450-460. Powell is, of course, correct in stating (451) that, if Plutarch's version of events is the Sullan one, then it is difficult to imagine how the tradition preserved in Appian came into being; however, it ought to be remembered that there was a significant strand of pro-Sullan contemporary historiography (such as, for example, the work of Sisenna, who Lintott (1971) 445 argues may have been Appian's source for this period), that may have included alternative pro-Sullan explanations of events that differed from the presentation in Plutarch. Sulla's *Autobiography* was not the only source of pro-Sullan or anti-Marian historiography available in Appian's time.

¹³ A precedent for this would be F17P, in which Sulla answered specific accusations made against himself.

¹⁴ 'filomariana': Valgiglio (1975) 264-5.

¹⁵ All quotations in the following points stem, unless otherwise specified, from *Plut. Mar.* 35.3.

1. Sulla does not deny that he was being pursued by Sulpicius' gangs at the time when he entered the house of Marius. Indeed, this would have been difficult given the fact of the murder immediately beforehand of the son of the other consul of 88, Q. Pompeius Rufus.¹⁶ Sulla does, however, explicitly deny that he fled to Marius' house, and claims instead that he withdrew there in order to discuss the current situation with Marius. The explicit rejection of the version of events which portrayed him acting in fear of Sulpicius and taking refuge at Marius' house is particularly noteworthy, since it provides direct evidence of Sulla engaging with criticisms that had been levelled against him, and setting up his own alternative account in explicit counterpoint to what appears to have become a well-known interpretation of his actions.¹⁷ In doing so, Sulla is forced to make a concession to his opponents in addressing these negative stories about himself, in order to disprove that he had acted under duress.

2. Sulla also admits that Sulpicius was indeed trying to force him to rescind the suspension of public business (βουλευσόμενος ὑπερ ὧν Σουλπίκιος ἠνάγκαζεν αὐτὸν ἄκοντα ψηφίσασθαι). He does, however, point out the illegality of Sulpicius' actions by emphasizing the violence with the latter was behaving (περισχῶν ἐν κύκλῳ ζίφεσι γυμνοῖς καὶ συνελάσας πρὸς τὸν Μάριον). We need not assume that this was untruthful; the murder of Rufus' son testifies to the violent means to which Sulpicius was prepared to resort by this stage, in which he is held to have surrounded with an armed "anti-senate".¹⁸

¹⁶ *MRR* 2.39. His son was Sulla's son-in-law (App. *BC*. 1.56: κηδεύοντα τῷ Σύλλῳ) married to Sulla's daughter by his first wife Julia (or Ilia), Cornelia. Julia/Ilia and her daughter: Plut. *Sull.* 6.11; cf. Keaveney (1980) 169.

¹⁷ Plut. *Mar.* 35.3: αὐτὸς δὲ Σύλλας ἐν τοῖς ὑπομνήμασιν οὗ φησι καταφυγεῖν πρὸς τὸν Μάριον, ἀλλ' ἀπαλλαχθῆναι βουλευσόμενος ὑπερ ὧν Σουλπίκιος ἠνάγκαζεν αὐτὸν ἄκοντα ψηφίσασθαι etc. Cf. commentary on F17P.

¹⁸ On the development of Sulpicius' political means and aims in the course of 88 see eg. Mitchell (1975). The 'anti-senate', ἀντισύγκλητον: Plut. *Mar.* 35.2; *Sull.* 8.2. Badian (1958) 234 and (1969a) 485 has argued that the anti-senate was an invention of Sullan propaganda, and did not, in fact, exist. There was, at any rate, no Latin term that may be rendered into Greek as ἀντισύγκλητος. See also Gabba (1973a) 429, arguing that the existence of an 'anti-senate' of 600 members at a time when the actual senate had only 300, rejects itself ('si respinge da sé'). Keaveney (1983b) 55 suggests that we may surmise *vice senatus* or even a phrase like *quos in consilium senatus vice vocabat*. Plutarch (*Sull.* 8.2) describes Sulpicius' political methods, however, in no uncertain terms, whether or not the anti-senate was part of this: συνταράξας πάντα τὰ πράγματα βία καὶ σιδήρῳ.

3. Sulla left Marius' house (willingly or under compulsion, we are not told, although ἄχρη does suggest that it was a direct consequence of Sulpicius' use of force), and rescinded the decree which had suspended public business.

Several aspects of this have raised eyebrows among scholars, who expected something rather different from the apologetic Sulla than an admission of having acted under duress, and having been coerced into rescinding the ἀπραξία.¹⁹ However, this seems largely to be the result of the scholarly trend which presents Sulla as mendacious, and his *Autobiography* as fictitious, or at least as presenting such an inaccurate and tendentious account that it is extremely unreliable for historical discussion.²⁰ On the contrary, Sulla's account had at its core the factual sequence of events and, while he certainly put forward his own interpretation of this incident, there is no evidence of outright falsehoods. Concerning such famous incidents as the Sulpician unrest in 88, it would surely be impossible for Sulla to have simply lied, since many of his readers would have lived through the events and thus been aware of the historical truth. That is not to say that Sulla could not manipulate his narrative, in terms both of events and of motivations, but the basic outline of the incidents in question had to be accurate. Since it was likely to have become common knowledge that Sulla went to the house of Marius and revoked the suspension of public business after being violently and publicly threatened by Sulpicius and his gangs, Sulla could not have denied it. What he could deny, however, were his reasons for going to the house of Marius: he did not go there under coercion, but willingly, in order to consult with him.²¹ Despite the enmity of the two men, Sulla chose to go to the elder statesman at this time of crisis in order to discuss the best course of action; this meeting was then hijacked by the violent methods of Sulpicius. This conjures up a picture in which Sulla was trying to portray himself as a man interested in concord, placing the wellbeing of the state ahead of his own personal enmities. Sulla's troubled relationship with Marius is undoubtedly an issue that he would have to address in the *Autobiography*, since by the time of writing the hostility between the two men had come to envelop the whole Roman state.²² Sulla's choice to present himself as having gone willingly to the house of Marius in order to discuss the developing crisis thus places himself in a highly favourable position, in which he was

¹⁹ E.g. Powell (1990).

²⁰ See the Conclusion for the arguments concerning Sulla's alleged mendacity.

²¹ Smith (2009b) 70.

²² A parallel for this may be found in F4P, in which Sulla established the cause of the hostilities between himself and Marius as having been the latter's unreasonable jealousy, thus exculpating himself concerning their later conflict.

innocent of all responsibility for the unrest in the city, and actively working to prevent disaster for the state, even at the sacrifice of personal pride. Sulla thus showed himself to be a man more interested in concord than personal gain, and one willing to set aside his differences with his enemy, if it were in the interests of the *res publica*.

This presentation of events, whether truthful or not, does not argue against the common knowledge that Sulla had gone to Marius' house at a time when he was being threatened with violence, but removes from Sulla the shame of having fled there. Plutarch was clearly aware of the alternative account of Sulla's actions in 88 against which Sulla was arguing in the *Autobiography*, since he not only sets out this version in the *Marius* before explaining at which points Sulla's narrative differed, but also chose this as his account in the *Life of Sulla*, omitting Sulla's version entirely.²³

With regard to the question of whether Sulla was aware of the plans of Sulpicius and Marius to transfer the Mithridatic command, the ancient sources do not give us enough information to reconstruct either the historical events or Sulla's portrayal of them. Plutarch does not record whether Sulla knew about the intended re-allocation of the Mithridatic command, although the story in which Sulla hurried to reach his troops before the tribunes strongly implies that he knew what message they carried.²⁴ Appian's insistence that Sulla left Rome unaware of these plans has been called into question, and rightly so.²⁵ Sulla as consul would no doubt have been kept informed of any such plots, and even if he could not be certain that they would be carried out, the rumour of the intentions of Marius must have reached his ears.²⁶ Plutarch does not inform us at what point Sulla left Rome, and whether Marius had yet begun to put into practice his designs on the command against Mithridates, but the account in *Sull.* 8.3-4 strongly suggests

²³ Plut. *Mar.* 35.2; *Sull.* 8.3.

²⁴ Plut. *Sull.* 8.4-9.1.

²⁵ App. *B.C.* 1.56 (οὐ γὰρ πῶ τις τῶν ἐπ' αὐτῷ πραττομένων ἤσθητο), with Powell (1990) 452.

²⁶ Although Cicero would have us believe that, in 63, the consul knew all the plots that were taking place in Rome, the example of Caesar in 44 should remind us to be wary of this assumption. However, if Plutarch is correct in his assertion that Marius had been attending the Campus Martius every day in order to exercise with his troops, we may assume that there had been some speculation as to his intentions. Plut. *Mar.* 34.3. It has also been argued that the *feriae* or *iustitium* had been brought about not because of the Sulpician riots, but because Sulpicius' intentions to transfer the command to Marius had become known.

that he was fully informed.²⁷ Carcopino suggested that Marius and Sulla had discussed the Mithridatic command while in Marius' house, and that since Sulla did not trust Marius, he planned to march on Rome if the latter did not hold up his end of the agreement.²⁸ Smith, however, has pointed out that this goes far beyond the limits of our evidence, and is a conjecture that cannot be proved. He also notes, rightly, that, even if at the meeting it was agreed that Marius would be granted the Mithridatic command, we need not imagine that Sulla's account was created in order to exculpate himself from the charge of having broken his word.²⁹ The surviving sources simply do not record what was agreed at that meeting, and we cannot be certain that any agreements were reached regarding the command.³⁰

Sulla thus presented himself as having been in full control of events; at each step he is the one to make the decision, and even when threatened with swords he does not state outright that this was the reason for his decision to return to the forum to rescind the ἀπραξία; it was certainly his choice to go to Marius' house, a choice made at the expense of personal pride in the interests of the state. The fragment preserved by Plutarch is decisive proof of the methods employed by Sulla in the presentation of his career and actions, manipulating events in ways that would fit with established fact without straying too far from the truth. In the same way that he presented Marius' jealousy as the cause of the conflict between them, here Marius and Sulpicius are again blamed for acting illegally. Sulpicius is said to have been the one who exacerbated the hostilities by initiating violence, thereby (partially, at least) exculpating Sulla for having marched on Rome shortly afterwards.

²⁷ Lintott (1971) 443: "The impression is given that Sulla did not leave Rome until the bill which took away his province and his legions was on the verge of enactment."

²⁸ Carcopino (1931) 395.

²⁹ *FRH* 3.295-296. The sources imply that the proposal for the re-allocation of the Mithridatic command did not take place at the same time as a number of Sulpicius' other legislative attempts; Appian states that it was later, while Plutarch (*Sull.* 8.2) and Livy (*Per.* 77) give only a catalogue of all the proposed laws at once, with no chronological implication, except that they each keep the Mithridatic bill until the end of their lists. Cf. Keaveney (1983b) 56.

³⁰ See Keaveney (1983b) for an argument that, if the Mithridatic command was discussed at all, Marius must have assured Sulla "that he did not plan to do anything to further his ambitions in that direction". This seems highly unlikely, since Marius' intentions were apparently widely known.

Commentary on F12P – Plut. Sull. 14.1-2 (= F19S, F13C) and F13P – Plut. Sull. 14.6 (= F20S, F14C)

F12P: *During the siege of Athens, by listening to the reports of soldiers who had overheard Athenians talking about the city's defences, Sulla was able to discover the Heptachalcum, a point of the wall at which it was possible for the Romans to cross into the city. Sulla wrote that a certain Marcus Ateius was the first to mount the wall. When he was confronted by the enemy, he withstood the attack and did not yield his position.*

F13P: *Sulla wrote that he took Athens on the Kalends of March.*¹

These two fragments, together with F19P, have often been used by scholars to show that the focus of Sulla's *Autobiography* was an accurate and detailed narrative of Sulla's military achievements.² The precision with which Plutarch is able to give specific data regarding Sulla's campaigns certainly suggests that his sources (primarily the *Autobiography*) customarily included important names, toponyms, figures and other such information. Assuming that the level of detail here was repeated in the majority of the military narrative, this brings the *Autobiography* in line with other military texts of a broadly similar period, such as Caesar's *Commentarii*.³ We may assume from the length of the *Autobiography* that the majority of the military narrative was indeed as comprehensive as F12P, F13P and F19P, despite the lack of other similarly detailed fragments concerning military affairs.⁴

¹ *FRH* 3.296 has noted that producing Julian dates equivalent to Athenian dates is impossible for this period; see also Samuel (1972) 57-8. For this reason we must infer that Plutarch states that the March and Anthesterion are equivalent because it was in the latter month that the Athenians celebrated and commemorated the ancient flood of Deucalion; the biographer is drawing a parallel between that destructive deluge and the blood flowing through the streets on the occasion of Sulla's sack of the city. Deucalion and the flood: Ovid. *Met.* 1.313-415.

² The most recent iteration of this argument was made by Tatum (2011) 167.

³ Smith (2009b) 70; 81 n. 34 notes a number of similarly detailed passages in Caesar: the exertions of notable soldiers: 2.25; specific dates: 1.6; greatly exaggerated casualty figures: 4.15, etc. F12P and F13P may also be taken as evidence of Sulla's method of work in his composition of the *Autobiography*: Sulla is likely to have needed to look up such details in his own note-books compiled while on campaign. This, in turn, implies that Sulla must have referred to these log-books on other, untraceable locations, adding a certain amount of credence to his account in general. See the commentary on F3P for Sulla's use of documents in the *Autobiography*.

⁴ 22 books: Plut. *Sull.* 37.1 = F21P.

Using fragments such as these, it is possible to understand more clearly how Plutarch used the *Autobiography* of Sulla when writing his *Life*: rather than making constant references to the *Autobiography* or using it as a framework during the composition process, the biographer restricts himself to checking certain particulars against his notes or against a copy of the *Autobiography*. It is only on specific points such as dates and names (or, at F19P, battle figures) that he feels the need to check his information. Moreover, he interprets Sulla's writing in a way that makes it accessible to his predominantly Greek readership, by adding Greek points of comparison for specific Roman cultural details that his audience might not have understood, such as naming the Greek month equivalent to the Roman March, Anthesterion,⁵ while leaving unexplained points of Greek topography, such as the location of the Heptachalcum.⁶ However, as may be determined from the differing means of citation, Sulla's *Autobiography* was not the only source material consulted by Plutarch during his background work for this passage. The difference between the specific citations at 14.2 (λέγει δὲ αὐτὸς ὁ Σύλλας ἐν τοῖς ὑπομνήμασι) and 14.6 (αὐτὸς φησιν ἐν τοῖς ὑπομνήμασι) and the more vague λέγεται regarding the discovery of the weak point of Athens' guards at the Heptachalcum strongly suggests that the latter was not taken from Sulla's *Autobiography* but from another, unnamed source, possibly even an oral one, or something that was considered common knowledge.⁷

⁵ F13P = Plut. *Sull.* 14.6: Ἐλεῖν δὲ τὰς Ἀθήνας αὐτὸς φησιν ἐν τοῖς ὑπομνήμασι Μαρτίαις καλάνδαις, ἧτις ἡμέρα μάλιστα συμπίπτει τῇ νομηνίᾳ τοῦ Ἀνθεστηριῶνος μηνός. Giardina (2008) 70 believes that it was Sulla himself who stated that the months of March and Anthesterion were equivalent, since it was in the latter month that the Athenians commemorated the deluge (on which see above). He argues that this shows that Sulla "believed in fateful coincidences", connecting this with Sulla's stated belief in *καιρός* in Plut. *Sull.* 6.5 = F8P (a). However, it is much more convincing to argue that the origin of this information was Plutarch himself, interpreting Roman cultural details for his Greek audience, and Sulla's specific understanding of *καιρός* (πρὸς καιρὸν – on the spur of the moment) does not imply the sort of coincidence that Giardina's interpretation would suggest.

⁶ F12P = Plut. *Sull.* 14.1: Ἐν δὲ τούτῳ λέγεται τινας ἐν Κεραμεικῷ πρεσβυτῶν ἀκούσαντας διαλεγομένων πρὸς ἀλλήλους καὶ κακιζόντων τὸν τύραννον, ὡς μὴ φυλάττοντα τοῦ τείχους τὴν περὶ τὸ Ἑπτάχαλκον ἔφοδον καὶ προσβολήν, ἧ μόνη δυνατὸν εἶναι καὶ ράδιον ὑπερβῆναι τοὺς πολεμίοθς, ἀπαγγεῖλαι ταῦτα πρὸς τὸν Σύλλαν. The story of Sulla's discovery of the Heptachalcum is repeated in Plut. *Mor.* 505b, in which we find the additional detail that the gossip overheard by Sulla's spies was spoken by some old men in a barbershop.

⁷ The sack of Athens would have left a notable scar in the memory of the city, and indeed of Greece, as may be observed in Pausanias' account of these events: 1.20.4-7. It is highly likely that details of the story would have been preserved by popular knowledge. Plutarch seems to be drawing on this cultural memory in his description of

Although we may be relatively sure that Plutarch is thus drawing on several sources for his narrative of the sack of Athens and not Sulla alone, it has been argued that Sulla was also the source for 14.7, in which Curio successfully besieges and captures the tyrant Aristion, owing to the description of the apparent manifestation of divine approval.⁸ Plutarch does use the term δαιμόνιον when citing Sulla's *Autobiography* elsewhere, such as at *Sull.* 6.6 = F8Pd (the exhortation of Lucullus to trust nothing so securely as what τὸ δαιμόνιον reveals in dreams).⁹ Moreover, the purpose of the appearance of τὸ δαιμόνιον in this passage is to confirm and support the actions of Sulla (and his soldiers). The surviving fragments of Sulla's *Autobiography* which discuss the role played by the divine strongly suggest that the role of τὸ δαιμόνιον within that work was to provide confirmation that Sulla's cause was just and that he had the support of the gods in his endeavours.¹⁰ The nature of τὸ δαιμόνιον in 14.7 therefore bears all the hallmarks of a quotation of the *Autobiography*, given the role played by the divine and the close proximity to a citation of Sulla at 14.6.¹¹

the sack, as suggested by his use of λέγεται in his narrative of the old men being overheard while gossiping about the weak point in the city's defences. It is even possible that local Athenian historians had recorded details of the siege and sack of the city, and that Plutarch was drawing on their work in his composition of this narrative. See Ruggeri (2006) 318-24; Thein (forthcoming [a]). Sack of Athens: see Appian *Mith.* 30, 38; Livy *Per.* 81; Paus 4.20.4-6. Hind (1994) 153-4; Keaveney (2005) 69-74. On the effects of the sack: Hoff (1997); Grigoropoulos (2009); Antela-Bernárdez (2009); Assenmaker (2013b). Plutarch is evidently aware of the tradition portraying Sulla's actions during the sack of Athens as monstrous: see for example his description of the panic of the citizens and the blood flowing in the Kerameikos at *Plut. Sull.* 14.4. It has even been argued that a coin hoard discovered at the Dipylon Gate (*IGCH* 339) was left by an Athenian fleeing the slaughter, and that another found in Piraeus (*ICGH* 337) was from Sulla's siege of the harbour in 88/7: Habicht (1999) 309-310. *ICGH*: Thompson, Mørkholm and Kraay (1973).

⁸ Valgiglio (1975) 273; Behr (1993) 18-19. *Plut. Sull.* 14.4: καὶ τὸ δαιμόνιον εὐθὺς ἐπεσήμηνε· τῆς γὰρ αὐτῆς ἡμέρας τε καὶ ὄρας ἐκεῖνόν τε Κουρίων κατήγε, καὶ νεφῶν ἐξ αἰθρίας συνδραμόντων πλήθος ὄμβρου καταρραγὲν ἐπλήρωσεν ὕδατος τὴν ἀκρόπολιν. C. Scribonius Curio, *cos.* 76: *MRR* 2.56; 92-93. No title is preserved for Curio's service under Sulla, but it is clear that he was a *legatus* or held a similar junior military role.

⁹ See commentary on F8P (a) for Plutarch's choice of terminology when referring to the divine in the *Sulla*.

¹⁰ See for example commentaries on F8P and F18P.

¹¹ It is possible that the naming of leading individuals within his army was a manifestation of the aspect of Sulla's character commemorated in his epitaph, that he was surpassed by no friend in kindness, and by no enemy in retribution: *Plut. Sull.* 38.4: οὔτε τῶν φίλων τις αὐτὸν εὖ ποιῶν οὔτε τῶν ἐχθρῶν κακῶς ὑπερεβάλετο. This aspect of his character may also be observed in his attitude towards those who fought alongside him, such as Lucullus. See commentary on F1P for details of the relationship between Sulla and Lucullus.

However, since there is no citation for this text, we may not state with absolute certainty that Sulla was the source for this story.¹² In view of the controversy engendered by the sack of Athens, we ought not be surprised to find τὸ δαιμόνιον stepping in to add legitimacy to Sulla's actions.

The harshness of Sulla's sack of Athens in 86 had a profound effect not only on the city itself, but also on the reception of Sulla in Greece. Plutarch's account of Sulla's time in Greece understandably makes much of the looting of Delphi, from which items were taken including the statue of Apollo he liked to carry with him, and even Croesus' cup, which he had broken into pieces.¹³ Plutarch uses this as evidence of the lasciviousness of Sulla, contrasting him with glorious leaders of Rome's past, who treated the Greek sanctuaries with respect and even added to their treasures. It has been argued that, at the time, Sulla's actions in Athens were not particularly noteworthy, and that the highly emotive language used by all our sources to describe the events is a result of Sulla's early career being viewed in the light of the proscriptions. Keaveney has argued that Sulla's troops were so exhausted by the length of the siege that he had no choice but to give them permission to loot and sack the city, or else be killed himself: "it would have been madness for Sulla to try and rein them in from altruistic motives. They would, without the slightest hesitation, have turned on him and destroyed him utterly."¹⁴ A different reconstruction may well be possible. The siege and sack of Athens in 87/6 is far from the only military action in antiquity that was carried out with restive troops, and if Sulla were so incapable of controlling his soldiers then he would surely not have been able to restrain them in their destruction and slaughter. Even Plutarch, who portrays Sulla's actions as having been like the deluge of Deucalion, admits the restraint exercised by Sulla and his troops, and Strabo's account of the event omits the violence entirely and concentrates only on the pardoning of the city, and the

¹² See the Introduction for the methodology of dealing with passages without citations, but which appear to preserve the sense of the *Autobiography*.

¹³ Statue of Apollo: Plut. *Sull.* 29.6. Although Sulla took this from Delphi, Plutarch does admit that he treated the statue with affection, stating that he carried the image in battle at all times, and that in the Battle of the Colline Gate, he took it out and kissed it with affection: λέγεται δὲ ἔχων τι χρυσοῦν Ἀπόλλωνος ἀγαλμάτιον ἐκ Δελφῶν ἀει μὲν αὐτὸ κατὰ τὰς μάχας περιφέρειν ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τότε τοῦτο καταφιλεῖν οὔτω δὴ λέγων. Croesus' cup and the removal of other treasures from Delphi: Plut. *Sull.* 12.6-9, cf. Hdt. 1.51.

¹⁴ Keaveney (2005) 74-75.

fact that the city remained free under the Romans.¹⁵ Indeed, Sulla's pardon of the living for the sake of the dead (that is, pardoning the Athenians of his day for the sake of the glories of Athens' past)¹⁶ has been taken as evidence of his clemency, a strand that appears to have existed within the historiographical tradition.¹⁷ Florus preserves a similar statement, declaring that Sulla decided to be lenient for the sake of the past glories of Athens, and their *sacra*: *postquam domuerat ingratisimos hominum, tamen, ut ipse dixit, in honorem mortuorum sacris suis famaeque donavit*.¹⁸ Interestingly, Florus states that Sulla himself had said this (*ut ipse dixit*), and Assenmaker has recently argued that this should be considered a new fragment, of the paraphrase type (“au sens du citations, ou «citations-paraphrases»”), of the *Autobiography*.¹⁹ Although the *Autobiography* is not named, the ascription of this saying to Sulla ought to be tested.

¹⁵ Plut. *Sull.* 14.5: ἀλλὰ γὰρ τοῦτο μὲν Μειδίου καὶ Καλλιφῶντος τῶν φυγάδων δεομένων καὶ προκυλινδουμένων αὐτοῦ, τοῦτο δὲ τῶν συγκλητικῶν, ὅσοι συνεστράτευον, ἐξαιτουμένων τὴν πόλιν, αὐτὸς τε μεστὸς ὦν ἤδη τῆς τιμωρίας, ἐγκώμιόν τι τῶν παλαιῶν Ἀθηναίων ὑπειτῶν ἔφη χαρίζεσθαι πολλοῖς μὲν ὀλιγούς, ζῶντας δὲ τεθηκόσιν. Strabo 9.1.20: τὸν δ' ἰσχύσαντα μάλιστα τὸν Ἀριστίωνα καὶ ταύτην βιασάμενον τὴν πόλιν ἐκ πολιορκίας ἐλὼν Σύλλας ὁ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμὼν ἐκόλασε, τῇ δὲ πόλει συγγνώμην ἔνειμε· καὶ μέχρι νῦν ἐν ἐλευθερίᾳ τέ ἐστι καὶ τιμῇ παρὰ τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις.

¹⁶ It might be argued that the disparity between Sulla's statement that he was willing to pardon the living for the sake of the dead at Plut. *Sull.* 14.5 and Plutarch's argument that Sulla pursued his own agenda in Greece and against Athens from a personal passion (ἔρωσ), and with an enthusiasm directed against the former glory of the city (Plut. *Sull.* 13.1) reveals a discontinuity within Sulla's attitudes towards Athens. However, it seems that the responsibility for this apparent divergence lies with Plutarch's depiction, and did not stem from Sulla's *Autobiography*: Arafat (1996) 98. See also Pelling (2002) 151, which sets Plutarch's claim that Sulla's reason for indulging Athens after her capture was for her glorious history against the apparently contradictory claim that it was because he was sated with vengeance (αὐτὸς τε μεστὸς ὦν ἤδη τῆς τιμωρίας, Plut. *Sull.* 14.5). Plutarch, however, does not set these two claims up as a contrast, and it is reasonable to assume that Sulla gave more than one reason, particularly since forgiving Athens simply at the request of two Athenians and a few Roman senators might have shown weakness. By stating that he was also sated with vengeance, Sulla puts himself back in control of the situation.

¹⁷ Note in particular Plutarch's assessment of the treatment of Athens by Sulla and by Lysander in the *Comp. Lys. et Sull.* 5.4. For references to Sulla's clemency in the tradition see Dowling (2000) and Thein (forthcoming [a]). It ought to be noted, as Thein (forthcoming [a]) points out, that the existence of references to Sulla's clemency does not imply that this was a significant thread in the narratives of Sulla's career; the proscriptions and the violence of Sulla's later career overshadowed such moments of clemency in the memory of the writers of the subsequent decades and centuries. On Sulla's treatment of Athens after its fall see Kallet-Marx (1995) 212-220.

¹⁸ Flor. *Ep.* 1.40.10.

¹⁹ Assenmaker (2013a) 809-810. For different types of fragment see the Introduction.

As is argued above, it seems that much of Plutarch's account of Sulla's treatment of Athens stemmed from the *Autobiography*, and one of the comments most like to have been taken from there concerns Sulla's reason for pardoning the Athenians (ἐγκώμιόν τι τῶν παλαιῶν Ἀθηναίων ὑπειτῶν ἔφη χαρίζεσθαι πολλοῖς μὲν ὀλιγούς, ζῶντας δὲ τεθνηκόσιν),²⁰ The similarity between that statement and Flor. *Ep.* 1.40.10 is striking, and it is more than plausible that both Florus and Plutarch were drawing on the same source at this point. Moreover, since we may be reasonably sure that Sulla's *Autobiography* was the source of much of Plutarch's account of these events, it stands to reason that the citation *ut ipse dixit* may be taken as a reference to the *Autobiography*.

If this is the case, then Flor. *Ep.* 1.40.10 allows us further insight into Sulla's treatment of his negotiations with the Athenians, and it should certainly be included in future editions of the fragments, given the citation of Sulla, even though the *Autobiography* is not explicitly named. It has been argued that the invocation of a city's past greatness, a "ritualized use of history" as a form of communication, was a commonplace of Athenian diplomacy, part of the "kinship diplomacy" of the Greek world that failed in the case of Sulla since he was a "barbarian aggressor".²¹ There is no suggestion that Sulla was aware of this tradition, however, and since Sulla was apparently persuaded to pardon the majority of the Athenians, there is no reason to state that the diplomatic process had failed.²² It is more plausible to interpret Sulla's pardoning of the city as an attempt to prevent further unrest among the inhabitants of Greece, whose land and cities were being ravaged as a result of the conflict between Mithridates and Rome.

Despite these claims of leniency on Sulla's part, however, the archaeological evidence for extensive fires and damage to Athens and Piraeus is indisputable;²³ Sulla's

²⁰ Plut. *Sull.* 14.5. Cf Strabo 9.1.20 for Sulla's pardon of Athens.

²¹ Chaniotis (2005a) 145-146; see also Chaniotis (2005b) 215-216.

²² As Santangelo (2007a) 40 notes, when the Athenians first attempted to use this strategy, Sulla dismissed them (Plut. *Sull.* 13.5), and it is safest to interpret this as evidence that he was not interested in any sort of negotiation. The allusion to the technique in Sulla's eventual decision to pardon the city surely proves that the point of the ritual was not lost on Sulla.

²³ See above bibliography. Assenmaker (2013b) 396-403 as evidence that, on the contrary, the sack of Athens was not as brutal as it has sometimes been suggested in the past; he draws particular attention to the financial stability of the city in the years after the attack. However, it ought to be understood that even though we are dealing with hyperbole on the part of Pausanias and Plutarch, the fires in the city are indisputable,

sack of Athens was a violent and destructive event, and even though Sulla might be said to have shown some mercy we must not assume that the hostile portrayal of the event in our sources is purely a result of the historians' reaction to Sulla's later career.²⁴ When considering the archaeological evidence for the sack, and the representation of the event by our other sources, Plutarch's narrative is certainly plausible: Sulla sacked the city and caused considerable bloodshed, but did show some restraint; things could have been even worse for the Athenians. And it is likely that this presentation of Sulla's actions should be traced back to his own self-representation in the *Autobiography*.²⁵

and support the theory argued for here that Sulla did indeed sack the city ferociously – but that in the end he showed mercy.

²⁴ Cf. Keaveney (2005) 75: "It is his peculiar misfortune to have his earlier career viewed by historians through the distorting lens of his proscriptions which blackened his final years." The effects on Athens went beyond the immediate devastation. Athens lost a number of political privileges (App. *Mithr.* 38), and the franchise was removed from those Athenians who had seceded to Mithridates for at least a decade. Ferguson (1911) 451; Habicht (1999) 297-337.

²⁵ Assenmaker (2013b) 402-403.

Commentary on F14P – Plut. Sull. 16.1 (= F21S, F15C)

When about to confront the forces of Mithridates under the command of Archelaus in Boeotia, Sulla combined his forces with those of Hortensius and occupied the hill of Philoboeotus in Elatea. Plutarch describes this hill as fertile, densely covered with trees, and with a good water supply, and tells us that Sulla praised highly both the location and the natural advantages of the hill.

This passage occurs after the account of the siege and successful capture of Athens, as Sulla travelled north in 86 BC into Boeotia with his troops to join with the army under the legatus L. Hortensius, in order to meet the challenge posed by Archelaus.¹ The battles of Chaeronea and Orchomenus took place shortly afterwards. Only the very end of this passage stems directly from Sulla, it would seem: τὴν φύσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν θέσιν ἐπαινεῖ θαυμασίως ὁ Σύλλας. This fits in well with the genre of military narrative; Sulla is giving detailed information about the locations to which he came while on campaign, and at points at which he was able to use the topography to his advantage, he did so. Sulla is thus presenting himself as a skilled general, who possesses the ability to adapt to the surroundings in which he found himself. This fits neatly into one of the qualities praised by Cicero as attributes of the ideal general, that of *scientia rei militaris*.²

Sulla's decision to praise the hill also reveals one of the many ways in which he used his *Autobiography* to address criticisms about him and about events within his career. There were many who thought that he had made a tactical error in leaving behind Attica and travelling into Boeotia, arguing that the landscape of Boeotia lent itself more readily to the capabilities of Archelaus and the Mithridatic troops than those of the Romans.³ The main strength of Archelaus' troops lay in the cavalry, and while the hills of Attica would have made it difficult for this enemy, the plains of Boeotia favoured the Mithridatic army. However, Plutarch claims that Sulla knew that the infertile lands of

¹ Hortensius played an important part in the battle of Chaeronea (Plut. *Sull.* 17.7), and had previously been charged with providing Sulla with troops (Plut. *Sull.* 15.3): *MRR* 2.56. On Archelaus, see commentary on F17P, below.

² Cic. *Pro Leg. Man.* 28.

³ Plutarch discusses the decision at length in 15.1-3, esp. 15.2: καὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς ἐδόκει σφάλλεσθαι τὸν λογισμὸν. Plutarch argues that the decision was justified, since Boeotia was much more fertile, and could sustain the Roman army more readily than Attica could. It is possible that Sulla's own account lies behind Plutarch at this point; see below.

Attica were not able to sustain the Roman troops even during peacetime, and Archelaus had been planning to cut off the Romans' supplies.⁴ Moving into Boeotia, on the other hand, meant that Sulla could be sure that his troops would continue to be fed. Plutarch discusses the decision at length, arguing that the fertility of his native land meant that the choice was justified.⁵ Similarly, the region of Elatea was known for being an advantageous defensive position, since there were a number of passes that might be relatively easily controlled.⁶ It is highly likely that this discussion stemmed from Sulla's *Autobiography*,⁷ since it addresses, and attempts to refute, specific criticisms levelled at Sulla, along similar lines to his construction of a narrative regarding Vercellae or the Jugurthine War.⁸

It is possible that we may discern from Plutarch's method of citation here that the comments on the pleasant nature of this hill (εὐγεῶν καὶ ἀμφιλαφῆ καὶ παρὰ τὴν ῥίζαν ὕδωρ ἔχοντα) stem from the biographer himself, drawing on his knowledge of the area in which he lived. It is likely that Sulla's praise of the hill (ἐπαίνεϊ) mentioned some such qualities, but that the exact praise given in *Sull.* 16.1 is Plutarch's own opinion on an area which he knew well;⁹ he would not have had to rely on Sulla's *Autobiography* or any other historical source for such information.¹⁰ While it is possible that the reference to the fertility of the hill (εὐγεῶν) goes back to Sulla's apologetic explanation for his decision to move north into Boeotia, it is more likely that Plutarch has simply picked up on this theme from Sulla's *Autobiography*; at any rate, even though Sulla may have been discussing the general fecundity of the area, there would be no reason to mention that the hill, temporarily held during a battle, was similarly fertile.

⁴ Plut. *Sull.* 15.1: βουλόμενον... τὰς εὐπορίας αὐτῶν ἀφαιρεῖν.

⁵ Plut. *Sull.* 15.1-3.

⁶ Strabo 9.3.2.

⁷ Valgiglio (1975) 271.

⁸ See commentary on F4P, and F5P and F6P.

⁹ Although the hill itself has not been definitively identified, the plains of Elatea from which it rose were close to Plutarch's home in the region of Chaeronea. The plains were clearly well known to Plutarch, who mentioned them in *Marc.* 21.2 as having been called Ἄρεως ὀρχήστραν, 'the dance-floor of Ares'. See Holden (1886) 111; Valgiglio (1954) 77.

¹⁰ To a certain extent the present tense of καλεῖται implies this also, since it refers to the contemporary situation in Plutarch's day, although it was conventional to use the present tense for geographical features that had not changed since the time in which the narrative was set.

Commentary on F15P – Plut. Sull. 19.4-5 (= F22S, F16C)

Sulla claimed that in the battle of Chaeronea, he lost only 14 men, two of whom returned later that evening. On account of this success, he set up trophies, and inscribed on them the names of Ares, Nike and Aphrodite, believing that his victory was due no less to εὐτυχία than to military expertise and forces.

This fragment preserves some of the most important evidence concerning Sulla's strategies of self-representation, both in the *Autobiography* and elsewhere. As well as providing a military narrative of a decisive battle, Sulla discussed the ways in which he commemorated his victory; this was, in the first place, through the erection of a trophy on the site of the battle. However, in order to circulate the ideas conveyed by the trophy's iconography and inscription, he also mentioned the monument and its inscription in his *Autobiography* and used an image of two trophies (representing, it is argued here, his victories at Chaeronea and Orchomenus) on his coinage and in other media, including a signet ring. This commentary focuses on the images and ideas that Sulla conveyed about himself with the Chaeronea and Orchomenus trophies, both in his *Autobiography* and elsewhere, with a view to revealing the complexity of the politician's public image and how his self-representation functioned in a number of fields.¹

The military focus of this passage brings it in line with many other fragments of the *Autobiography*. The almost certainly exaggerated casualty figures, for example, recall F19P, which discusses the figures for Sacriportus.² Here, Sulla claims that in the battle of Chaeronea he lost only 14 soldiers, of which two returned afterwards.³ This slight variation on the convention of exaggerating enemy casualty numbers while under-estimating one's own may have been employed in order to increase the vividness of

¹ This fragment has been subjected to much discussion, and it is not the intention of this commentary to confront and solve all the problems that have been raised in previous scholarship. This is, instead, a selective discussion concerning the relation of F15P to Sulla's broader strategy of self-representation. For references regarding the main ideas conveyed in F15P see the commentaries of Bertinelli (1997) 359-361; Chassignet (2004) 244-245; *FRH* 3.297.

² See commentary on F19P.

³ The battle of Chaeronea took place in 86 BC between the Romans and the troops of Mithridates, led by his general Archelaus. Plut. *Sull.* 17-19; App. *Mithr.* 42-3; Front. *Strat.* 2.3.17. An excellent summary of this Mithridatic campaign may be found in Hind (1994) 154-159.

Sulla's narrative; at any rate, it adds to the argument that the bulk of Sulla's *Autobiography* consisted of detailed narrative of military affairs.⁴

As was standard practice following a victory of that magnitude, Sulla erected a trophy on the site of the battle. Such trophies were originally made of enemy armour and spoils arranged on a tree trunk, but by this stage of the late Republic they were stone structures built to resemble the original tree trunk and armour constructions.⁵ After Chaeronea, Plutarch tells us that two monuments were set up. Although he does not cite Sulla directly for the information that the trophy was discussed in the *Autobiography*, his use of διὸ suggests that the connection between the victory and the dedication of the trophy was drawn by Sulla rather than by Plutarch himself. This adds credence to that which we might otherwise have suspected: that Sulla mentioned the trophy in the *Autobiography*.⁶

Plutarch's wording is of crucial significance to the understanding of the nature of the two constructions:

διὸ καὶ τοῖς τροπαίοις ἐπέγραψεν Ἄρη καὶ Νίκην καὶ Ἀφροδίτην, ὡς οὐχ ἦττον εὐτυχία κατορθώσας ἢ δεινότητι καὶ δυνάμει τὸν πόλεμον. ἀλλὰ τοῦτο μὲν τὸ τρόπαιον ἔστηκε τῆς πεδιάδος μάχης ἣ πρῶτον ἐνέκλιναν οἱ περὶ Ἀρχέλαον παρὰ τὸ Μόλου ρεῖθρον, ἕτερον δὲ ἐστὶ τοῦ Θουρίου κατὰ κορυφὴν βεβηκὸς ἐπὶ τῇ κυκλώσει τῶν βαρβάρων, γράμμασιν Ἑλληνικοῖς ἐπισημαῖνον Ὅμολοίχον καὶ Ἀναξίδαμον ἀριστεῖς.⁷

“For this reason he inscribed on the trophies ‘Ares and Nike and Aphrodite’, since (he believed that) he had succeeded no less through good fortune than through natural cleverness and ability in warfare. This trophy stands at the point on the battlefield at which those around Archelaus first gave way near the stream Molos, but there is another concerning the enveloping of the barbarians which stands on the summit of Thurium, and indicates in Greek letters ‘Homoloichus and Anaxidamus, the best’.”

⁴ For Sullan exaggeration of casualty numbers see Hirschfeld (1913) 291-293.

⁵ On the evolution of Roman trophies see Picard (1957) 103-163.

⁶ Contrary to the assertion of *FRH* 3.297.

⁷ Plut. *Sull.* 19.5. We may assume that Plutarch's description was based on his own first hand experience of seeing the monuments, since they were located so close to his hometown. On Plutarch and Chaeronea during the Mithridatic War, and the problematic picture he presents, see Santangelo (2007a) 45-48.

Plutarch is very specific in distinguishing between the two monuments. The first was the trophy mentioned in the fragment above; the second, a monument recording the actions of two local Greeks who had helped with the capture of the Mithridatic camp. One of these monuments was discovered in 1990 by a group of graduate students from the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, who believed that they had found Sulla's trophy.⁸ However, when the details were published, it became evident that Camp *et al.* had misinterpreted their find: the presence of the names of Homoloichus and Anaxidamus serve to prove that they had, in fact, come across the second monument, honouring the two Greeks for the assistance they provided to the Romans during the battle.⁹ Further analysis of this monument has demonstrated the likelihood that the monument was erected by the Chaeroneans themselves, to stand as testament of their roles in the battle, since it is roughly made and the inscription is crudely cut and written in local Boeotian (Aeolic) dialect.¹⁰ This does not conflict with the statements of Plutarch, who simply says ἕτερον δὲ ἐστὶ, without stating who it was who built the construction. The monument located by Camp *et al.* was an important find, not least since it corroborates Plutarch's account of these constructions, but it is not a Sullan trophy.¹¹

⁸ Camp, Ierardi, McInerney, Morgan and Umholtz (1992), hereafter 'Camp *et al.*'.

⁹ MacKay (2000) 168-177. If Plutarch's description of the monument of Homoloichus and Anaxidamus was taken from Sulla, this would suggest that, as in F12P, Sulla was willing to give credit to individuals who had supported him. See commentary on F12P and F13P for the naming of M. Ateius and this tendency in Sulla's *Autobiography*. However, the wording is not clear and it is perhaps more likely that Plutarch had added the information about the second monument from his own local knowledge. At any rate, Plutarch is careful to point out that the Homoloichus and Anaxidamus commemoration was on a *second* monument at Chaeronea, not Sulla's trophy. Since he had seen these monuments first hand, we may take this assertion to be correct.

¹⁰ MacKay (2000) 171: "even if we could believe that Sulla erected such a monument to Greeks serving under him, it is impossible to believe that a magistrate of the Roman people would have inscribed it in the uncouth dialect of Boeotia." Although it is perhaps going a little too far to describe the dialect of Pindar as 'uncouth', it was starkly different from Attic Greek, so much so that Plato harshly criticised the writing of the Lesbian poet Pittacus of Mytilene, even calling the dialect 'βάρβαρος' (*Protagoras* 341c). MacKay is surely correct to doubt that Sulla, as representative of Rome, would have chosen such a dialect in which to inscribe his victory monument.

¹¹ These three constructions were also misunderstood by Mayor (2010) 208-213, who believed that Sulla set up three trophies (two at Chaeronea and one at Orchomenus), and that these three trophies were featured on coins. Mayor is incorrect on these points, since there is no evidence for a coin featuring three trophies (*RRC* 359 portrays two, with a jug and *lituus*), and no evidence for a third trophy at Chaeronea and Orchomenus. Keaveney (2005) 80 also describes the Homoloichus and Anaxidamus monument imprecisely as a 'permanent trophy'.

It has been suggested that a third monument was constructed nearby following the battle of Orchomenus, which took place shortly after the battle of Chaeronea, in early 85 BC. Although there is no mention of a second Sullan trophy in the region within the written record, Orchomenus was a similarly important victory for Sulla, and it is logical to assume that if he were intending to set up a trophy after one, he may have done the same after the other. The appearance of the two trophies on Sulla's coinage corroborates this theory, since it is implausible in the extreme to suggest that the Homoloichus and Anaxidamus monument, set up by native Greeks commemorating their own role in the battle, would have been in the shape of a Roman trophy or would have been featured on one of Sulla's coins.¹² It is possible that the trophy that Sulla set up at Orchomenus has been uncovered; a significant monument from the Roman period was found near modern Orchomenos, and early reports in the international press suggested that it could be the Sullan monument. However, the monument has yet to be properly examined and published, and until that happens it will not be possible to confirm whether or not the monument is indeed a trophy set up by Sulla after the battle of Orchomenus.¹³

Three significant motivating factors appear to have prompted Sulla to dedicate the trophies at Chaeronea and Orchomenus. Primarily, gratitude towards the gods seems to have played some role, if we are to believe the account in Plutarch; secondly, the trophies stood as a permanent testament to his achievements in the middle of Greece; and thirdly, since Sulla had made himself distinctly unpopular with the inhabitants of the local area, the monuments could stand as testament to the divine support that Sulla was receiving in his campaign. Following the victory at Orchomenus, Sulla looted a nearby sanctuary, an act which must have angered the native population.¹⁴ Pausanias uses Sulla as an example of the aphorism 'θυμιάμασιν ἄλλοτρίοις τὸ θεῖον σέβεσθαι', and states that Sulla took a particularly fine statue of a standing Dionysus, by the famous Myron, from the Minyae at Orchomenus.¹⁵ Pausanias compares Sulla's actions at Orchomenus to his actions towards Thebes and the sack of Athens. Plutarch's silence on the matter may stem from the hostilities between Chaeronea and Orchomenus that

¹² See below on this coin, *RRC* 359.

¹³ Mayor (2010) 208-213. For this reason, much of what is said here about the Orchomenus trophy must remain provisional, until such time as the trophy (if that is indeed what has been found) is published.

¹⁴ Santangelo (2007a) 200.

¹⁵ Paus. 9.30.1. See Arafat (1996) 102-4.

followed the Mithridatic War.¹⁶ At any rate, Sulla had more reason to set up an impressive monument at Orchomenus than at a number of places, since it was a crucial site of the campaign, and the ascription of the responsibility of the Roman victory to the gods added legitimacy to his campaign, and may even have been intended in part to quell unrest regarding his presence in the region. There is no reason to think that Sulla was at any pains to conceal his plundering of the temples: a famous story circulated, for example, in which he was said to have carried with him a small statue of Apollo which he had taken from the sanctuary at Delphi,¹⁷ and he openly used land taken from Thebes as compensation for items looted from Delphi.¹⁸ As the story of Sulla and the statue of Apollo reveals, however, it was not necessarily problematic for Sulla to have used resources from Delphi. It is not clear that the statue was, as usually assumed, ‘taken’ from the sanctuary at Delphi;¹⁹ Plutarch simply describes it as ἐκ Δελφῶν. It is equally possible to interpret this phrase as meaning that the statue was a gift to Sulla, possibly on the occasion of his reparation to the sanctuary with the lands taken from Thebes. Plutarch’s position as a priest at Delphi no doubt coloured his interpretation and presentation of Sulla’s actions in this regard, and it is notable that Appian does not condemn Sulla to the same extent.²⁰ On the other hand, the looting of the religious centre at Orchomenus cannot have helped to placate that region of Boeotia, whose landscape still bore the scars of these battles two centuries later,²¹ and even if Delphi might be argued to have renewed their friendship with Sulla, we cannot expect the inhabitants of Boeotia to have received such significant reparations. It is in this regard that the Chaeronea and Orchomenus trophies could be used as a statement that Sulla’s actions had the support of the gods.

The Chaeronea and Orchomenus trophies also had a significant function within Sulla’s broader self-representational strategy. While it was common practice to set up such trophies on the battlefield after a victory, in order to proclaim to posterity the might of Rome, there was a natural limit to the effectiveness and reach of the ideas

¹⁶ For the hostilities between Chaeronea and Orchomenus see Santangelo (2007a) 45-48. As Santangelo also notes at 200, these disputes prove that Orchomenus was not destroyed by Sulla, even if he had taken some of the treasures of the city.

¹⁷ Plut. *Sull.* 29.6.

¹⁸ The looting of items from Delphi (as well as Olympia and Epidauros): Plut. *Sull.* 12.4-6. Reparations from land taken from the Thebans: 19.6.

¹⁹ Eg Mayor (2010) 201.

²⁰ Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* 7.2.1 = *Mor.* 700e.

²¹ Bows, helmets, pieces of breastplates, and swords from this battle were still being found in Plutarch’s day, nearly two centuries later. Plut. *Sull.* 21.4.

conveyed by these distant monuments, which would scarcely have reached Rome itself. Sulla, however, clearly wished for knowledge of his trophy at Chaeronea to be circulated more widely, and it was no doubt for this reason that Sulla included it in his *Autobiography*.²² It may be determined from Plutarch's statement – διὸ καὶ τοῖς τροπαίοις ἐπέγραψεν Ἄρη καὶ Νίκην καὶ Ἀφροδίτην, ὡς οὐχ ἦττον εὐτυχία κατορθώσας ἢ δεινότητι καὶ δυνάμει τὸν πόλεμον – that Sulla not only mentioned the Chaeronea trophy, but discussed it in some detail, including the gods to whom it was dedicated, and the reasons for their selection.

According to Plutarch, the three gods to whom the trophy at Chaeronea was dedicated, and whose names were inscribed upon it, were Ares, Nike, and Aphrodite. It is probable that this reflects an original inscription in which the names of the gods were given in Greek and not Latin, and therefore not 'Mars, Victoria, and Venus'. It was common for such victory monuments to bear inscriptions in Latin even when they were erected in Greek-speaking areas, and if we had no further information it would have been tempting to conclude that this trophy was inscribed in Latin too.²³

Indeed, it has frequently been argued that the trophy was inscribed in Latin since in Plutarch's careful distinction between Sulla's trophy and the Homoloichus and Anaxidamus monument, the biographer specifies that the latter was written 'in Greek letters': γράμμασιν Ἑλληνικοῖς. This has been taken as an implication that the other monument, Sulla's trophy, bears a Latin inscription. However, it is not clear that γράμμασιν Ἑλληνικοῖς is to be taken as an attempt on Plutarch's part to distinguish between the two constructions, and, if the monument were inscribed in Latin, it would be unusual among Sulla's constructions in Greece and the Greek East.²⁴ It is quite clear that the inscription was in fact in Greek, because Plutarch has preserved his own first-

²² In all probability, the Orchomenus trophy was also mentioned in the *Autobiography*, but since Plutarch does not record a description of this second trophy, this may not be established with any certainty.

²³ The majority of Sullan inscriptions in Greece, and all of those in the Greek East, were in Greek. See eg. *RDGE* 18, 20, 21, 23, 49, 51, 70. Some constructions in Greece did bear inscriptions in Latin, such as the dedication to Mars at Sicyon, *ILLRP* 224. For a list of Sulla's Latin inscriptions in Greece see Santangelo (2007a) 203 n. 18, and 231-2.

²⁴ Santangelo (2007a) 203-4. See also Assenmaker (2013c) 947-955.

hand account of the Chaeronea trophy, in which he is careful to point out that the name used by Sulla was not Φήλιξ but Ἐπαφρόδιτος.²⁵

We have no reason to doubt Plutarch's testimony on this point, but the difficulties raised by the passage have led to some convoluted explanations that are not necessary if one envisages the existence of a second trophy at Orchomenus, as discussed above. MacKay argued that the plural τὰ τρόπαια in the phrase τὰ παρ' ἡμῶν ἐν Χαιρωνείᾳ τρόπαια referred to the two constructions at Chaeronea: the trophy and the Homoloichus and Anaxidamus monument. Since the Homoloichus and Anaxidamus monument was discovered and did not feature Sulla's *cognomen*,²⁶ MacKay inferred that Plutarch had simply conflated the two in his memory, and that τὰ τρόπαια was thus merely an imprecise reference to the two Chaeronean constructions, only one of which was in reality a τρόπαιον.²⁷ However, there is no need to assume that Plutarch had conflated the two monuments, particularly since the biographer seems to have been sufficiently familiar with the constructions as to record their inscriptions with reasonable accuracy. The fact that Plutarch remembered the appearance of the *cognomen* Ἐπαφρόδιτος is a sufficiently specific detail to suggest that he was reasonably familiar with the inscription; it is illogical to argue that he was so familiar with one of the constructions and yet mistaken about the other, especially since we know that Plutarch's description in the *Sulla* of the inscription on the Homoloichus and Anaxidamus monument was reasonably accurate.²⁸

Some alternative explanation must therefore be found for Plutarch's plural τὰ τρόπαια. The solution is to be found in the full phrase τὰ παρ' ἡμῶν ἐν Χαιρωνείᾳ τρόπαια, if we posit that by παρ' ἡμῶν ἐν Χαιρωνείᾳ Plutarch did not mean 'in/at Chaeronea' but the more literal 'near us in Chaeronea', and that the plural τὰ τρόπαια must refer to the two trophies that were *near* Chaeronea: that is, the trophy celebrating the battle of Chaeronea, and the trophy celebrating the battle of Orchomenus. The

²⁵ Plut. *De Fort. Rom.* 4 = *Mor.* 318d: καὶ Ῥωμαιστὶ μὲν Φήλιξ ὀνομάζετο, τοῖς δὲ Ἑλλήσιν οὕτως ἔγραφε, Λούκιος Κορνήλιος Σύλλας Ἐπαφρόδιτος. καὶ τὰ παρ' ἡμῶν ἐν Χαιρωνείᾳ τρόπαια, καὶ τὰ τῶν Μιθριδατικῶν, οὕτως ἐπιγράφεται.

²⁶ Although we may not be absolutely certain on this point, the stone does not have room for such an additional inscription, and it does not appear that it has been broken.

²⁷ MacKay (2000) 175-176.

²⁸ Plut. *Sull.* 19.5. The publication of the Orchomenus monument will allow us to determine with much more certainty the accuracy with which Plutarch wrote when he stated that both the Chaeronea and Orchomenus trophies were inscribed with the *cognomen* Ἐπαφρόδιτος (as argued below).

modern towns of Chaeronea and Orchomenos are approximately 8 miles away from one another, and although the exact locations of the battlefields has not been identified, it is reasonable to assume that the battles must have been close to the respective towns after which they were each named. Since the battlefield at Orchomenus was a plain, and Chaeronea on higher land, it might even have been possible to see both trophies at the same time.²⁹ It would thus be possible to use the phrase παρ' ἡμῖν ἐν Χαιρωνείᾳ to refer to both trophies. It is logical to posit that the basic dedicatory formula that appeared on the Chaeronea trophy would be repeated in broadly the same terms on the Orchomenus trophy; even if we cannot know whether or not the same gods appeared on the latter, we may assume that it would be realistic for Sulla to give his name in the same way on two trophies dedicated so close to one another both geographically and chronologically. It is therefore logical to infer that the *cognomen* Ἐπαφρόδιτος appeared on both trophies. Moreover, since it may thus be determined that the inscriptions were written in Greek (hence Ἐπαφρόδιτος), we may also conclude that the names of the gods to whom the Chaeronea trophy was dedicated were also given in their Greek forms. Plutarch's Ἄρη καὶ Νίκην καὶ Ἀφροδίτην thus reflects the text of an original inscription in which the gods thanked were Ares, Nike, and Aphrodite, not Mars, Victoria, and Venus.³⁰

That said, it is also clear that the Greek gods glossed their Roman counterparts: that by thanking Ares, Sulla was (also) thanking Mars, and so on. The use of the Greek names does not mean that the Roman gods were not also being thought of when Sulla dedicated the monument. But the choice to use the Greek names strongly suggests that Sulla envisaged a close connection between the pairs and, especially in the case of Venus and Aphrodite, this is particularly revealing of the ways in which Sulla constructed his public image. There are a number of occasions on which Sulla made reference to Venus or Aphrodite, and these have led many scholars to posit an extremely close relationship between Sulla and this goddess in both her Greek and Latin guises. For example, he paid tribute to and established a connection with the cult of Aphrodite at Aphrodisias in Caria by sending an axe and a dedicatory inscription to the sanctuary there, and he displayed the head of Venus on his coinage.³¹ Most notably, of course, he used the *cognomen* Epaphroditos while in the Greek East, drawing an explicit

²⁹ If this were the case, then the two trophies would have been closely tied together in the mind of the immediate viewers in Boeotia, a process that would continue with the appearance of the two trophies on *RRC* 359.

³⁰ When the Orchomenus trophy is finally published, if its inscription is sufficiently well preserved, it is likely that it will resolve this question.

³¹ Axe: App. *BC* 1.97. Coinage: eg. *RRC* 359, on which see below.

connection between himself and the goddess. The relationship between Sulla and Venus is complex, and is discussed in more detail in the Conclusion, but it ought to be noted here that the presence of Aphrodite/Venus on the Chaeronea monument has often been cited as one of the strongest piece of evidence for a connection between that goddess and Sulla's understanding of *felicitas*.³² However, close analysis of the literary evidence for the trophy and Sulla's presentation of Aphrodite/Venus in the context of Chaeronea shows that the connection may not be securely established. This is the first occasion on which these three gods appeared as a triad in either a Greek or a Roman context; Sulla's selection of the three seems to have been a deliberate and calculated decision.³³

It has been argued by Chassignet that the names of the three gods and the three qualities of Sulla which led to the victory are presented in chiasmic order: Ares/Mars corresponds to δύναμις τὸν πόλεμον, Nike/Victoria to δεινότης, and Aphrodite/Venus to εὐτυχία.³⁴ This would imply that the three gods were chosen for the Chaeronea trophy since they were being thanked for granting the assistance in the attaining of victory with which they were specifically connected on the monument. Since, as is argued above, it is most likely that the inscription of the gods' names on the monument was mentioned by Sulla in the *Autobiography*, we may also consider the possibility that the three attributes to which they are closely associated also stem from that text. However, Chassignet appears to have reached this conclusion having already formed the opinion that Sulla's relationship with Aphrodite/Venus was firmly connected with *felicitas*. If we cast this assumption aside, the argument for chiasmus in this section is much weakened; we could just as easily equate Ares/Mars with εὐτυχία (*felicitas* being, after all, predominantly a military concept, or one which was made manifest by the possessor's military successes), Nike/Victoria with δεινότης, and Aphrodite/Venus with δύναμις τὸν πόλεμον, since the presence of the head of Venus on *RRC* 359 suggests that it was the latter goddess with whom Sulla associated his victory.³⁵ Or, alternatively, the three qualities may have been named in order to create a rhetorically pleasing inscribed text, with no implied correspondence between each of the specific qualities and one of the three named gods. And, similarly, the order of the qualities may have been altered by Plutarch due to an imperfect recollection of the monument's appearance. In short,

³² Plut. *Sull.* 19.5: εὐτυχία. For a justification of taking εὐτυχία in Plutarch as a reference to *felicitas* see the discussion in F8P (a).

³³ Picard (1957) 175-178 unconvincingly suggested a Carian origin for the triad.

³⁴ Chassignet (2004) 244.

³⁵ See below.

even though the name of Aphrodite/Venus appeared in the inscription on the Chaeronea trophy, together with the concept of εὐτυχία/*felicitas*, we cannot be certain that any connection between the two (to the exclusion of the other gods and qualities or concepts) was intended.

Similarly, although we know that Sulla's *cognomen* on the Chaeronea trophy was given in the form *Epaphroditos* rather than *Felix*,³⁶ we cannot take this to imply that Sulla intended the reader to interpret this as a representation of a close relationship between Aphrodite/Venus and himself. This was, in fact, the name used by Sulla on a large number of inscriptions written in Greek found in Greece and the Greek East, so does not bear a particularly specific relation to the Chaeronea trophy.³⁷ Instead, the presence of Aphrodite/Venus on the Chaeronea trophy, as on *RRC* 359, is best interpreted as a representation of the Trojan myth of the foundation of Rome; that is to say the Aphrodite/Venus was thought to be the ancestor of the Romans since she was the mother of Aeneas, who escaped from Troy and fled with his father and son to Italy.³⁸ Once this has been established, the evidence for a connection between *felicitas* and Aphrodite/Venus at Chaeronea becomes much weaker. Indeed, it is reduced to the correspondence between the *cognomina* *Epaphroditos* and *Felix*, which do not directly relate to the Chaeronea trophy. Indeed, the relationship between Sulla and Venus has frequently been overstated by scholars; there is, for example, insufficient evidence of a cult of Venus Felix at Rome for which Sulla was responsible.³⁹ His relationships with the gods were complex, and the extant accounts of his dealings with the divine also mention other gods, including Bellona, Apollo, and Hercules.⁴⁰ The appearance of Aphrodite/Venus on the Chaeronea trophy cannot, therefore, be taken as an explicit assertion that it was that goddess alone who provided Sulla with *felicitas* throughout his life. On the contrary, we must take this association as relating to the location of the dedicated trophy, and as an attempt by a Roman magistrate and general to assert power and legitimize their authority while on Greek soil. Aphrodite/Venus stands for this

³⁶ Plut. *Mor.* 318d (*De Fort. Rom.* 4).

³⁷ For Sulla and epigraphy see Mayer (2008). For instances of Sulla's use of the title Ἐπαφρόδιτος in epigraphy in the Greek East see *RDGE* 18, 21, 23, 49. See also Santangelo (2007a) 231-232.

³⁸ Santangelo (2007a) 199-206.

³⁹ This was for a long time widely accepted. The most full exposition of the theory may be found in Schilling (1975) 272-295. It has been strongly refuted, though: see Rives (1994) 297-298. For Sulla's relationship with Venus and Aphrodite see Santangelo (2007a) 199-213.

⁴⁰ Keaveney (1983a).

aspect of Sulla's success, while Nike/Victoria and Ares/Mars complete the triad, representing Sulla's military victories as achieved due to the divine support he enjoyed, in his capacity as representative of the race that descended ultimately from the Trojans and, through Aeneas, from Aphrodite/Venus herself.

As has recently been argued, it was customary for Roman magistrates to negotiate their positions of power while in Greece by invoking the myth of the relationship between Rome and Troy.⁴¹ By claiming on the Chaeronea trophy that he received his divinely-granted good fortune, his *felicitas*, from Aphrodite/Venus, Sulla was drawing attention to the tradition on the mythical origins of Rome whereby the city was founded by Aeneas, the son of this goddess, thus placing Rome in the role both of opponent of Greece, since she was founded by a Trojan, and as descendants of one of the most prominent Greek gods, who protected the race that originated from her own son. Sulla is known to have engaged directly with this myth: Appian, for example, records an oracle given to Sulla at Delphi in which the Trojan heritage of the Roman people is invoked.⁴² Moreover, the association of this goddess with Nike/Victoria and Ares/Mars as a triad of goddess represents Rome's complex position as a military superpower in Greece, and the choice of these three gods as the recipients of the trophy monuments reveals Sulla's understanding of the complexity of Rome's status in the wider world. His ability to place himself within this framework not just as a Roman leader but as an individual with a personal connection with the gods, expressed through his *felicitas*, added legitimacy to his presence in the area and stood as a bold claim of divine ordination to those whose sanctuaries he had gone on to plunder. Thus, although Sulla's erection of the trophies was not in itself extraordinary, his choice of gods and the connection in the *Autobiography* of these events with his *felicitas* reveals how Sulla was cleverly acting within established conventions, while presenting himself in a unique light as personally responsible for his victories, through the favour of the gods.

Moreover, Sulla was not content with the reach of the message contained within the trophy and inscription. While to a certain extent the idea of the trophy could be circulated more widely than its immediate location (through, for example, pictures of the trophy being carried in a triumph), there was a natural limit to the efficacy and scope of the message that it contained. It is clear that Sulla wished to circumvent this obstacle not only by including a discussion of the trophy in his *Autobiography*, but by using the

⁴¹ Santangelo (2007a) 199-206. See also Erskine (2001).

⁴² App. *BC*. 1.97, with Marinoni (1987). See also F8P (d).

iconography of the two trophies at Chaeronea and Orchomenus in a variety of media, including a coin issue and a signet ring.

RRC 359, minted on campaign in 84-3 BC and the first coin issue known to have been struck by Sulla, displays on the obverse the head of Venus, wearing a diadem, accompanied by Cupid holding a laurel branch, and the legend 'L. SVLLA'; on the reverse a jug and a *lituus* are surrounded by two trophies, with the legend 'IMPER. ITERV(M)'.⁴³ The striking iconography of this coin reveals the interconnection of a number of complex themes at work in Sulla's self-representation, and the manner in which his *Autobiography* worked alongside other elements of his public image, but has raised many problems of interpretation for scholars. Chief among these difficulties is the presence of the jug and *lituus*, a very common pair of symbols in a numismatic context, whose first attested appearance together is on *RRC 359*. The traditional view has long been that the two items were part of the tools of an augur, so referred when on a coin to an augur or an augurate.⁴⁴ This reconstruction is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is not clear whether or not Sulla actually was an augur at the time the coin was minted, or whether he was making a claim to be an augur, or if in fact the presence of the jug and *lituus* represent something else altogether. Even if one were to accept that Sulla had been an augur by 84-3, an issue which is also open to dispute, it is possible that the declaration of Sulla as a *hostis* stripped him of that priesthood. Appian states that Sulla complained that he had been stripped of a priesthood, but the possible interpretations of this are manifold.⁴⁵ *RRC 359* has therefore been subject to intense scholarly scrutiny. It is not the purpose of this study to confront the constitutional, legal, and religious issues involved in the problem of Sulla's augurate; the debate between Badian and Frier in the 1960s, and the recent renewed interest in the subject on the parts of Drummond and North, should suffice to show that there is no uncontroversial solution.⁴⁶ However, the work of scholars such as Stewart and Linderski has permitted

⁴³ *RRC 359*, with discussion in Crawford (1974) 1.373-374.

⁴⁴ Taylor (1944).

⁴⁵ App. *BC*. 1.79: ἤτει δ' αὐτοὺς τὴν τε ἀξίωσιν καὶ περιουσίαν καὶ ἱερωσύνην καὶ εἴ τι ἄλλο γέρας εἶχεν, ἐντελῆ πάντα ἀποδοθῆναι. There are important objections to taking this as a reference to an augurate, not least Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 99 and Plin. *Ep.* 4.8.1, which suggest that, even in the case of an exile, an augurate would not be removed: North (2011) 55.

⁴⁶ Frier (1967); Badian (1968); Frier (1969); Badian (1969b). Badian's assertion that Sulla was not an augur until 82 should be accepted, which increases the need to find an alternative interpretation of the augural symbolism on *RRC 359*. Not all of Frier's conclusions are without merit, however: he is surely right to argue that *RRC 359* is

the questions raised by the jug and *lituus* to be considered in a completely new light. According to these new studies, the presence of the jug and the *lituus* may continue to be considered an allusion to the augurate to some degree, but it did not necessarily stand as an assertion that the moneyer himself was an augur, or had an ancestor who was an augur.⁴⁷

There are several significant objections to the idea that the jug and *lituus* referred to Sulla's augurate, legitimate or otherwise. For example, although the *lituus* is beyond question an augural tool and could allude to an augur, the augurate, or some specific augural ritual act, the jug is much more difficult to identify. It cannot represent any known augural function. Attempts have been made to identify the jug as a *capis*, a pontifical tool.⁴⁸ According to this interpretation, the jug and *lituus* represented the augural and pontifical conferring of power on a magistrate and, by extension, the legitimacy of that magistrate, whose right to hold power had been confirmed by the positive signs analysed by the pontiffs and the augurs.⁴⁹ Sulla's choice to include the jug and *lituus* on *RRC* 359 would not, therefore, be a bold claim to augural status, but an equally bold statement of his own legitimacy as a magistrate of the Roman people in the face of his questionable status after having been declared a *hostis*.⁵⁰ However, this

ultimately to be interpreted as a claim to the legitimacy of his own power, and a rejection of the validity of the senate's actions. Drummond (2008), with regard to a debated potential clause (mentioned in Dio 39.17) of the *Lex Domitia* prohibiting members of the same *gens* from simultaneously holding the same priesthood, used a fragment of the augural *fasti* (*ILS* 9338), which features a member of the Cornelian *gens* as an augur in 88BC, to argue that Sulla's priesthood was the augurate, which he had held from at least that year. He uses *RRC* 359 as proof of this, taking the jug and *lituus* as meaning that Sulla was (or had been) an augur at the time of the coin's minting. North (2011) has argued against this conclusion, citing the fact that *RRC* 359 was the first time that this symbolic pair appeared on coinage, and that, other than a similar coin minted in 81BC by Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius (*RRC* 374), it was a long time before these symbols reappeared. Instead, North interprets the symbols as referring to the *sacra* and *auspicia*, and connects this with the coin's legend 'IMPER ITERU(M)': 'the pairing indicates the ritual piety characteristic of Rome and which had led to its triumphant progress and also to the successes of the issuers of the coins.' See also Linderski (1996); Stewart (1997).

⁴⁷ This argument was first put forward by Crawford (1974) 373-374, though this idea was not investigated thoroughly until later.

⁴⁸ Contrary to its usual identification as a *praefericulum*, an augural tool, eg. Smykov (2013) 148.

⁴⁹ Stewart (1997) 174: the jug and *lituus* represent 'the two ritual means by which the Romans sought to guarantee divine sanction for public business'.

⁵⁰ His supporters followed this trend by identifying themselves on their coins by the magistracies they held: Stewart (1997) 179. Crawford (1964) 148-149 has argued that

approach has also been called into question, since the *capis* was a short and broad vessel, whereas the jug that accompanies the *lituus* on coinage is uniformly tall and narrow. The shapes are so different that the symbol on the coinage cannot be a representation of the *capis*.⁵¹ An alternative explanation must therefore be found for the presence of the jug.⁵² Linderski's suggestion that this was a vessel used in the *sortitio* is attractive, but the issue needs further examination.⁵³

However, it must be remembered that this was the first coin on which the jug and the *lituus* appeared as a pair of symbols.⁵⁴ Everything else about the coin pointed to Sulla directly and in a very clear manner⁵⁵ (the trophies, the name and title, the presence of Venus, Cupid holding a laurel branch), so it is unlikely that the jug and *lituus* was as oblique a reference as some have suggested.⁵⁶ *RRC* 359 is a clever piece of self-representation, but it is not subtle in its choice and combination of symbols. Since this was the first time that the jug and *lituus* appeared, it has to be supposed that Sulla considered it a symbol whose meaning would be self-evident. Crawford's explanation has yet to be surpassed: that this pair of symbols must have referred not to the augurate, which Sulla had not yet held, but to the passing of the *lex curiata* which conferred on him his *imperium*.⁵⁷ Sulla could thus use his coin to reject the senate's actions and his declaration as a *hostis*, and demonstrate the validity of these statements by providing tangible proof of his merits in the form of the laurel branch, the trophies, and the title

Sulla's coinage worked to add legitimacy to his claims regarding his political position in this period in which his status could be considered highly questionable.

⁵¹ The *capis* has also been identified as the *simpvium*, a long-handled sacrificial vessel, on which see Linderski (1996) 175-176, with 176 n. 118.

⁵² Fears (1975) similarly argued that *RRC* 359 marks a turning point in the history of numismatic propaganda in this period, asserting that it was precisely with Sulla that the jug and *lituus* ceased to represent the augurate, and began to represent magisterial *auspicium*. This, however, belies the fact that *RRC* 359 is the earliest coin to have been discovered that bears the jug and *lituus*.

⁵³ Linderski (1996).

⁵⁴ Stewart (1997) 170. A near-contemporary coin by Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius (*RRC* 374) also featured this combination of symbols; after these two coins, however, it was a long time before they appeared again on Roman coinage. See Stewart (1997) for a list of coins featuring a jug and a *lituus*.

⁵⁵ MacKay (2000) 203.

⁵⁶ On the flexibility of coinage as a venue for self-representation see Meadows/Williams (2001), 38: "the coin types of the Roman Republic had become a blank canvas for the depiction of the moneyers' chosen scenes."

⁵⁷ Crawford (1974) 373-374.

imperator iterum, together with a representation of the divine support that he enjoyed.⁵⁸ This is an unambiguous statement regarding the context within which Sulla saw his trophies and his victories at Chaeronea and Orchomenus: not as single, separate entities, but as part of a consistent picture of military prowess and divine blessing.

The presence of the head of Venus on the reverse of *RRC* 359 thus ties in with the context of the inscription of the trophies at Chaeronea. It was common for coins celebrating a particular victory to feature a portrait of the god or goddess to whom the victory was attributed.⁵⁹ This, combined with the presence of the name of Venus on the Chaeronea trophy, suggests a close association between that particular victory and goddess in the mind (or, at least, the public image) of Sulla. It is not clear, however, that any connection was drawn between the goddess and Sulla himself at this stage. It is a commonplace of scholarship concerning Sulla's relationship with the gods to argue that the frequent mentions of Venus/Aphrodite prove that he saw or presented himself as enjoying a particularly close personal relationship with the goddess. Many of these arguments draw heavily on the Chaeronea inscription and *RRC* 359; however, as has been argued here, the presence of the goddess on these two elements of Sulla's self-representation fit firmly within the context of Sulla negotiating his difficult position vis-a-vis the Greek world, and his careful managing of his position as a preeminent Roman

⁵⁸ The legend 'IMPER ITERV(M)' on *RRC* 359 has also caused a number of difficulties: if this coin was minted in 84-3 BC, then what were the two occasions on which he was hailed as *imperator*? He had not yet held a triumph (the one over Mithridates was held in 81), and although a further otherwise unknown imperatorial acclamation and triumph have been posited for his activities in Cilicia during his praetorship in 97, there is little evidence that supports such a suggestion. Gisborne's theory that the word *iterum* was used (instead of *bis*) because it referred to the fact that his triumph lasted for two days, rather than the usual one, would be attractive if there were other instances of *iterum* being used in this way. In particular, his triumph was not *just* over Mithridates, since the sources (for which see Sumi (2002) 417-419) reveal that the second day of festivities celebrated his victories in Italy, the triumph being clearly separated into two parts. The word is nowhere else used in this sense, however (according to the entry in the *TLL* 7.2.551-563) so this theory must be rejected. Certainly Sulla must have had very good reason for including the word *iterum* on the coin, since this was the first occasion on which the title of *imperator* was recorded on coinage, so to emphasise that he was not just *imperator* but *imperator iterum* was a very strong statement indeed. Gisborne (2005) 114-115. See also Martin (1989) 25, with Combès (1966), on the process of imperatorial acclamation. See the most recent discussion in Assenmaker (2013d) 255-257, which connects the appearance of *ITERVM* with other coinage of the period, and particularly with an issue of Fimbria from 85 that bore the legend *FIMBRIA IMPERAT*.

⁵⁹ Sumi (2002) 414.

fighting in, and more importantly using the resources of, Greece. It is not the number of times which Venus/Aphrodite is mentioned that should draw our attention, but the nature of the references and the manner in which Sulla invokes the goddess. The Chaeronea inscription and *RRC* 359 do not suggest that the relationship between Sulla and Venus/Aphrodite was anything other than that which existed between a goddess who favoured the descendants of her son and supported them in their efforts in Greece as well as in Rome.

The trophy mentioned in F15P, therefore, represents just one aspect of Sulla's presentation of his successes in Boeotia in the mid 80s. As well as erecting trophies on the battlefields, Sulla inscribed on those trophies the names of the gods to whom he claimed he owed his success, and the qualities which the gods had granted which had led to his victory, messages which had resonances for the local inhabitants of the area as well as for Roman observers; he also displayed images of the trophies on the first coin he minted, and used a similar image on a signet ring, so that the messages conveyed by the trophies would be spread to as many people as possible, especially in Rome, and not limited to those in Boeotia. Indeed, the signet ring was a particularly powerful location for this image, since it would thus appear on very many documents throughout the Roman world. And, so that the messages would be remembered in perpetuity, he discussed the matter in his *Autobiography*. F15P thus reveals how careful Sulla was in the planning and construction of his public image: by using easily recognizable iconography and simple associations of ideas he could spread messages about himself to as great an audience as possible. We are fortunate that a number of other pieces of evidence have survived which show how many parallels Sulla was creating within his self-representational strategy. We may assume that similar combinations of images and ideas featured elsewhere in his public image, even if they have not survived with such great variety of components to the present day. Indeed, some parallels may be drawn here with certain other monumental projects launched or supported by Sulla, such as the so-called Bocchus monument, erected on the Capitol by Bocchus, the king of Mauretania, depicting the surrender of Jugurtha to Sulla, surrounded by symbols of victory.⁶⁰ The message of this monument was clear: that Sulla was the one who could claim responsibility for ending the Jugurthine War, and not Marius. The use of the image of the surrender of Jugurtha in a number of different media (the monument and a

⁶⁰ See the commentary on F7P.

signet ring, as well as a discussion in the *Autobiography*) shows that the consistent dossier of images presented regarding the Chaeronea and Orchomenus monuments was not an isolated case, but that Sulla was working to circulate certain messages about himself as widely as possible. It is also clear that, in the case of the image of the surrender of Jugurtha, Sulla's efforts worked, since the signet ring bearing this scene was considered by Plutarch to have been one of the sources of the antagonism between Sulla and Marius. If the image and its circulation had not been potent, then such a comment would have been meaningless.⁶¹

Sulla was making a sustained effort to remind people of his achievements and of the context within which he wished them to be viewed; F15P and the corresponding numismatic, monumental, and literary evidence present a consistent picture of Sulla as a divinely sanctioned leader, proven through his military victories, with the promise (or at least strong suggestion) of further successes in the future.⁶²

⁶¹ For this incident see commentary on F4P.

⁶² *RRC* 359 and the other evidence connected to F15P illustrate the theory of coinage being used in the late Republic as a venue for conveying ideas about oneself, chiefly through the means of reminding people of one's achievements, with the coins acting as a new sort of 'monument'. See Meadows/Williams (2001).

Commentary on F16P – Plut. *Sull.* 17.1-2 (= F4S, F17C)

After the battle of Chaeronea, Sulla received reports of favourable oracles, which foretold an imminent second victory in the area. At least one of these oracles came from the nearby cult of Trophonius at Lebadeia.

At the battle of Chaeronea, Sulla conquered a great number of the enemy troops, but Mithridates' army was not destroyed. After the battle, Sulla left for Thessaly to meet the *consul suffectus* L. Valerius Flaccus, who had been sent to him by the senate, apparently thinking that there would be no further imminent engagement with the Archelaus' troops.¹ However, when a new Mithridatic commander, Dorylaeus, arrived in Boeotia with a very sizeable army, Sulla was forced to turn back and confront the newly combined Pontic forces. The two armies met on the plain of Orchomenus, which is only about 8 miles away from Chaeronea, and once again Sulla led his troops to a resounding success. So many of Mithridates' troops were killed that Plutarch claimed that Pontic weapons were still being discovered centuries later by local farmers.²

After Sulla had left Chaeronea, Plutarch tells us that Sulla reported having received two oracles. The first of these was apparently from the cult of Trophonius, which was an important oracular centre in Boeotia near Lebadeia. Trophonius, a figure variously described as the son of Apollo, or the stepson or brother of Agamedes,³ would give oracular responses to those who underwent a specific set of rituals.⁴ The oracle of Trophonius was well known and much visited, and it is unsurprising that Sulla should have wished to associate himself with this cult. There is no suggestion that Sulla went to Lebadeia and consulted this oracle directly, but he declared in his *Autobiography* that he received two predictions of another battle in the near future, which would also have a favourable outcome for the Romans. One of these was directly attributed to the oracle of Trophonius and, although the second did not mention Trophonius or Lebadeia, the similarity of the vision may be said to confirm that the two were connected.⁵

The first of these predictions came from Quintus Titius, described as οὐκ ἄφανῆς ἀνὴρ τῶν ἐν τῇ Ἑλλάδι πραγματευομένων, who had visited the cave of

¹ L. Valerius C.? f. L. n. Flaccus: *MRR* 2.53. Archelaus: see the commentary on F17P.

² Plut. *Sull.* 21.4. See the discussion in the commentary on F15P.

³ For the complex mythology of Trophonius see Bonnechère (2003) 65-86.

⁴ These rituals are described in detail by Pausanias 9.2-14; see below.

⁵ Bonnechère (2003) 31-32.

Trophonius and received an oracle predicting a second victory in the area in the near future, a message delivered by an ὁμοφή who resembled Olympian Zeus in beauty and size: τὸ κάλλος καὶ τὸ μέγεθος.⁶ Sulla has apparently taken great pains to stress the reliability of this message: it is ascribed to a major local oracular centre, the god in question is described as appearing like Zeus,⁷ and the individual who delivered the message is a respectable Roman businessman. This impression is further strengthened by a second oracular message that was delivered to Sulla concerning affairs in Italy, from the same ὁμοφή, but delivered by a legionary soldier, Salvenius.⁸ By using two unconnected sources and claiming that the same god had appeared to both, Sulla is able to grant both messages additional credibility and to some degree a guarantee of authenticity, and by creating a picture in which the gods are sending Sulla favourable responses from all directions, Sulla restates his assertion that his actions are consistently favoured by the gods.⁹

When an individual consulted the oracle of Trophonius, they would emerge speaking unintelligibly. Priests would then interpret their words and shape them into a coherent message and response.¹⁰ And, indeed, it seems that this process had taken place with regard to the oracles received after Chaeronea, since the clarity of the messages was exceptional. There would be no problems of interpretation here: Sulla would fight the Mithridatic troops again in a short time, and would once again be victorious. It transpired that this was a reference to Orchomenus, a battle that, along with Chaeronea, played an important role in the ways in which Sulla presented his exploits in Greece.¹¹ We have already noted the presence of a trophy from Orchomenus

⁶ Plut. *Sull.* 17.1. This episode is also narrated in Aug. *Civ. Dei* 2.24, where Titius is given the *praenomen* Lucius.

⁷ On the connection between Zeus and Trophonius see Bonnechère (2003) 92.

⁸ It is possible that this name was inaccurately recorded by Plutarch, and should be ‘Salvienus’. It is the only instance in which the name appears, whereas ‘Salvienus’ is recorded on two occasions (*ILLRP* 515, 532). *FRH* 3.291.

⁹ Bertinelli (1997) 356 has suggested that a third oracle was received by Sulla at this time: the (Delphic?) oracle narrated in App. *B.C.* 1.97, which led to Sulla’s dedication of an axe and an inscription at Aphrodisias in Caria. However, there is nothing to connect that oracle with Trophonius, or with Sulla’s time in Boeotia, and there is no need to assume that this was the only occasion on which Sulla received such oracles. See the commentary on F8P (d) above for the Aphrodisias dedication and the possible identifications of the oracle which inspired Sulla’s decision.

¹⁰ Paus. 9.2-14. For full discussion of the evidence concerning the nature of the consultations of Trophonius see Bonnechère (2003) 131-217.

¹¹ See commentary on F15P for the importance of the victories at Chaeronea and Orchomenus. Orchomenus: Plut. *Sull.* 20-1; App. *Mithr.* 49.

being used in combination with one from Chaeronea in a number of different elements of Sulla's self-representational strategy. There are no citations of the *Autobiography* during any extant narratives of Orchomenus, but it has rightly been suggested that the work lies behind at least some of our information on the battle.¹² The presentation of Sulla's actions during the battle is remarkably consistent across our surviving narratives, and focuses on Sulla's ability to bring the battle to a successful conclusion even when it looked like that was not possible. Both Plutarch and Appian claim that when Archelaus led a particularly effective charge, the Roman battle line was broken and the troops started to flee. Sulla, however, put a stop to this, since he dismounted from his horse and went to where the men were fleeing, making a speech declaring that they were deserting him and Rome. Plutarch expressed it as "For me, O Romans, an honourable death here; but you, when men ask you where you betrayed your commander, remember to tell them, at Orchomenus", while Appian rendered the speech as "If you are ever asked, Romans, where you abandoned Sulla, your general, say that it was at the battle of Orchomenus."¹³ The striking similarity of these two speeches leads to the persuasive conclusion that Plutarch and Appian were working from the same source at this point, and it is reasonable to suggest that this was Sulla's own *Autobiography*, since we find Sulla acting as a charismatic leader of his troops, brave and passionate, and willing to put his own life at great risk in order to urge his troops not to despair.¹⁴ It is not difficult to see the benefits that such a tale would bring to Sulla's reputation.¹⁵

This fragment is important in the understanding of Plutarch's source usage in the *Life of Sulla*, since the author declares that he had access to local accounts detailing the oracles and pronouncements that came from Trophonius at this time, but that he chose to report in the *Life* the words of Sulla on the matter: *περὶ ὧν οἱ μὲν ἐπιχώριοι πλείονα λέγουσιν· ὡς δὲ Σύλλας αὐτὸς ἐν δεκάτῳ τῶν ὑπομνημάτων γέγραφε.*¹⁶ It is not clear what these ἐπιχώριοι might have written: they could have composed local histories of the period, or perhaps documents from Lebadeia recording the oracles that were given

¹² Valgiglio (1975) 271-272 points out that Plutarch draws a distinction between the citations of Sulla and those of oral, local traditions, on which see below.

¹³ Plut. *Sull.* 21.2: Ἐμοὶ μὲν ἐνταῦθά που καλὸν, ὃ Ῥωμαῖοι, τελευτᾶν, ὑμεῖς αὐτοκράτορα, μεμνημένοι φράζειν ὡς ἐν Ὀρχομενῷ. App. *Mith.* 49: εἴ τις ὑμῶν, ὃ Ῥωμαῖοι, πύθοιτο, ποῦ Σύλλαν τὸν στρατηγὸν ὑμῶν αὐτῶν προδῶκατε, λέγειν, ἐν Ὀρχομενῷ μαχόμενον.

¹⁴ Thein (2009) 97.

¹⁵ For Sulla's 'charisma' see the Introduction, and the commentary on F18P.

¹⁶ Plut. *Sull.* 17.1.

out by the cult of Trophonius. Interestingly, Plutarch has apparently consulted these texts, noted that they contained information pertaining to the story of Sulla's time in Boeotia in 86, and chosen instead to give the version located in Sulla's *Autobiography*. This is particularly notable since it is often assumed that Plutarch was drawing on local knowledge and local histories of Boeotia in the composition of the *Lives* when they pertain to Boeotia.¹⁷ Here we have proof of this method. And as regards Sulla's *Autobiography*, not only can we know that Plutarch was supplementing his reading of the *Autobiography* with local accounts, but also that he privileged the former over the latter on at least this one occasion. Although we might have expected Plutarch to have used the information recorded in Boeotian sources, he has instead followed the account in the *Autobiography* of his subject. This is most likely to be a reflection of his literary aims in the writing of the *Lives*, since Plutarch was interested in exploring the character of his subject rather than writing a history of a particular conflict.

This fragment has also been used to determine the organisation of material within Sulla's *Autobiography*, a particularly thorny issue. It is generally assumed that the bulk of the work was written as a broadly chronological account of his career, stretching to 22 books. If, then, Sulla was discussing the events of 86 in book 10, that would mean that he had squeezed the eventful early years of his public life into just eight books (since the first two books were reserved for the thematic introduction and ancestral history), but took twelve books to discuss the events of 86 down to his retirement, or possibly only his triumph.¹⁸ F20P certainly suggests that he had reached the climax of his narrative in the 21st (and penultimate) book.¹⁹ This would imply that Sulla said relatively little about the early parts of his career and devoted the majority of his work to the Civil War: eight books covering approximately 20 years, and ten books covering approximately 4. This arrangement of material within the *Auobiography* seems to be rather unbalanced. Although this is possible, and Sulla would certainly have wanted to discuss the events of the Civil War in detail, the evidence provided by the remaining fragments and citations means that we ought to question whether this was really the case. Almost all the preserved citations and fragments arise from points earlier in Sulla's career, predominantly the Mithridatic War, but also the Jugurthine and

¹⁷ Valgiglio (1975) 271-272.

¹⁸ For the arguments concerning the ending of Sulla's *Autobiography* see the discussion in the Introduction, and the commentary on F21P.

¹⁹ See the Introduction for the arrangement of material within the *Autobiography*, with the commentaries on F2P and F8P for the contents of books 1 and 2 and the commentary on F20P for the ending of the *Autobiography*.

Germanic Wars, and the political convulsions of 88, and very few to the Civil War. This would not seem to support the idea that the majority of Sulla's text concerned the latter conflict. And, moreover, although we might have expected that Sulla would wish to write a detailed and lengthy apologetic account of his part in the Civil War, there is little evidence that this was given in the *Autobiography*, since the accounts of Plutarch and Appian do not seem to have drawn on Sulla extensively for this period. It is likely that the absence of such an apologetic account is partly responsible for the tradition that found Sulla so inscrutable, epitomised by Seneca's question of 'Qualis Sulla fuerit?'.²⁰ Although inconclusive, this evidence certainly brings into question the universal acceptance of Plutarch's attribution of the Trophonius oracles to the tenth book.

If, on the other hand, Sulla's account of the aftermath of Chaeronea was not in book 10, then an alternative explanation for Plutarch's book number has to be found. It is plausible that Plutarch made a mistake in recording this number, but we may not assume that this is the case simply because it does not fit without interpretation of the lost work. It is rare for Plutarch to give the number of the book from which he has taken information, so when he does so, we might expect there to be a reason for including this detail. Plutarch does not say that the two oracles described in the fragment were mentioned in Sulla's discussion of the aftermath of the battle of Chaeronea. It is thus possible that they were narrated at some other point in the *Autobiography*, perhaps as a digression inspired by a thematic connection drawn from an earlier point in his *Autobiography*. This digression need not have been lengthy and need not have been a comprehensive diachronic treatment of a particular subject. The oracles could easily have been mentioned in connection with another oracle, perhaps as part of Sulla's strategy of showing how he had consistent support from the gods in his endeavours. Indeed, we know that Sulla recorded other oracles in his *Autobiography*, such as the famous instruction, usually assumed to have come from Delphi, which urged Sulla to make a dedication to Aphrodite at Aphrodisias.²¹ This would have no bearing on the way in which Sulla narrated the developments between the battles of Chaeronea and Orchomenus, since he could have alluded again to the oracles that were mentioned earlier, in book ten, and would not affect a chronological narrative of the military events

²⁰ Sen. *Cons. ad Marc.* 1.12.6. On this passage, and the enigma of Sulla, see Giardina (2009) 76.

²¹ App. *B.C.* 1.97. Appian does not cite Sulla for this (or any other) information, but the detail he includes is notable; the entire oracular response is recorded, and it is likely that Appian took this information from the *Autobiography*. See Marinoni (1987) and the commentary on F8P (d) above.

which would naturally have formed the bulk of Sulla's narrative. It would also explain Plutarch's decision to include the number of the book from which he took the information concerning these two oracles, in order to direct an interested reader who wished to find Sulla's own account of these oracles to the book in the *Autobiography* in which they were located.

Plutarch's δεκάτω may be taken as accurate, therefore, but that does not mean that we have to assume an overly unbalanced organisation of material within Sulla's *Autobiography* in favour of the final few years of his career. Rather, it is likely that the two oracles were mentioned in the context of an earlier oracle, which led Sulla to expand on other important oracular responses which he had been given; we may speculate that there was a thematic link between these oracles and the earlier one, such as a shared origin in the cave of Trophonius, or a shared ὁμοίη that looked like Zeus in size and beauty. Short digressions such as this do not find a parallel within the fragments of the *Autobiography*, but this is not an insurmountable objection, since there are so few book numbers preserved that it is often difficult to determine precisely where certain material was set out in the original work. Indeed, two of the three other book numbers preserved also denote a digression, albeit lengthy ones: F2P derived from an ancestral narrative in book 2, and F8P derived from a thematic discussion of *felicitas* and related concepts in book 1. Although these two fragments attest to long digressions, and not short asides, it is not unrealistic to propose shorter digressions elsewhere in the book. And, furthermore, if F16P was originally a digression at an earlier point in the narrative, there is no reason to believe that Sulla would not have referred to them again in their proper chronological place, immediately after the battle of Chaeronea. Sulla could thus still maintain that his actions were divinely endorsed and, as may be seen in so many other passages of Sulla's *Autobiography* and Plutarch's *Life of Sulla*, the most significant episodes in Sulla's career were preceded by clusters of omens, portents and oracles.²²

²² See for example the omens preceding Sulla's march on Rome in 82: Plut. *Sull.* 27.3-8, including F18P.

Commentary on F17P – Plut. Sull. 23.1-2 (= F23S, F18C)

After his victories at Chaeronea and Orchomenus, Sulla began to travel to the Hellespont, bringing with him the defeated Archelaus, one of Mithridates' most senior generals. On this journey, Archelaus was treated with honour, was given the greatest care by Sulla when he fell ill, was granted the title of 'friend and ally of the Romans', and received a large tract of land in Euboea. This caused many to suspect an alliance between the two generals, thus casting the value of Sulla's victory at Chaeronea into question. Sulla defended himself on these points.¹

Following the battle of Orchomenus in 86/5 BC, Sulla and his forces were in a very favourable position. The series of victories that they had won against the Mithridatic troops in Greece had eaten into the Pontic king's resources, and shown Mithridates decisive proof that the Romans would not tolerate his attacks on their province.² Although Sulla had failed to capture Archelaus, the general in charge of the Pontic troops at both Chaeronea and Orchomenus, Mithridates now sent this man to the Roman leader in order to try to arrange terms of an agreement between them.³ Archelaus suggested that Sulla should return to Rome to deal with his enemies there; Cinna and Carbo were in power,⁴ and Sulla had reportedly had a visit from his wife Metella, begging him to return, since their enemies were burning his houses and the situation in Rome needed his immediate attention. According to Plutarch's account, Sulla had already been contemplating returning, but did not wish to abandon his efforts in the Mithridatic War.⁵ To encourage Sulla, Archelaus offered him the incentives or rewards of money, ships, and troops. Sulla rejected this offer, however, and after making an equivalent offer to Archelaus, in order to show that accepting would amount to treason,

¹ Notably, Plutarch's text at this point makes no claim that what he has preserved is a quotation of Sulla's work. It has customarily been included as a fragment, however (and is again here), because it is possible to use the allegations that were laid against Sulla as a means to determine some of his original arguments. *FRH* 3.297: 'it... serves to outline the 'negative shape' of what the text contained'.

² Mayor (2010) 221.

³ App. *Mith.* 54; Plut. *Sull.* 22.2-5. Archelaus was close to his king and had the official title of φίλος; it is possible that they were related by marriage: Mayor (2010) 114. Archelaus had survived the defeat at Orchomenus by hiding in a marsh: App. *Mith.* 50.

⁴ *MRR* 2.57.

⁵ Plut. *Sull.* 22.1-2.

Sulla made a lengthy speech,⁶ which so greatly affected Archelaus that he instead sought terms of peace.⁷ It has been argued that Sulla's speech, which is preserved by Plutarch, must have been recorded in, and taken from, the *Autobiography*; it is even possible that it was copied into the *Autobiography* from a document in Sulla's possession.⁸

At this juncture, Sulla, with Archelaus in his retinue, advanced in order to meet with Flaccus, who had been sent by the Senate to take the command from Sulla. Archelaus was not, however, a captive; Plutarch tells us that he was held in honour (ἐν τιμῇ).⁹ While he was travelling, Archelaus fell ill and, rather than letting him die or refusing him medical attention, Sulla treated him extraordinarily generously. He stopped the march and personally cared for him ὡς ἐνος τῶν ὑπ' αὐτὸν ἡγεμόνων καὶ στρατηγῶν, 'as though he were one of his own officers and generals'.¹⁰ This raised

⁶ Plut. *Sull.* 22.3-5; App. *Mith.* 54-5.

⁷ It is highly likely that Sulla's *Autobiography* and Sullan sources lie behind much of the surviving accounts of these events. The versions presented by Appian and Plutarch are broadly similar, even down to the speeches of Archelaus and Sulla. Without any citations it is impossible to be certain, but it is more than plausible that they were working from the same source at this point, or that, if Plutarch was reading Sulla's *Autobiography*, Appian had read an account that also drew on the *Autobiography*. However, there are certain problematic aspects of Appian's account, in particular the suggestion that Sulla's father had been a friend of Mithridates, presumably in the capacity of a promagistrate in Asia, based on the following passage of *Mith.* 54: τοσοῦτον ἐξήνεγκεν ἐς τὴν Ἰταλίαν μῖσος ὃ νῦν ἡμῖν ὑποκρινόμενος φιλίαν πατρώαν, ἧς οὐ πρὶν ἑκαταίδεκα μυριάδας ὑμῶν ὑπ' ἐμοῦ συγκοπήναι ἐμνημονεύετε. This interpretation, proposed by Hinard (1985a) 21-22, would have significant implications for our understanding of Sulla's family background and his early political connections. Madden/Keaveney (1993) have shown, however, that the ὑμῶν refers not to Sulla himself, but to the Romans.

⁸ Plut. *Sull.* 22.4; see Smith (2009b) 71 for the argument that this came from Sulla's *Autobiography*, since it strikes "a good Roman note". Much of Plutarch's account of these proceedings has a distinctly Sullan note, such as Archelaus' reaction to Sulla's speech at their meeting (Plut. *Sull.* 22.5). With no citation, it is impossible to know if this tradition did indeed originate in the work of Sulla himself, but many scholars have argued as such. Mayor (2010) 221 with bibliography. It has been suggested (Mayor (2010) 231) that Archelaus himself might have been behind much of the surviving evidence for the character and strategies of Mithridates. This is unlikely to have been the case, since there is no reason to believe that Archelaus left any written record, although an unknown Pontic source might be postulated.

⁹ Plut. *Sull.* 23.1.

¹⁰ Plut. *Sull.* 23.2. Such treatment was not necessarily extraordinary, however: Alexander's treatment of the wife of Darius, for example, demonstrates that it was considered appropriate to treat elite prisoners with respect. The extent to which this happened in the case of Archelaus does not seem to have been particularly extreme, although the combination of this event with other rumours about the relationship

suspicious that the two men were friends, since Sulla had also granted him the title of Ῥωμαίων φίλος αὐτὸς καὶ σύμμαχος, given him 10,000 acres of land in Euboea, and released all the friends of Mithridates whom he held captive except Aristion, a personal enemy of Archelaus, who had been killed. These suspicions were politically damaging to Sulla, since it was implied that the victories which he had won at Chaeronea and Orchomenus had been achieved through underhand means due to the collusion of the two men, rather than won fairly through Sulla's supremacy in the battles.¹¹

These attacks seem to have had some credence, and been seen as dangerous by Sulla, since they prompted him to write about the events in his *Autobiography*. Plutarch uses the verb ἀπολογεῖται of Sulla's response, and it is vital that we determine what was meant by Plutarch's use of this term. It has long been recognized that much of Sulla's *Autobiography* consisted of what we might term 'apologetic' material; that is to say that Sulla used the *Autobiography* in order to set out his case concerning the more controversial aspects of his career. As set out in the Introduction, one of the aims of this thesis is to illustrate that Sulla did so chiefly by presenting alternative explanations for events within his career, rather than specifically answering accusations, charges, and criticisms that had been levelled at him. Plutarch's final sentence in this fragment must therefore be analysed carefully, since it is one of the most important pieces of evidence for the nature of Sulla's self-defence in the *Autobiography*: περὶ μὲν οὖν τούτων ὁ Σύλλας ἐν τοῖς ὑπομνήμασιν ἀπολογεῖται. "About these matters, therefore, Sulla defended himself in his *Autobiography*." How are we to interpret this statement? Does it imply that Sulla listed the claims that were made about his relationship with Archelaus and proceeded to argue against each of them in turn? Or, as happened elsewhere in the *Autobiography*, did Sulla simply write his account of his dealings with Archelaus, presenting himself as having done nothing wrong, the 'defence' thus being implicit?

between the two men suggests that it was (or at least could be) viewed as something suspicious.

¹¹ Plut. *Sull.* 23.1-2. It seems that the accusations also reached Pontus, since Archelaus swiftly fell from favour and later fled Pontus. Sall. *Hist.* 4.69.12 shows Mithridates describing Archelaus as *postremus servorum* who had betrayed his army, and in App. *Mithr.* 64 we are told that Mithridates was suspicious of Archelaus' relationship with Sulla, since he thought that he had yielded too much in their negotiations. Archelaus' fall from favour was particularly notable since the two men had been close, and were possibly even related by marriage. Mayor (2010) 114. Chassignet (2004) 245; Keaveney (2005) 87; *FRH* 3.297. For Mithridates' intelligence strategies, and the important role played by embassies and relationships between his generals and their Roman counterparts, see Ñaco del Hoyo (forthcoming).

The answer to this lies in the way in which the verb ἀπολογεῖται was used. In the *Life of Sulla*, Plutarch uses ἀπολογία, ἀπολογέομαι and related terms only for those occasions on which there was some need for special explanation. Shortly after the incidents in question here, Sulla met with Mithridates at the conference between the two men that would lead to the Peace of Dardanus.¹² In Plutarch's description of these incidents, he states that Mithridates gave an account of affairs in way that blamed the gods and the Romans for the war. Mithridates' speech was thus highly contentious, attempting to remove from himself responsibility for the outbreak of the war, and Plutarch captures this by describing the speech as an ἀπολογία. There is no question here as to how this term ought to be interpreted: it refers to a careful and methodical re-telling of the war in which the Romans and the gods were the ones to blame for the war's outbreak, and in which specific aspects of the war were addressed and reinterpreted by Sulla.¹³ It is highly likely that this involved Mithridates listing, or at least spelling out, the features of the war which he wished to construe another way.¹⁴ The same is true of the only other occasion on which Plutarch uses the verb ἀπολογέομαι in the *Life of Sulla*, in which Sulla is said to have replied to the concerns of his troops regarding his decision to allow Mithridates to leave unharmed from the Peace of Dardanus, since they wished for reparation for the massacre of the Roman citizens in Asia in 88.¹⁵ Here, too, it is clear that Sulla not only addressed his troops' concerns in general, but answered specific aspects of their charges and grievances.¹⁶ Throughout Plutarch's *Lives* it is this usage and meaning of ἀπολογέομαι and ἀπολογία and their cognates which appears most frequently. The terms appear on 58 occasions, of which 44 (including the two cited above from the *Life of Sulla*) may be deemed to fall

¹² On the Peace of Dardanus see Plut. *Sull.* 24.1-5; App. *Mithr.* 56-8, with: Reinach (1890) 190-211, esp. 204-205; Glew (1981); McGing (1986) 131, 133-138; Hind (1994) 161-164.

¹³ Plut. *Sull.* 24.2.

¹⁴ In Appian's account of these proceedings (*Mithr.* 57-8), Sulla gives a lengthy speech in his attempts to treat for peace. The speech pays very little attention to Sulla's own role in events, instead focussing on Roman-Pontic interaction and on Mithridates, and thus seems to refute the arguments that Mithridates had already made, and that had been part of Mithridates' propaganda before the war had begun. Santangelo (2009) 62-63. For Mithridates' propaganda see Glew (1977); McGing (1986).

¹⁵ Plut. *Sull.* 24.4. This massacre is sometimes known (anachronistically) as the 'Asian Vespers'; App. *Mithr.* 22-23 describes Mithridates' order to kill all the Ῥωμαῖοι and Ἴταλοὶ in Asia. See also App. *Mithr.* 58, 62; Vell. Pat. 18.1-2; Cic. *Pro Leg. Man.* 7; Livy *Ep.* 78; Val. Max. 9.2.ext.3; Memnon 22.9; Tac. *Ann.* 4.14; Plut. *Pomp.* 37.2; Flor. *Ep.* 1.40.7.

¹⁶ It has been suggested that the concerns of the troops had been strengthened by Sulla's lenient treatment of Archelaus. *FRH* 3.297.

into this category, of referring to a defence against a specific charge or charges, and a further 10 into the related category of referring to an apology or an excuse for an action (possibly, but not necessarily, an offense).¹⁷ It is clear that Plutarch almost unfailingly uses the terms ἀπολογέομαι and ἀπολογία to refer to a defensive explanation, and that in the majority of these cases it refers to specific charges that had been laid against someone, which that person would then refute.

This body of evidence strongly suggests that Plutarch's use of ἀπολογεῖται in F17P is intended to convey this meaning, and that we may interpret his description of Sulla's self-defence regarding accusations of friendship with Archelaus as implying that in the *Autobiography* Sulla had confronted specific claims that had been laid against himself on these points. Plutarch's description of the events, in which each charge is laid out in turn, may reflect the structure with which Sulla wrote at this point. The most plausible reconstruction would involve Sulla's narration pausing at the relevant moment to mention that accusations had been made against him, going on to set out each of these accusations with his rebuttals, before proceeding with the narrative once more. In other words, Sulla treated his relationship with Archelaus in a digression in which he systematically refuted each of the charges laid against him.

However, we must assume that this was not the limit of Sulla's self-defence concerning his alleged friendship with Archelaus. It is argued in this thesis that the bulk of what might be termed apologetic material in Sulla's *Autobiography* consisted for the most part of carefully constructed narratives in which Sulla portrayed himself and aspects of his career as he wished for them to be remembered. Although at this moment it is likely that Sulla directly confronted criticisms that had been levelled at him, we must assume that he also used his narrative of his dealings with Archelaus in order to strengthen these claims, and set out a consistent picture in which he dealt with Archelaus in a manner that was beyond reproach. This would involve maintaining his

¹⁷ A defence against a specific charge or charges: *Cat. Min.* 18.2; *Cic.* 16.4, 29.1, 41.4; *Brut.* 46.2; *Caes.* 6.7, 8.4, 56.9; *Alex.* 7.8; *Agis* 6.2, 17.4, 19.3; *Cleom.* 36.2; *Alc.* 19.3, 9.4; *Coriol.* 17.2, 18.1, 18.3, 20.1, 39.3; *Ant.* 16.4, 55.2; *Mar.* 25.6; *Dion* 14.7, 34.5; *Demosth.* 25.6; *Cat. Mai.* 15.4; *Them.* 23.3; *Rom.* 14.6; *Cimon* 1.4, 14.3; *Luc.* 14.4; *Nic.* 22.1; *Marc.* 27.2, 27.3; *Fab. Max.* 9.1; *Solon* 31.2; *Public.* 6.1, 7.1; *Aem. Paul.* 19.10; *Philop.* 6.7; *Galba* 8.4. An apology or apologetic excuse for an offence or action: *Pomp.* 47.5; *Demosth.* 13.3; *Demetr.* 37.1; *Pelop.* 27.5, 29.6; *Per.* 37.2; *Solon.* 3.3; *Flam.* 13.3; *Arat.* 33.3, 38.7. An excuse for a crime: *Pomp.* 78.3. An attempt to see something from another's perspective: *Cleom.* 31.4. A testimony to a quality in someone: *Lycurg.* 31.3. A corrupt passage of *Tim.* (30.5) contains ἀπολογουμένης; its meaning is not clear.

subsequent assertions that his victories at Chaeronea and Orchomenus were not achieved due to complicity between the two generals, and ensuring that his account of his journey through Greece and the choices he made in handling the situation of Archelaus' illness in a manner which left him beyond reproach. We have already noted above the significance of the Chaeronea and Orchomenus victories in Sulla's public image; it was important for Sulla to maintain that they had been legitimately achieved.¹⁸ It was by using both of these methods of defence and ἀπολογία that Sulla's *Autobiography* would remove from its author the accusations that had been levelled at him. The combination of these two approaches would not have been necessary on every point. For the majority of his *Autobiography*, alternative explanations located within the narrative would suffice, but these two methods could be combined for those points that required a particularly careful and effective apologetic strategy.¹⁹

One fortunate result of this is that we are able to use Sulla's self-defence in order to reconstruct some of the contemporary anti-Sullan debates that were ongoing during his lifetime. Sulla defended himself on specific points, which were then recorded by Plutarch, and which reveal the focus of the accusations that were levelled against Sulla. If we may take Plutarch's account as a reasonably accurate representation of Sulla's presentation of these events, then there is no suggestion that Sulla disputed the allegations that he had stopped the march and taken great care of Archelaus when he had fallen ill, or that he had granted him a large tract of land in Euboea and the title of Ῥωμαίων φίλος αὐτὸς καὶ σύμμαχος.²⁰ Plutarch claims only that Sulla defended himself on these points, not that he disputed the basic facts. It was on the basis of these matters that the accusations had been laid against Sulla that he and Archelaus had been plotting together since before the battles of Chaeronea and Orchomenus. If the events had not in fact been accurate, then Sulla would have simply been able to dispute them.

¹⁸ See the commentaries on F15P and F16P above, and the discussion of the importance of these battles below.

¹⁹ On Sulla's *Autobiography* as *apologia* or self-defence, see the Conclusion. The nature of the apologetic material within Sulla's work is too complex to allow us to categorise the whole work as *apologia*. In this respect, it stands apart from the works of the autobiographers that had preceded Sulla (M. Aemilius Scaurus' *De vita sua*, P. Rutilius Rufus' *De vita sua*, and Q. Lutatius Catulus' autobiography). See Chassignet (2003) 74-78.

²⁰ It has been suggested that the land given to Archelaus had been taken from Euboea in a similar manner to the expropriation of land from Thebes, which was then granted to Delphi. Plut. *Sull.* 19.6. Bertinelli (1997) 366. Euboea had previously been held by Archelaus, so it is possible that this formed part of Sulla's motivations for his gift. See Mayor (2010) 221.

Since there is no record that he did so, it would thus appear that they are, at least in outline, probably true.

If there was no complicity between the two men, then Sulla treated the Pontic general with remarkable courtesy and care. The title of Ῥωμαίων φίλος αὐτὸς καὶ σύμμαχος is particularly surprising, since in their previous exchange Archelaus had insulted Sulla by asking him to betray Rome by taking a bribe of a large supply of money, ships, and troops, in order to remove his political enemies from power. After Sulla had pointed out why this would amount to treason, Archelaus' attitude is described as having been that of a suppliant: προσκυνήσας.²¹ While this implies no enmity between the two men, the relationship at this stage does not seem to have been close, and it is perhaps surprising that a man who had so recently been in so weak a position as to have acted as a suppliant to Sulla would shortly afterwards be granted the title of Ῥωμαίων φίλος αὐτὸς καὶ σύμμαχος. Perhaps this title, if indeed it was granted to Archelaus, was intended to mimic his official Pontic title of a φίλος of Mithridates. On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine that any such equivalent title would have been given in Latin. Although there is one example of the bestowing of *amicitia populi Romani*, in the *Senatus consultum de Asclepiade* from 78 BC, there has been no scholarly consensus as to the exact definition and legal implications of this term.²² It certainly did not signify a grant of citizenship, but it is unclear whether or not it was taken to be understood as the inferring of a special, privileged legal status. Although the inscription does also list a number of legal and financial privileges to which the recipients of the grant of *amicitia* would also be entitled, it is not possible to determine whether these were the result of the *amicitia* or given as additional honours.²³ Moreover, the case of the three Greeks to whom the *amicitia* and other benefits were awarded in response to assistance that they had given to Rome in the Social War and ratified by a *senatus consultum* is a very different situation from that of Archelaus.²⁴ Archelaus had at this stage done little to assist Rome, although he had now agreed to treat with Mithridates on Rome's behalf. And while there is little certainty as to the

²¹ Plut. *Sull.* 22.2-5.

²² *S.c. de Asclepiade*: Raggi (2001), with 109-113 on the question of *amicitia*. Although there has been much disagreement about the dating of the inscription, Raggi argues persuasively that the evidence provided by the dialect and the letter types strongly suggests that the surviving inscription does date to the Republican period, providing an interesting parallel to this reference to the granting of friendship.

²³ Raggi (2001) 110.

²⁴ The inscription names the war as the *Bellum Italicum*; Raggi suggests that this should be taken as the Social War. Raggi (2001) 115, with bibliography in n. 267.

legal situation concerning the grant of *amicitia* to the three Greeks in the s.c. *de Asclepiade*, it seems that it had to be granted or ratified by senatorial decree, so it is not clear whether or not Sulla would have had the ability or authority to make a similar grant to Archelaus.

On the other hand, it is possible that this formed part of a tradition hostile to Sulla, since he is described in terms that suggest kingship; προσκυνήσις was offered to Persian kings by their suppliants.²⁵ The most famous example involved Alexander demanding this honour from his Macedonian officers.²⁶ There is no suggestion in Plutarch's account of these events that Sulla demanded such treatment from the Pontic general, but it rather implies that Archelaus did this of his own volition. Nevertheless, there is a significant tradition concerning Sulla's engagement with the iconography of kingship, and it was seen in antiquity as a particularly worrying aspect of his character. For example, when meeting with Ariobarzanes and Orobazus in approximately 95 BC,²⁷ Sulla arranged for three chairs to be set up. He took the central chair and gave audience to the Cappadocian king and his general, thus placing himself on an equal (or possibly superior) footing.²⁸ Plutarch reports that the reception of this was mixed, varying from praise (ἐπήνεσαν) to condemnation (ἠτιάσαντο) and accusations of vulgarity and arrogance (φορτικὸν... καὶ ἀκαίρως φιλότιμον).²⁹ Gisborne has demonstrated that royal imagery and associations were present in a number of different moments in Sulla's career and, although he never went so far as to portray himself as a king, in his dealings with foreign kings "he presented himself as their superior".³⁰ Although Plutarch implies that Archelaus' *proskynesis* was not requested by Sulla, neither is there any suggestion that Sulla rejected the honour, since he granted Archelaus' request to treat for peace

²⁵ Herod. *Hist.* 1.134. Proskynesis was offered to all Persians of a higher rank, but was particularly associated with the king, since all were of a lower rank than himself and therefore all would offer him this honour. See Taylor (1927); Spawforth (2007) 103-106.

²⁶ Arr. *Anab.* 4.10.5-4.12.5.

²⁷ The date of this meeting is disputed; Sherwin-White (1977b) 173-179 has suggested a much later dating in 92, in a scheme that also involves an emendation of the traditional dating of Sulla's praetorship; see above in the Introduction for the various constructions of the chronology of Sulla's career.

²⁸ This image, in which Sulla was depicted as seated above two foreign rulers, would recur with the Bocchus monument and Sulla's signet ring.

²⁹ Plut. *Sull.* 5.4-5. This was the first official contact between Rome and Parthian envoys, and it is clear that Sulla was aware of the importance of acting in the right way. There can be no question that he knew the regal associations that would be implicit in his choice of seating arrangements. See Gisborne (2005) 112-113.

³⁰ Gisborne (2005) 121.

with Mithridates.³¹ It is therefore possible that a tradition hostile to Sulla had arisen in which Sulla demanded regal honours from Archelaus, or in which he was given such regal honours but did not refuse them.

One of the ways in which Sulla was said to have favoured Archelaus is very unlikely to have been true. Although it has been accepted by some scholars,³² the allegation that Aristion was executed since he was an enemy of Archelaus was almost certainly not the case. Aristion had been one of Rome's most troublesome opponents for some time, and was not the only Mithridatic leader to be executed. Appian states that Aristion was killed, along with his bodyguard, and all those who had been in power in Greece or who had contravened the rules set out by the Romans after Greece had been captured: καὶ αὐτῶν ὁ Σύλλας Ἀριστίωνα μὲν καὶ τοὺς ἐκείνῳ δορυφορήσαντας ἢ ἀρχὴν τινα ἄρξαντας, ἢ ὅτιοῦν ἄλλο πράξαντας παρ' ἃ πρότερον ἀλούσης τῆς Ἑλλάδος ὑπο Ῥωμαίων αὐτοῖς διετέτακτο, ἐκόλασε θανατῶ.³³ It is not at all certain that Aristion was singled out by Sulla, and that he had not released the other allies of Mithridates whom he had captured in Greece.³⁴ Moreover, while it was alleged in Plutarch's account that Aristion had been killed by poison (διὰ φαρμάκων),³⁵ alternative accounts of these events record that Aristion was dragged from the temple of Athene, where he had gone for refuge, and executed.³⁶ There is no suggestion in this tradition that poison was used, or that Aristion alone was killed, whether or not he was a personal enemy of Archelaus. This latter tradition is, however, found in the work of Pausanias, who maintained a very hostile view of Sulla's actions in Athens, and it is possible that it is for this reason that the sacrilegious act of dragging Archelaus from sanctuary in the temple is not mentioned in our other sources.³⁷ The two traditions reflect two different constructions of Sulla's character and actions, since Pausanias shows him to be acting

³¹ Plut. *Sull.* 22.5. For the story of the meeting of Sulla with Orobazus and Ariobarzanes see the commentary on F7P.

³² Such as Reinach (1890) 197.

³³ App. *Mithr.* 39.

³⁴ Valgiglio (1954) 107-8; Bertinelli (1997) 366; Keaveney (2005) 87.

³⁵ Mayor (2010) 403 n. 20 has suggested that the poison used was hemlock, but there is no evidence for this. It is notable that poison was not a traditional method of execution in Rome. It was, however, frequently used in Athens, one of the three known methods of execution: MacDowell (1986) 254-255.

³⁶ Pausanias 1.20.7. This was a sacrilegious act, since it ignored the inviolability of temples and sanctuaries. Pausanias argued that it was because of this act that Sulla was later punished with the illness that caused his death (on which see Plut. *Sull.* 36.2-4 and commentary on F21P, below).

³⁷ For Pausanias' view of Sulla at Athens see the commentary on F12 and 13P.

contrary to the laws and religious taboos of both Rome and Athens, while in Plutarch's version there is no alleged wrongdoing on Sulla's part.

The purpose of these accusations and criticisms seems to have been to remove from Sulla the credit for his victories at Chaeronea and Orchomenus. A similar process took place regarding the responsibility for the battle of Vercellae, when anti-Marian sources (including Sulla and Catulus) presented narratives of the battle in which Marius was not responsible for the victory.³⁸ It is highly likely that this type of dialogue frequently took place among the political elite in Rome during this period. Political pamphlets had for some time provided a venue in which the achievements of the most important political figures were discussed, and with the growth in the popularity of the writing of autobiographies and histories which included autobiographical accounts of the authors' own lives, it was now possible to treat such matters at greater length and in much greater detail than had previously been the case in traditional annalistic history.³⁹ A comprehensive re-telling of recent history, in which one's enemies were depicted as not having deserved the honours that were accorded to them, proved a valuable tool which was undoubtedly taken up by a significant number of politicians.

The victories that Sulla had achieved at Chaeronea and Orchomenus had been the turning point of the Mithridatic War, and had become an important part of Sulla's self-representation. He had used the trophies that he had erected on the sites of the two battles in a number of different media in order to make the most of the prestige that these victories might bring to him. For Sulla's enemies to have claimed, therefore, that Sulla had plotted with Archelaus and that, consequently, the victories that he had won had not been the military achievements that Sulla had made out was potentially very damaging indeed. The image of the two trophies that appeared on *RRC* 359 and on Sulla's signet ring was a potent symbol of his military prowess and the favour which he enjoyed from the gods, but if the victories that had led to these were brought under question, and it became widely known that Sulla might have achieved them through illicit means, then the image would come to represent Sulla's dishonour and the allegations that he had tricked the Romans into thinking that his victories had been legitimately obtained. It is not difficult to see why Sulla thought that the matter was worth confronting in his *Autobiography*. This passage has in the past been viewed as surprising, since it is generally expected that Sulla's self-defence in the *Autobiography*

³⁸ See commentary on F5P and F6P.

³⁹ See the Introduction for the growing political use of autobiographies.

would have focussed on his more controversial later record. Misch, for example, argued that it was “a small matter in comparison with the fearful atrocities he had on his conscience and may have wanted to justify – assuming that we may attribute to him such a thing as a conscience.”⁴⁰ However, this fragment reveals that he was concerned with the adverse effects of the accusations that had been levelled against himself, and shows that it was just as important for Sulla to ensure that he retained the honour and the credit for his victories at Chaeronea and Orchomenus as it was to answer criticisms concerning later aspects of his career such as the dictatorship or the proscriptions.

⁴⁰ Misch (1950) 246.

Commentary on F18P – Plut. Sull. 27.3-6 (= F24S, F20C)

Sulla's soldiers pledged an oath that, upon their return to Italy, they would not disperse to their own towns, but stay with their general; they also voluntarily made an offering of money to Sulla, since he was in need of financial assistance, but Sulla refused their offer. Before joining battle, Sulla was assured of its positive outcome by unmistakable signs of success. These took various forms, including the impression of a laurel wreath on the liver of a sacrificial victim, and a vision of two male goats fighting like men, before rising into the air and disappearing. Shortly after this and in the same area, Sulla defeated the forces of Norbanus and the younger Marius through the loyalty and enthusiasm of his men; Sulla said that it was due to this success that the soldiers did not disperse. At Silvium he was met by a servant of Pontius in an inspired state, who told him that Bellona would grant him victory and triumph, but that if he did not hurry, the Capitol would be burn,; which did actually happen.

This lengthy passage of Plutarch's *Life of Sulla* has traditionally been attributed to Sulla as one fragment. Only three short sections are directly cited as deriving from the *Autobiography*, but most scholars have maintained Peter's original decision that this whole section consisted of material taken from that source.¹ The battles that Sulla fought in Italy after his return from the East in 83 and his subsequent (second) march on Rome formed one of the more controversial episodes in Sulla's career since, although the narration of these events would naturally consist of military narrative, the enemies that Sulla was fighting and the troops that served those men were fellow Roman citizens.² Unlike Sulla's battles against the forces of Mithridates, in which it was beneficial for Sulla to claim to have killed as many as possible, since they were enemies of Rome that were falling, he would have to be much more careful in his presentation of these events. It was crucial that Sulla should present his actions in this affair as being beyond reproach. As in so many other cases in the *Autobiography*, Sulla's justification of his actions is compounded by a series of omens and portents that revealed to Sulla not only his inevitable success, but also the divine support that he enjoyed. It is for this

¹ Peter (1914) 202-203. See also Chassignet (2004) 182-183, 245-246; *FRH* 2.489; 3.297-298.

² Sulla's return from the East and landing in Italy in 83: Livy. *Per.* 85; Vell. Pat. 2.25.1-2; App. *BC.* 1.34.

reason that, when Sulla landed in Brundisium in 83, we are presented with a multitude of such omens, so that the reader is left in no doubt that Sulla's actions were divinely sanctioned, and therefore justified.³

In this fragment, two omens and one prophecy fulfil this function. This commentary will consider this evidence, before moving on to discuss the military themes in the fragment. Firstly, after making an initial landing at Brundisium, Sulla began his journey north towards Rome along the Appian Way. When at Tarentum, he offered sacrifice. The liver of the sacrificial victim was inspected, and found to feature the impression of a laurel wreath, with two fillets hanging from it: θύσαντος μὲν γὰρ εὐθέως ἣ διέβη περι Τάραντα, δάφνης στεφάνου τύπον ἔχων ὁ λοβὸς ὄφθη, καὶ λημνίσκων δυὸ κατηρτημένων.⁴ The nature of the observations of the victim's liver is unusual. It was extremely uncommon to find such immediately recognizable marks during the performance of a sacrifice; there could be no interpretations of the appearance on the liver of a triumphal crown other than victory for Sulla. This story is repeated in similar terms by Augustine in a passage which seems to have drawn on the *Autobiography*.⁵ There, the liver of the victim (which Augustine specifies was a calf), displays a golden crown.⁶

Both Plutarch and Augustine mention that this sacrifice took place at Tarentum. An erroneous interpretation of διέβη in Plutarch's account has led to some confusion concerning the sequence of the events in question here. Perrin's translation suggests that this term, together with εὐθέως, implies that this was where Sulla had disembarked on his return from Italy, and she argued that Sulla had landed at Tarentum, while the main part of his troops had gone to Brundisium.⁷ However, διαβαίνω more properly means 'pass through', and must refer to Sulla's journey north; the statement that the sacrifices were carried out 'straight away' (εὐθέως) thus simply means that they were conducted

³ Wiseman (2009b) 111; *FRH* 3.297-298.

⁴ Plut. *Sull.* 27.4.

⁵ The passage mentions several pieces of information known to have been recorded in Sulla's *Autobiography*, such as the appearance of the snake at Nola. If Augustine did not read Sulla's work directly, then he at least had access a secondary source that drew heavily on Sulla's original text.

⁶ Aug. *Civ. Dei* 2.24: *Cum venisset Tarentum Sulla atque ibi sacrificasset, vidit in capite vitulini iecoris similitudinem coronae aureae.*

⁷ Perrin (1916) 410 n. 1.

on Sulla's arrival in Tarentum.⁸ Sulla must have spent at least a few days in Brundisium before setting out from there to Rome. He had to arrange the landing and organisation of a very large number of troops, and Appian recounts that he had granted an exemption (ἀτέλεια, probably from *portorium*) to the town's inhabitants in exchange for the friendly welcome that he had received.⁹

The second of the omens has raised a significant textual problem. The manuscript tradition records that two τράγοι, male goats, were seen to be fighting in the manner of men fighting a battle on Mount Tifata, to the north of Capua.¹⁰ It became evident that this was an apparition when the goats rose into the air and gradually dispersed, vanishing like smoke.¹¹ The somewhat improbable nature of this vision has prompted some scholars to emend τράγοι to στρατοί, since it was arguably more likely that two armies would be seen fighting in battle formation.¹² However, Plutarch's description of the combatants πάντα δρῶντες καὶ πάσχοντες ἃ συμβαίνει μαχομένοις ἀνθρώποις makes little sense if the combatants were already known to be men. Although it must have been an extremely unusual vision, the manuscript reading of two τράγοι thus best fits the context.¹³ Although no interpretation of the portent is offered in Plutarch's *Life*, it is apparent that the two goats symbolised Sulla and his enemies; the connection of this portent to the battle at Mount Tifata (the location of the portent) between Sulla and the combined forces of the consul Norbanus and the younger Marius is stressed chronologically and geographically, even if the symbolism is not made explicit: the battle happened μετ'οὐ πολλὸν χρόνον ἐν τῷ τόπῳ τούτῳ.¹⁴ This ensured

⁸ A similar chronological contraction may be seen in Plutarch's account of Sulla's early career, in which he is said to have stood for the praetorship immediately (εὐθὺς) after his return from the Cimbric War, on which see the commentary on F7P above.

⁹ App. *BC*. 1.79. *Portorium*: Gabba (1958) 212-213; Bertinelli (1997) 378. It is unclear how this story would have arisen if Sulla had not landed at Brundisium. There is a general consensus among ancient authors that the landing was at Brundisium: Plut. *Sull.* 27.1; App. *BC*. 1.79, 84; Vell. Pat. 2.25.1-2.

¹⁰ The manuscript tradition records ἦφατον or ἡφατον at this point, but the reading of this as Τίφατον is universally accepted. Bertinelli (1997) 170, 378.

¹¹ Plut. *Sull.* 27.4.

¹² Ziegler (1925) 172; Flacelière (1971) 270, 341. This conclusion is largely founded upon Obsequens' description (at 57) of a similar vision: *Per Sullana tempora inter Capuam et Vulturum ingens signorum sonus armorumque horrendo clamore auditus, ita ut viderentur duae acies concurrere per plures dies*. Aug. *Civ. Dei* 2.25 mentions a similar vision: *Per aliquot dies... duas acies proeliari*. It is by no means clear however that this is a description of the same incident mentioned in Plut. *Sull.* 27.4. Valgiglio (1967) 128 accepts τράγοι.

¹³ Bertinelli (1997) 378; Chassignet (2004) 246.

¹⁴ Plut. *Sull.* 27.4.

that the portent gained an important political resonance, since it brought Sulla's intentions here into the divine sphere and showed that he was enjoying the support of the gods; conversely, this also shows that Norbanus and Marius were not fulfilling the intentions of the gods at this juncture. By presenting the gods as expressing special favours to himself, Sulla was able to maintain that his cause was just.

The prophecy in F18P concerns one of the more problematic issues in Sulla's self-representation. Sulla claimed that he was promised victory in this war (κράτος πολέμου καὶ νίκην), but was warned that if he did not hurry to Rome, the Capitol would be burned.¹⁵ The message was delivered to him at Silvium¹⁶ by a slave of an otherwise unknown Lucius Pontius,¹⁷ who was in an inspired state, described by Plutarch as θεοφόρητος, and who claimed that his message came from Ma Bellona, a goddess who featured prominently in Sulla's dealings with the divine.¹⁸ This prophecy predicted the burning of the Capitol, set out the conditions that Sulla had to meet to avert the catastrophe, and established a time frame within which Sulla was to act. Sulla did not take heed of this warning, however, and, since he did not hurry to Rome, the fire did take place, on the 6th of July 83.¹⁹

The burning of the Capitol and the destruction of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, as well as the loss of its votive dedications and cult statue and the Sibylline texts, was an extraordinarily traumatic experience for the people of Rome.²⁰ The event was of such magnitude that, even though it happened in Sulla's absence, he had no choice but to narrate the story, and confront the problems that it raised. It is notable that the other detailed accounts of Sulla's landing in Italy and the overtures to the battles that

¹⁵ The destruction of the Capitol on the 6th of July 83: Sall. *Cat.* 47.2; Cic. *Cat.* 3.9; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 4.62.6; Tac. *Hist.* 3.72.1; App. *BC.* 1.86.

¹⁶ The geography of this account is confused, since Sulla must have passed through Silvium before arriving at Mount Tifata. Plutarch was either unaware of the geography of the region, or simply more interested in constructing his narrative with incidents that he found interesting than in recounting all the events strictly in the order in which they took place.

¹⁷ It is possible, although by no means certain, that this was the same Lucius Pontius who appears on *ILLRP* 515: *FRH* 3.298. The *praenomen* Lucius is not recorded by Plutarch, but reconstructed on the basis of the account of Aug. *Civ. Dei* 2.24: *servus cuiusdam Luci Pontii*. It has been suggested that this could be the Samnite leader Pontius Telesinus, who fought against Sulla (Plut. *Sull.* 29.1-8); Bertinelli (1997) 379.

¹⁸ Plut. *Sull.* 27.6. For Sulla's engagement with Ma Bellona see the commentary on F8P.

¹⁹ Plut. *Sull.* 27.6.

²⁰ Gagé (1955) 432-434; Flower (2008). See discussion below in the commentary on F20P.

followed also prominently feature a series of prodigies and omens. Appian declares that there were many δείματα and ἄλογα throughout Italy: ancient and terrible oracles were remembered, a mule gave birth, a woman gave birth to a snake instead of a baby, and there were severe earthquakes, which destroyed several temples in Rome.²¹ The final portent which Appian describes is the fire which destroyed the Capitol. Under Appian's interpretation, the destruction itself was a portent, rather than a traumatic event which was prophesied to Sulla. The fire, along with the other portents, revealed the many deaths that would occur in the forthcoming war and the conquest of Italy and Rome, and then Sulla's alteration of the constitution. Just as in Plutarch, omen after omen is related, to give the impression of the deepest turmoil.²² Sulla's *Autobiography* seems to have followed the same model, using a large number of supernatural phenomena to emphasise this chaos and to show that Sulla's subsequent victory would save Italy and Rome from the unrest that they had been suffering. While the fire is not described as a portent in Plutarch's account, it is possible that in Sulla's *Autobiography* the prophecy was predicting the portent, signifying divine wrath, which Sulla could then try to prevent from happening.

The temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitol was rebuilt after Sulla's death and dedicated by Q. Lutatius Catulus.²³ A significant amount of ancient evidence suggests that Sulla himself may have been instrumental in initiating the rebuilding project, although he did not live to see its completion.²⁴ Even if Sulla had made attempts to rebuild this temple, and even if these attempts were widely known, it is nonetheless extremely surprising to find that Sulla not only mentioned the destruction of the Capitol in his *Autobiography*, as might have been expected, and that he had foreknowledge of the catastrophe, but also that he did nothing to avert the disaster when he alone had the

²¹ App. *BC.* 1.83.

²² Flower (2008) 82: "heightened religious sensibility and fear".

²³ Cos. 78: *MRR* 2.85. Dedication of the new temple: *CIL* I² 737 = 6.1314 = *ILS* 35 = *ILLRP* 367. This Catulus, the son of the general under whom Sulla served against the Cimbri, took the *cognomen* 'Capitolinus' in acknowledgement of the importance of the rededication of the temple, and was closely connected with that act throughout his life: Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.69. The identification of the building conventionally known as the 'Tabularium' as having also been dedicated by Catulus was dismissed by Purcell (1993) 135-142.

²⁴ Plutarch claimed that Sulla built the temple, and that Catulus merely dedicated it after the dictator's death. Plut. *Publ.* 15.1-2: τὸν δὲ δεύτερον ἀνέστησε μὲν Σύλλας, ἐπεγράφη δὲ τῇ καθιερώσει Κάτουλος Σύλλα προαποθανόντος. Tacitus also asserts that Sulla began the rebuilding. Tac. *Hist.* 3.72.3: *curam victor Sulla suscepit, neque tamen dedicavit.*

ability to do so.²⁵ The destruction of the temple reflected badly on Sulla himself since, on the one hand, it could be interpreted as an omen of the most serious nature, portending doom for the Republic itself,²⁶ and on the other hand, the fire caused people to think back on the earlier attacks on Rome, creating uncomfortable parallels with Sulla's civil war and his march on the city.²⁷ The warning that had been delivered to Sulla placed him in a unique position, since he alone could have saved the Capitol from destruction by obeying the instructions given to him in the message from the goddess, by hurrying to Rome. Sulla admitted that he knew what could have been done to save the temple, and that nonetheless he did not do it; by making this admission, he might be seen to have made himself unnecessarily vulnerable to criticism.

Sulla seems to have spoken widely about the fire during his lifetime, and in the *Autobiography*.²⁸ Pliny records a tradition, which is likely to have derived from Sulla himself, whether in the oral tradition and common knowledge or in the *Autobiography*, in which Sulla asserted that the failure to dedicate the rebuilt temple was the one thing lacking from his *felicitas*.²⁹ Tacitus preserves a very similar statement, in which Sulla complained that the fact that he did not live to see the dedication of the new temple was the only respect in which his *felicitas* failed him.³⁰ The striking similarities between these two accounts, including verbal echoes (*dedicavisset/dedicavit, felicitate/felicitate*) and the information not only that this was a regret but was the only thing that his *felicitas* did not ensure for him, together with the recurrence of a similar formulation in Plutarch's *Life of Publicola*, strongly suggests that the source of this story was the

²⁵ The burning of the temple would have been widely known and discussed throughout Rome and Italy, so Sulla would have had no choice but to confront the story. The mention of the prophecy, however, reflects a choice that Sulla need not have made, and cannot be explained by necessity alone. See above, in the commentary on F2P, for Sulla's alleged attempt to reconstruct the Sibylline Books.

²⁶ Flower (2008) 81. It has been argued (Wiseman (2009b) 119) that Augustus' famous dream of Jupiter Capitolinus complaining to him that his own temple was being neglected in favour of Jupiter Tonans reflects an attempt on the part of the *princeps* to create a deliberate contrast between himself and Sulla. Suet. *Aug.* 91.2.

²⁷ Flower (2008) 82: the fire "looked like a bad omen for Sulla, casting him in the role of an invading enemy who would capture the city and perhaps even put an end to an era, in a way even more destructive than the Gallic Sack."

²⁸ *FRH* 3.298 argues that the final sentence of this passage, concerning the date on which the fire occurred, stemmed from the *Autobiography*, although the Greek explanation of the date must have come from Plutarch.

²⁹ Pliny. *NH.* 7.138: *hoc tamen nempe felicitati suae defuisse confessus est quod Capitolium non dedicavisset.*

³⁰ Tac. *Hist.* 3.72.3: *curam victor Sulla suscepit, neque tamen dedicavit; hoc solum felicitate eius negatum.*

Autobiography.³¹ Moreover, Pliny's discussion of how the fire on the Capitol related to Sulla's *felicitas* strongly suggests that it stemmed, directly or otherwise, from Sulla's own self-representation and statements that he had made about himself – and the possibility must be entertained that Pliny took this information from the *Autobiography*.³² The subject matter (the loss of the Capitol) certainly suggests that it could have come from that text, since we know that he took great pains to present a carefully constructed account of the incident, which exonerated him from blame. Similarly, the comment regarding Sulla's *felicitas* may be thought to stem from Sulla's discussion of the subject in his *Autobiography*. While there is no specific source citation with which to prove such an assertion, it nonetheless fulfils the same criteria as F18P, for example, in which we are told that Sulla said something (ὡς φησιν αὐτός), but are not told where, in the work of an author known to quote Sulla elsewhere.

Assuming that this passage did stem from the *Autobiography*, we are here given an extremely interesting insight into Sulla's interpretation of his *felicitas*. For Sulla to state that his *felicitas* was lacking in any way is perhaps surprising, given the otherwise consistent picture that the gods had supported him at all times. On the face of it, this might be seen as an admission of a failing on Sulla's part; not something that could often be expected of Sulla. A parallel might be seen in F4P, in which Sulla was forced to give an apologetic explanation for his *repulsa* on his first attempt to gain election to the praetorship. There, Sulla justified his defeat by claiming that the people wanted him to throw games as aedile using beasts sent by his ally Bocchus. Here we may see a similar phenomenon. The only respect in which Sulla's *felicitas* was lacking was his failure to dedicate the Capitol. But, as is argued below, Sulla took care to explain that he was not the one responsible for the delay that caused the fire. If this reconstruction, in which Sulla exonerated himself from blame, is correct, then this passage becomes easier to interpret: Sulla's *felicitas* failed him only in one respect, and that was the fault not of himself, but of his enemies. We cannot, of course, be certain that this Pliny passage is a fragment, although it should certainly be included in discussions of the possible scope of the *Autobiography*. As Thein has argued, albeit briefly, a stronger argument may be

³¹ Smith (2009b) 71 agrees that the story in Pliny is likely to be derived from the *Autobiography*. Plutarch in the *Life of Publicola* (15.1-2) compares the fortunes of Sulla and Vespasian. The latter rebuilt the temple after it had been destroyed in AD 69, and is said to have been more fortunate than Sulla since the latter died before seeing the temple consecrated, while Vespasian died after the temple had been completed, but before it was destroyed again shortly afterwards, in AD 80.

³² Not least since Pliny preserves another fragment at *NH* 22.6.12 = F10P.

made for accepting this as a fragment than there are for F17aP.³³ At any rate, it strongly suggests that in the *Autobiography* (or plausibly in comments made elsewhere), Sulla was open about his failure to save the temple from destruction; his complaint is that he could not dedicate the new temple, but this necessarily recognises and acknowledges the destruction of the old one.

Since it is very surprising that Sulla should choose to admit such a failing, some explanation must be found. Appian's account of the fire mentions that the cause of the fire was never discovered, although a number of culprits were suspected. Chief among these were Carbo, or the consuls of 83, but Appian also mentions that some people thought that the fire was started by an agent sent by Sulla.³⁴ It is perhaps this small detail which reveals Sulla's motivation for discussing the matter to such a great extent in the *Autobiography*. If it was widely suspected that Sulla himself had some hand in causing the destruction of the Capitol, then he would have had to avert such claims; to commit arson and destroy this most important of temples would have contradicted the pious image of himself that Sulla had constructed so carefully. The circulation of such damaging rumours about himself would therefore have prompted Sulla to present his own interpretation of the matter in his *Autobiography*, in which, however much he wished to save the Capitol, he had to remain in the south of Italy and confront the threats posed by Norbanus and Marius the Younger.

It is also notable that, although we have many different accounts of the destruction of the temple and Sulla's despair that he could not dedicate the new one, nowhere do we find an explicit statement of Sulla's interpretation of the sequence of events. If Sulla could have saved the temple but did not, then he could be subject to criticism, which would have to be allayed with careful counter-explanation. On the other hand, Flower has argued that Sulla's presentation of these events, such as they have survived, suggest that he did not at any point specify how he might have saved the temple, and instead focussed on the inevitability of the temple's destruction. Sulla's claims that he could have saved the temple are, under this interpretation, connected with his attempts to cast himself in the role of the saviour of Rome. The outcome was, however, inevitable: "the temple must have burned because the gods ordained that it would, even on that very day."³⁵ This explanation is to some extent attractive, since it

³³ Thein (2005) 283.

³⁴ App. *BC*. 1.86.

³⁵ Flower (2008) 82-83.

explains Sulla's willingness to discuss the matter at length and the later (frequent) occasions on which he held events within sight of the burned ruins of the temple.³⁶ However, it does not answer the question of why Sulla would have mentioned the detail that he alone could have saved the temple, but chose not to obey Ma-Bellona's advice and, in all probability, stated that in this his *felicitas*, otherwise consistent and unflinching, was lacking. It is indeed possible that Sulla's presentation of these events did not answer all the questions that might have been asked concerning the events, but instead maintained his consistent presentation of himself as a man with whom the gods chose to share privileged information. But an explanation must be found for why Sulla would openly admit to such a significant failing. The most attractive interpretation of our sparse evidence is that Sulla was at pains to ensure that he was no longer suspected of having ordered the fire. If this was the case, his statement (preserved in Pliny and Tacitus, as well as Plutarch) that in this his *felicitas* failed him, may have been intended to illustrate that Sulla had nothing to gain from the destruction of the temple, as a further attempt to remove the stain of suspicion from himself.

There is an alternative explanation that may be suggested, although it is based on conjecture and may not be verified to any degree of certainty with the ancient evidence that has survived. The condition and the time limit that were imposed in the prophecy given to Sulla from Ma-Bellona meant that Sulla was told what he had to do to avert the disaster: he had to hurry to Rome. The Capitol would burn only εἰ δὲ μὴ σπεύσειεν. Since the Capitol did indeed burn, it is usually inferred that Sulla chose to fight his enemies rather than travel to Rome immediately, thus failing to fulfil the conditions set by the goddess and ensuring the temple's destruction. However, since there is little evidence concerning the manner in which Sulla discussed the actual fire itself, it is equally possible that Sulla emphasised in the *Autobiography* that he did try to hurry to Rome, and was only prevented from arriving in time to avert the catastrophe because he was stopped by Norbanus and Marius the Younger. This formulation would lay the blame for the destruction with Sulla's enemies and exonerate himself entirely. This presentation would not undercut the consistency of Sulla's self portrait, and would explain the manner in which he complained of his failure to rededicate the new temple, which would imply not an admission of a failing but a criticism of his enemies.

³⁶ Flower (2008) 84.

The other main theme of this passage is Sulla's military expertise, and the relationship he had fostered between himself and his troops. This was another area in which it was necessary for Sulla to ensure that he constructed his presentation of himself in the *Autobiography* with great care. It was the loyalty of the troops to Sulla that allowed him to march on Rome in 83. Sulla emphasised the strength of their devotion to him by claiming that he was afraid (unjustifiably, as it turned out) that they might leave him once they had landed in Italy.³⁷ To some extent, this is an understandable concern, since the army had been with Sulla for many years by this point and may have wished to return to their families.³⁸ Assuming that Sulla's presentation of this situation was reasonably similar to Plutarch's, we may determine that this detail was included chiefly in order to create a contrast with Sulla's statement of the troops' faithfulness, since they not only stayed with Sulla, but offered him considerable sums of their own money in order to assist Sulla in his campaign.³⁹ There is no reason to suppose that this story was historically accurate; the offer would certainly have been unnecessary considering Sulla's financial situation, and the amount that the troops would have been able to give would not have made a significant difference. It has been shown that, although during Sulla's early life and political career he was far from wealthy,⁴⁰ by the time of his return from the East in 83 he would have made a very large sum of money while on campaign, and it would be extremely unusual for a leader in such a secure financial position to have needed his own soldiers to volunteer their own contributions.⁴¹ Appian's account of Sulla's return emphasises the wealth he had amassed by this stage.⁴² On the contrary, it seems that this story was intended to reveal the devotion which Sulla's troops held towards their leader, since they were willing not only to stay with him instead of going to see their families, but even to give their own money to help to finance his campaign.

³⁷ Plut. *Sull.* 27.3.

³⁸ It is possible that this detail was intended to encourage the reader to empathize with Sulla and the subsequent relief that both he and his troops must have felt on their victory: Thein (2009) 98.

³⁹ Plut. *Sull.* 27.3.

⁴⁰ Plut. *Sull.* 1.2-4: Sulla's youthful poverty; 2.4: inheritance from Nicopolis and his stepmother.

⁴¹ Bertinelli (1997) 376-377 carries out a survey of the sources on Sulla's wealth in 83, and concludes that, even if it were true that the soldiers did offer Sulla financial assistance, Sulla could easily refuse them. Sulla was certainly exceptionally wealthy at this point: Shatzman (1975) 271-2.

⁴² App. *BC.* 1.74.

Moreover, Sulla's insistence that his troops were so well trained and so loyal that they were willing to make such offers reflected extremely well on Sulla himself;⁴³ since he was returning with his army and was about to march on Rome, it was critical that Sulla could show that he had his men under control and that, even if he was resorting to violence in order to free Rome from the Marian factions (according to his own interpretation, at least), his motivation was purely the security of Italy and Rome. This may be seen from his soldiers' offer of money, and from the oath which Sulla claimed they voluntarily took, swearing that they would do no damage to Italy.⁴⁴ Sulla could therefore maintain that his intentions were to protect Italy and Rome, and he could thus counter potential criticisms regarding his decision to expose Rome to danger, by marching his troops against the city for a second time, through persuading the reader that Italy and, by extension, Rome, were not threatened by his troops since they were so well controlled by his charismatic leadership. Sulla's treatment of his troops had also caused a number of political problems. The decision to grant land settlements to his veterans was a controversial one, and set a precedent that later leaders would have no choice but to attempt to follow.⁴⁵ By praising the virtues of his soldiers and focussing on their self-control and their moral qualities, Sulla emphasises the role of these men in his civil war and, by extension, in saving Rome from the factions led by Sulla's enemies. This in turn implies that the decision to grant these men land was a justified one. It is thus possible that Sulla's description of the excellence of his troops fitted into an apologetic discussion of the colonization programme, or that this was a theme that ran throughout the *Autobiography*.

The theme of Sulla's charismatic leadership is picked up in Plutarch's description of the conduct of the battle at Mount Tifata, in which Sulla is said to have been victorious not through careful strategic planning, but relying on the eagerness and courage of his soldiers.⁴⁶ Although there is no citation of Sulla for this detail, it is likely that the story was taken from the *Autobiography* since it stands as an excellent illustration of Sulla's reliance on *καῖρός*. It is difficult to determine Plutarch's exact

⁴³ Appian also describes the troops as being well disposed to Sulla (εὖνοον) and disciplined (γεγυμνασμένον). App. *BC*. 1.74.

⁴⁴ Plut. *Sull.* 27.3. The oath was then fulfilled after the battle of Mount Tifata, since, according to Sulla, it was due to this success that the soldiers did not leave for their hometowns, but held together. Plut. *Sull.* 27.6.

⁴⁵ Brunt (1971) 294-345; Broadhead (2007) 157-160; Thein (2010).

⁴⁶ Plut. *Sull.* 27.5.

meaning in his statement regarding Sulla's attitude to *καίρος*.⁴⁷ The concept of *καίρος* was not current in Republican Rome, so the statement that Sulla thought the actions he undertook *πρὸς καίρον* turned out for the best might reflect either a phrase such as *opportune*, or refer to an equivalent Latin concept such as *occasio*.⁴⁸ Sulla's description of the role of courage and enthusiasm rather than strategy fulfills precisely the earlier statement of his trust in *καίρος* rather than *γνώμη*. Plutarch states that he took this programmatic statement directly from Sulla's *Autobiography*, and the similarities between that statement and the timbre of Sulla's expressions of *felicitas* elsewhere suggest that this might also stem from Sulla's presentation of himself in the *Autobiography*. Interestingly, in F8P (a), Plutarch used Sulla's statement of the importance of *καίρος* as an illustration of the autobiographer's attitude to the divine (*τὸ θεῖον*).⁴⁹ In the description of Mount Tifata, it is not stated explicitly that Sulla's victory, achieved through *καίρος*, derives from his *felicitas* and his relationship with the gods, although this is the impression that Plutarch gives by framing this battle with the omens of the laurel wreath on the calf's liver and the fighting male goats, and the prophecy concerning the destruction of the Capitol. Sulla portrays himself as victorious in this battle not through his own leadership and military capabilities, but through the excellence of his troops. Victory was won for Sulla through the combined support of his troops and the gods, whose favour is confirmed throughout this passage in the multitude of omens and portents. This charismatic relationship that Sulla nurtured between himself and his troops seems to have played an integral part in his re-telling of the battles in which he fought.⁵⁰

The nature of Sulla's leadership seems to have been the subject of considerable discussion in the ancient world. It was, for example, his 'charisma', his enigmatic personal qualities, which meant that he was able to secure the surrender of Jugurtha and establish himself as a military leader of great worth.⁵¹ The conduct of the battle of

⁴⁷ Plut. *Sull.* 6.5 = F8P (a); see the commentary above.

⁴⁸ The argument that this section of Plutarch implies that Sulla engaged with the idea of *occasio* was first explored by Giardina (2009). See the commentary on F8P for a discussion of this idea.

⁴⁹ Plut. *Sull.* 6.4 = F8P (a).

⁵⁰ Thein argued that the concept guiding Sulla and his troops in this battle was not *καίρος* but a combination of *virtus* and *celeritas*. Thein (2009) 98.

⁵¹ Ridley (2010) 96-103 gives an excellent summary of the modern scholarship on this subject. Bates (1983) 240-241, 248-249 argues that Sallust's portrait of Sulla's deeds in the Jugurthine War demonstrates this aspect of Sulla's relationship with his soldiers: from the very beginning he addressed his soldiers in a friendly manner, granting

Mount Tifata appears to be an occasion on which this quality of Sulla's came to the fore; the devotion that Sulla had inspired in his soldiers during their years in the East meant that he was able to rely on them now. His charisma was a vital part of his ability to conduct a war in which his soldiers would have to fight and kill their fellow countrymen. In an age when individual military commanders were of the highest importance, the cultivation of the image of a man to whom the gods showed their favour, and whose actions inevitably led to positive outcomes, became a successful political strategy.⁵² It was an inevitably important aspect of Sulla's task in the *Autobiography* to construct with great care his presentation of his charismatic qualities as a leader.⁵³ F18P allows us to see Sulla's methods of doing so: it was not by explicitly extolling his own qualities that Sulla illustrated his charisma, but by showing the effects of this charisma in the loyalty that he inspired in his soldiers.

It is thus clear that, despite the disparate subjects discussed by Plutarch in F18P, the information taken by the biographer from Sulla's *Autobiography* reveals a consistent self-portrait on the part of its author. Sulla has created a narrative of the events surrounding his return to Italy in 83 in which he is exonerated of any blame, and his actions are justified, but without ever having to resort to explicit rejection of criticisms. This is achieved on the one hand through the use of religious and supernatural phenomena, demonstrating the support which the gods showed towards their favourite, and, on the other by revealing the intense loyalty of his troops. The killing of fellow Roman citizens must have been problematic within Sulla's self-representation strategy,

beneficia liberally and accepting favours only reluctantly, all of which made him popular with the men and with Marius. It is likely that this reflects a similar presentation of Sulla's character in the *Autobiography*: Sall. *Iug.* 96.1-3. The terms 'charisma' and 'charismatic' are used here in their general sense, rather than their ancient Greek meanings or their usage in Weber's sociological theories of the classification of types of authority. For an analysis of Weber's work on 'charisma' see Dow Jr. (1978).

⁵² The success of this strategy may be seen in the following decades, with the military commanders that are central to the history of the end of the Republic. Pompey and Caesar, to name the two most well known examples of this trend, used their charismatic personalities to strengthen their relationship with their troops, which assisted their rises to prominence and to power. The concept of charisma has, in modern scholarship, been closely associated with the possession of *felicitas*: Fears (1975) 592.

⁵³ It has been suggested that the theme of charisma appeared elsewhere in Sulla's self-representation strategy, most importantly with the use of the *lituus* on his coinage. Fears (1975) 600 argues that the *lituus* referred to the moneyer's *auspicium* and *imperium* and, therefore, to his special religious aura. However, it is not clear that the *lituus* refers to this quality alone, particularly on Sulla's coinage. See discussion above in the commentary on F15P for the extremely difficult task of interpreting the meaning of the *lituus* on the coins of the last century of the Republic.

and engaging in outright apologia would involve acknowledging the controversial nature of Sulla's civil war.⁵⁴ By focusing instead on the allegiance of his troops even in the most extreme of circumstances, Sulla could establish his contention that the war was justified. Many of the commonplaces of military narrative, such as the exaggeration of casualty figures and concentrating on the barbarian characteristics of the enemy, had to be avoided in a narrative of a civil war, but Sulla still had to discuss these matters and show that his decisions and his actions were justified.⁵⁵ Insisting on the absolute loyalty of his troops and the unfailing support of the gods fulfils this intention. Sulla could show that he was the just and rightful victor without needing to give lengthy descriptions of the deaths of those fellow Roman citizens who supported and fought for his personal and political enemies.⁵⁶ And, as ever, the support of the gods, demonstrated in all the most important methods of communication (an omen, a haruspical observation, and direct communication from the divine in a dream), gave further confirmation that Sulla, possessing *felicitas*, was justified in carrying out his civil war. In this respect, F18P is apologia that does not engage in apologetics.

⁵⁴ Plutarch's description of Sulla's enemies as πεντεκαίδεκα στρατηγούς πολεμίους may reflect a similar description of these men as hostile commanders in Sulla's *Autobiography*. These fifteen men were L. Cornelius Scipio Asiaticus, C. Norbanus, Appius Claudius, Q. Sertorius, C. Marius the Younger, M. Marius Gratidianus, M. Iunius Brutus, L. Iunius Damasippus, P. Albinovanus, Flavius Fimbria, C. Marcus Censorinus, (A. Postumius?) Albinus, M. Lamponius, Pontius Telesinus, and Gutta. Bertinelli (1997) 377-378. See *MRR* 2.62-65; Chassignet (2004) 246.

⁵⁵ It is possible that Sulla did exaggerate the casualty figures on each side in these battles; concerning the battle against Norbanus at Capua, Plutarch states that Sulla killed 7000 of the enemy, which is a high estimate, although not entirely implausible. Other authors however, perhaps drawing on Sulla's *Autobiography*, mention that Sulla lost very few men, suggesting that Sulla did engage in his customary inflation of the losses of the opposition and depreciation of those on his own side. Eutrop. 5.7.4; Oros. 5.20.2; App. *BC*. 1.84. Peter (1914) 273; Bertinelli (1997) 379; Chassignet (2004) 183.

⁵⁶ It is, of course, possible that Sulla did engage in such descriptions, but no ancient authors appear to have drawn on his *Autobiography* for this type of detail. The later authors who have preserved elements of the *Autobiography* chose to focus on the role of the divine and the importance of Sulla's relationship with his troops, so it seems likely that these were also the main focus of the narrative in the *Autobiography*.

Commentary on F19P – Plut. *Sull.* 28.8 (= F25S, F21C)

In the battle of Sacriportus, Sulla claimed that he had taken 8000 prisoners and killed 20000 of the enemy, but lost only 23 men.

In the spring of 82 BC, Sulla met the younger Marius in battle at Sacriportus,¹ an unidentified location not far from Praeneste and Signia.² Although it is certain that Marius' side did suffer significant losses, the casualty figures presented by Sulla are, as hardly needs pointing out, a gross exaggeration, in a similar vein to F15P and the figures apparently taken from Sulla from Plutarch for the battle of Chaeronea. The exaggeration of casualty figures (and the underestimation of casualty figures on one's own side) was commonplace within military narrative,³ and although it sounds unnatural to a modern ear, it would not have been unexpected.⁴ Fragments such as this, F12P and F13P have led scholars to argue, no doubt correctly, that much of Sulla's *Autobiography* consisted of detailed military narrative.⁵

¹ App. *BC.* 1.87; Vell. Pat. 2.26.1-2; Flor. *Ep.* 2.3.21.23-4; Vict. *Vir. Ill.* 68, 75; Lucan 2.134; Livy *Per.* 87; Sall. *Hist.* 1.30. Bertinelli (1997) 384; Keaveney (2005) 116-117; Steel (2013) 104-105. The name given in Appian (Ἱερὸν λιμένα) is clearly a translation of the Latin name *Sacriportus*, which serves to prove that Appian was using a Latin source at this point: Gabba (1958) 230-231.

² Location: Gabba (1958) 230-231; Rawson (1987) 171-172. The battle led to a routing of Marius' troops, who fled to nearby Praeneste, which was subsequently besieged. When it was clear that Praeneste would soon fall, Marius committed suicide so that he would not be taken alive. For references see *MRR* 2.65-66.

³ Hirschfeld (1913).

⁴ Alternative accounts of Sacriportus survive which preserve different numbers. Oros. 5.20.6 (= F84P of Claudius Quadrigarius) gives 25,000 Marian casualties; Eutrop. 5.8 gives 15,000 Marian casualties and 400 Sullan losses; Diod. 38-9.15 gives 15,000 Marian casualties. Flor. *Ep.* 2.3.21.23-4 gives 70,000 men for the combined battles of Sacriportus and the Colline Gate. Keaveney (2005) 169 took this passage as evidence that "Sulla throughout deliberately falsified the record of his own casualties." While this might have been the case, it was far from an uncommon practice, and there is no need to suppose that this is evidence of a generally mendacious attitude in the *Autobiography*. On Sulla's alleged mendacity, see the Introduction.

⁵ See commentary on F12P and F13P, and the Introduction.

Commentary on F20P – Priscian 9 p. 476 H (= F5S, F22C)

In the twenty-first book of his Res suae, Sulla wrote: ‘The republic was about to come to the utmost catastrophe...’.

This short fragment is the third and final piece of Sulla’s original Latin that has been preserved. The fourth century AD grammarian Priscian used it as an illustration of the future participle, which does not decline.¹ The sentence *ad summam perniciem rem publicam perventurum esse* has caused a number of problems for scholars, however, and has raised more questions than it has provided answers. Three main issues confront the reader of this fragment: the book number, the title of the *Autobiography*, and the identification of the events described. The first two of these are discussed in full in the Introduction. On this last subject there has been no scholarly consensus, and opinions have varied as to whether it is possible to identify the subject under discussion and, if so, what the events in question were.

The most skeptical view was expressed by Bardon, who claimed that the expression was so vague that it allowed many interpretations, but no conclusions.² While it is true that the sentence is vague, the information contained in the citation gives us the original location of the fragment within Sulla’s *Autobiography*, that is, in the twenty-first book. Although we do not know precisely how far the *Autobiography* went and what events were covered in the late books, we may be certain that Sulla’s reference to the ‘utmost catastrophe’ that threatened the Republic came very late in his public career. Attempts to identify the subject of this fragment have therefore focused on the Civil War and on Sulla’s dictatorship. Lewis argued that the passage has strong verbal similarities to the description of the battle of the Colline Gate in late 82 BC:³

*Pontius Telesinus... kal. Novembribus ita ad portam Collinam cum Sulla dimicavit et ad summum discrimen et eum et rem publicam reduceret.*⁴

¹ Hence *perventurum* in place of *perventuram*. *FRH* 3.291.

² *MRR* 1.154. Bardon (1952) 150; Alonso-Nuñez (2004-5) 103.

³ Lewis (1991a) 517-518.

⁴ *Vell. Pat.* 2.27.1.

It is true that *ad summum discrimen et eum et rem publicam reduceret* is verbally close to the quotation in Priscian, but this is the language of civil war, and it is likely that two writers would have used somewhat similar vocabulary to discuss such matters. Lewis believes that Velleius had used Sulla's *Autobiography*, since his account reflects the *Autobiography* "and more likely than not draws on it directly" for much of Sulla's career.⁵ Lewis' argument largely rests on Velleius' addition of *et eum*, since although danger to Sulla himself does not appear in Priscian's quotation, it does nevertheless feature in Plutarch's account of this battle, and on the precision of the date given by Velleius, which reflects the similar accuracy concerning the dating of military engagements in Sulla's *Autobiography*, such as in F13P. However, as Lewis inadvertently shows, this sort of rhetoric is present in all our sources for the battle, and it is likely that this stems from similar accounts in a number of sources, rather than Sulla's alone.⁶ It is by no means clear that Velleius had read Sulla's account, rather than the works of Sisenna and other pro-Sullan historians. Thus, while the verbal echoes in Velleius are attractive, they are certainly not strong enough to mean that the Priscian fragment came without doubt from Sulla's description of the battle of the Colline Gate.⁷

The most frequent suggestion for the identification of the *summa perniciēs* in this fragment is that it refers to the crisis that was arguably averted by Sulla's assumption of the dictatorship. This would place the fragment either immediately before the dictatorship, and the arguments that were given for it at this time,⁸ or to some point after Sulla had become dictator, as part of an apologetic explanation or justification of this action.⁹ There is no way to distinguish between these, since the quotation in Priscian does not give sufficient detail to allow us to make anything other than an educated guess. It seems clear that Sulla was about to follow the

⁵ Lewis (1991a) 518 with references in n. 34, most notably to Vell. Pat. 2.17-18 and 2.23-25.

⁶ Lewis uses the similarities between Velleius and the accounts of Appian and Plutarch in order to suggest that all three were working from the text of the *Autobiography* at this point. There are, however, other sources that these works have in common, and we simply cannot be certain that the similarities between Priscian and Velleius here mean that both stem from the same original source.

⁷ This argument has, however, won support, such as Chassignet (2004) 247; Smith (2009b) 68; Thein (2009) 100; *FRH* 3.291.

⁸ Carcopino (1931) 233.

⁹ Valgiglio (1975) 277; Pascucci (1975) 291; Behr (1993) 10-11.

statement that Rome was about to come to the pinnacle of its crisis with an assurance that he either had then saved or would then save the state. There is no need to assume that this was part of a justification of the dictatorship. It is not clear whether or not Sulla discussed his dictatorship at all in the *Autobiography*, since there is no positive account of Sulla's career after the point of his triumph in early 81.¹⁰ It is in part an argument *e silentio* to infer from this that Sulla did not discuss the matter, but the questions raised and uncertainty expressed in antiquity regarding Sulla's motivations after this point certainly suggest that no account existed to which these writers could turn.¹¹ If this was the case, then it is less likely that the quotation in Priscian was part of a justificatory or apologetic account of the dictatorship. Instead, it probably occurred, as Lewis suggested, as part of the narrative of the battle of the Colline Gate, though not for the reasons that he cited. If this was the case, then it explains why no account of the dictatorship survived, since after the Colline Gate there were a number of other important battles and engagements to relate, and if the Colline Gate were in book 21 there would not be space to cover all of these as well as giving justifications for the dictatorship.¹²

An alternative possibility is that this came from a little earlier, in 83, when Sulla had returned to Italy and it was clear that a compromise between himself and the Marians looked impossible, and war inevitable. It was at this point that Sulla related in his *Autobiography* that he had received a prophecy from Ma-Bellona, promising him victory in the war, but foretelling that the Capitol would burn if he did not hurry to Rome.¹³ Sulla did not obey this advice, however, and the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus (along with a number of other important buildings) was destroyed by fire. As noted above, this event was extraordinarily traumatic for Rome, since the city's most prominent archaic temple had been lost, along with irreplaceable items such as

¹⁰ For the triumph as the traditional ending of an autobiography see the Introduction. It is also possible that Sulla had meant to take his account further, but died before he could finish.

¹¹ The most famous expression of the ancient failure to grasp Sulla's character may be found in Sen. *Cons. ad Marc.* 12.4: *Sed istud inter res nondum iudicatas abeat, qualis Sulla fuerit.* Appian, too, expresses incredulity in *BC* 1.103: ἄλογον δ' ἤδη καὶ τὸ βιασάμενον ἐξ τὴν ἀρχὴν ῥιζοκινδύνως, ἐπεὶτε ἐγκρατὴς ἐγένετο, ἐκόντα ἀποθέσθαι. For further bibliography on this problem see Giardina (2009).

¹² Smith (2009b) 68 names Clusium, Faventia, and Fidentia, as well as the siege of Praeneste, which must surely have been included in the *Autobiography*.

¹³ Plut. *Sull.* 27.6 = F18P, see commentary above.

the cult statue, votives and artwork, and the *libri Sibyllini*. The fire and the destruction of the temple continued to be discussed for many years to come, and although they are surprisingly rarely mentioned in the extant literature, we may be certain that they elicited an emotional reaction.¹⁴ After all, when this was considered as a portent, it overshadowed all previous *exempla*.¹⁵ The burning of the Capitol was so meaningful that it was featured in the *Autobiography* despite Sulla's failure to avert the disaster, even though he had been told how to avoid that outcome. Sulla would have had little choice but to confront this problematic issue in his *Autobiography*, since it had had such a profound effect on Rome, but he need not have mentioned his foreknowledge. By connecting the burning of the temple with a prophecy of his victory, Sulla could imply that the portent was somehow connected to his successes, and the foreknowledge that he was given both emphasized his relationship with the gods and implied that he was in some way in control of events.¹⁶ Although it is unlikely that Sulla would have described the fire itself as a *summa perniciēs*, since this would have brought his own failure to save it into focus, it is possible that he used the traumatic event as a symbol or a portent of the *summa perniciēs* which was about to befall Rome now that her most important sanctuary had been destroyed.

However, since in the *Autobiography* Sulla had claimed that he was in a position to save the Capitol if he had tried, it is unlikely that he would have described the event in quite these terms. On the contrary, it is more likely that the *perniciēs* refers to an action committed by Sulla's enemies, or something that was not in his power to avert. Given that the majority of the *Autobiography* was taken up with military matters, it is probable that this *perniciēs* referred to a military situation, and thus to one of the battles at the end of the second civil war when the fighting had reached the edges of Rome itself. The most likely solution is that, as Lewis suggested, this was part of the narrative of the battle of the Colline Gate, though not for the

¹⁴ When the Capitol burned again, in AD 69, Tacitus records that this was thought to signify that Roman *imperium* was at an end: Tac. *Hist.* 4.54: *Sed nihil aequae quam incendium Capitolio, ut finem imperio adesse crederent, impulerat.*

¹⁵ Flower (2008) 81: "Within Rome's system of portents and divine signs, nothing could have been more fearful than the complete destruction of its main temple, so closely identified with the Republic itself, and its books of prophecies, so often the ultimate resort in previous times of crisis."

¹⁶ Flower (2008) 82-83. For Sulla's presentation of the burning of the Capitol see the commentary on F18P.

reasons that he cited. Moreover, if this was the case then it goes some way to explaining why no account of the dictatorship seems to have survived, since after the Colline Gate there were a number of other important battles and engagements to relate, and if the Colline Gate were narrated in book 21 there would not be space to cover all of these as well as giving justifications for the dictatorship.

Although the quotation is very short, it is possible to determine to a small degree how Sulla chose to express himself in the *Autobiography*. The text shows the heightened emotions of a moment of crisis, with the repeated prefix *per-* in *perniciem* and *perventurum* standing out in particular. Although it is not possible to be sure of what came next in the sentence, the phrase might be argued to demand a resolution in an inverted *cum* clause, or something similar. This is, of course, pure speculation, but the quotation does show that Sulla was writing in such a way as to emphasize the commotion and the importance of the events with which he was involved. The state was not just in danger, but was about to come to its *summa perniciem*, from which it would subsequently be saved, according to Sulla's formulation, by Sulla himself.

Commentary on F21P – Plut. Sull. 37.1-2 (= F6S, F23C)

Sulla not only foresaw but even wrote about his death, for he stopped writing the twenty-second book of his Autobiography two days before he died. He says that Chaldaeans predicted that he would die at the height of his good fortunes, and that he dreamt of his deceased son calling to him not to be anxious, but to go with him to his mother Metella.

Plutarch's description of the final days of Sulla seems to have made use of the *Autobiography*, although this is likely to have been supplemented with other sources. The description of the gruesome illness that took Sulla, for example, is extremely unlikely to have been taken from a pro-Sullan source.¹ However, it is clear that Plutarch used the *Autobiography* for this passage, concerning Sulla's apparent foreknowledge of his own death. He cites the twenty second book of Sulla's *Autobiography*, and states that at this point he stopped writing: γράφων ἐπαύσατο.² This passage has allowed us to determine the length of Sulla's work, and confirms Priscian's statement that the fragment he preserved, apparently from the climax of the narrative, was located in the 21st book. Twenty two books was an unprecedented length for an autobiography in the Republican period, which had previously tended to run to one or two books at most.³

It is unclear, however, whether this was the intended length of the work, or whether this was as much as Sulla had managed to write before he died. Plutarch's phrasing at this point is ambiguous; γράφων ἐπαύσατο could mean either than he

¹ Plut. *Sull.* 36.2-4; see also Plin. *NH* 7.138. There are a number of suggestions as to the nature of the illness from which Sulla suffered. Plutarch's description strongly suggests a diagnosis of phthiriasis, a disease involving the eating of the flesh by flies, although scabies is also a possibility, given the reports in Plutarch (*Sull.* 2.1) of red and white blotches on his skin: Keaveney & Madden (1982) 94-95. It has also been suggested that Sulla was suffering from syphilis: Jenkins (1994) 139-140. There is too little information for retrospective diagnosis to be valuable, particularly in the case of syphilis, for which there is no evidence except Sulla's apparently promiscuous lifestyle – hardly a strong enough foundation on which to base the diagnosis of a specific condition. What is apparent is that, whatever the illness was from which Sulla was suffering, it was of a serious nature, and is highly likely to have played a role in his decision to leave Rome at the end of his second consulship.

² Plut. *Sull.* 37.1.

³ See the Introduction for Sulla's precedents.

concluded his writing, or that he was forced to cease writing by his illness or death and simply stopped. The two potential meanings have very different implications for our understanding of the intended scope of Sulla's work. If Sulla died leaving the *Autobiography* incomplete, then it is likely that he had intended to write more. This, in turn, implies that any omissions from the *Autobiography* were the product of chance. If, on the other hand, we are to interpret Plutarch's words as a statement that Sulla reached the conclusion of his *Autobiography* two days before he died, then the subjects which appear to have been omitted from the work would have been the result of a deliberate and reasoned choice. There appear to be certain significant aspects of Sulla's career about which no pro-Sullan interpretations survive. Most importantly, there appear to be no accounts of Sulla's political life after his triumph that interpret his actions in a positive light. Since one of the principal aims of the *Autobiography* was *apologia*, broadly defined, the absence of any apologetic narrative or justification of the dictatorship, the constitutional reforms, and decisions such as the proscriptions is striking. It is likely that this was due to the absence of any discussion of these matters in the *Autobiography*. If γράφων ἐπαύσατο meant that Sulla concluded his writing, having included everything he intended to write about, then this has serious implications for the scope of Sulla's self-justification in the *Autobiography*, since it implies that he chose to end the work with his triumph, but not to discuss any of the more controversial aspects of his subsequent career, including those which might be thought to require special explanation.

Unfortunately, given the absence of any further evidence on the subject, there is no way to solve this problem. Since it would have been suspiciously fortuitous for Sulla to have come to the end of his conclusion two days before he died, it is tempting to suggest that the work was left unfinished. If this was the case, then it is likely that the work was concluded by Sulla's freedman Epicadus. Suetonius claimed that this man had completed the work after his patron's death: *Librum autem, quem Sulla novissimum de rebus suis imperfectum reliquerat, ipse supplevit.*⁴ It is not clear how we are to interpret this statement; Suetonius' assertion that the work was *imperfectus* could have referred to a text with substantial gaps and large sections left entirely

⁴ Suet. *Gramm.* 12. Suetonius also claims that Epicadus was a favourite of Sulla's son Faustus, which suggests that he was a friend of the family. Epicadus was an author in his own right, having composed a work *De Cognominibus*: Charisius 110 Keil.

unwritten, or it could mean that the work required refining and editing before it could be circulated. An alternative theory concerning the completion of Sulla's *Autobiography* draws on Plutarch's statement that Sulla had dedicated the work to Lucullus so that the younger man would put in order and arrange the work: ὡς συνταξομένῳ καὶ διαθήσοντι τὴν ἱστορίαν ἄμεινον.⁵ It is not likely that this was meant to imply that Lucullus wrote and completed a work that Sulla had been unable to finish, or indeed that he carried out the task with which he was apparently entrusted. It seems to have been commonplace for the authors of autobiographical works to send them to other writers so that their texts could be re-written with greater skill. Catulus, under whom Sulla served against the Cimbri, is known to have done so, and it has been suggested that Caesar was engaging with this widely recognised charade through his decision to publish his highly sophisticated writings as *commentarii*, the literary form more frequently associated with log-books and notes, and not with literature.⁶ Cicero's famous letter to the historian L. Lucceius appears to have been part of this same intellectual tradition.⁷ It is possible that by writing an autobiography, politicians could make themselves the subject of criticism, as reflected in the summary of Tacitus, who declares that people had not questioned the honesty or the motives either of Rutilius Rufus or of Scaurus, two of the most important Republican autobiographers.⁸ By dedicating the work to another, however, and claiming that the dedicatee was to rearrange and edit the imperfect text, the author could avoid accusations of arrogance. It is not clear to what extent autobiography in the Republic could be defined as a 'genre' in any sense that would imply specific expectations on the part of the reader concerning its contents. Sulla's work was undoubtedly located within a tradition that was still in the process of becoming more concretely defined.⁹ If a commonplace had begun to emerge which encouraged the

⁵ Plut. *Luc.* 1.2 = F1P; see commentary above.

⁶ Q. Lutatius Catulus dedicated (*misit*) his autobiographical work to the poet Aulus Furius, apparently in the hope that his friend would compose an epic poem on the subject of the Cimbric War. Cic. *Brut.* 132 praises the *integritas* of Catulus' Latin: *quae perspicitur cum ex orationibus eius potest tum facillime ex eo libro, quem de consulate et de rebus gestis suis conscriptum molli et Xenophonteo genere sermonis misit ad A. Furium poetam familiarem suum.* For *misit* in the context of a literary dedication see *TLL* 8.1180: '*mitto*', *strictius sc. dedicandi causa*. The literary genre of Caesar's *Commentarii*: Riggsby (2006) 136-137.

⁷ Cic. *Fam.* 5.12.

⁸ Tac. *Ag.* 1.3.

⁹ Pelling (2009).

autobiographer to make a false, modest dedication claiming that the work was inadequate, and that the dedicatee should arrange and complete the composition, then there is no reason to think that Plutarch's mention of Lucullus as the dedicatee was intended to imply that Lucullus had actually carried out this task. Although a number of examples of this system of dedication have survived, there is no evidence that in any case the editing and rearrangement of material ever took place. If, therefore, Sulla died and left the *Autobiography* unfinished, then it is not likely that Lucullus felt any obligation to complete the task. It is much more plausible that Epicadus carried out this role, since we know that he was a writer in his own right, and we have no reason to distrust Suetonius' statement that he had completed the project after Sulla's death.¹⁰

On the other hand, while we can accept the involvement of Epicadus, it is not possible to be certain about the extent to which he edited or added to the *Autobiography*. It has been suggested that the extremely positive assessment of Sulla's funeral in Plutarch's *Life of Sulla*, a text which is known to have drawn heavily on the *Autobiography* elsewhere, might have drawn on Sulla's writings for this too.¹¹ Since Sulla himself could not have written about this, except perhaps his plans for his own funeral, then it is likely that Epicadus' responsibility with regard to the *Autobiography* was to record these final events of Sulla's public affairs.¹² It has also been posited that Sulla's predictions of his own death, the main subject of F21P, were also added by Epicadus, if one takes *τρόπον τινὰ* to imply incredulity on the part of Plutarch as to how Sulla could have written about these events from the very end of his own life. It is equally possible, however, to take these words to mean that Plutarch was amazed that Sulla had been able to write these things two days before his death, both because of the foreknowledge which they required, and because in the previous chapter Plutarch had discussed the gruesome and debilitating illness from which Sulla was suffering.¹³

Sulla's miraculous foreknowledge came from two different sources, the first of which was a prediction given to him by the Chaldaeans. These seem to have been Babylonian priests who specialised in mathematics and astronomy, as well as

¹⁰ Suet. *Gramm.* 12.

¹¹ See for example Arce (1988) 17-34; Sumi (2002) 420-421.

¹² Sulla's funeral: Plut. *Sull.* 38.

¹³ Plut. *Sull.* 36.2-4.

divination.¹⁴ Earlier in Plutarch's biography, in a passage which is almost universally thought to have Sulla's *Autobiography* behind it, he described a meeting between Sulla and a Chaldaean in the retinue of Orobazus, who carried out a physiognomical examination and declared that Sulla must become the greatest of men, and that he was amazed that even now he consented not to be the first among men.¹⁵ This episode was said to have taken place during Sulla's meeting with Ariobarzanes and Orobazus in which he arranged three chairs for their gathering and sat between the king and the ambassador in order to negotiate.¹⁶ Although Sulla faced some criticism on this account, since he was acting in a manner that could be interpreted as regal, he also gained some political capital from the events, earning praise for his attitude towards the barbarians, and placing Orobazus in so shameful a position that he was later executed.¹⁷ As discussed above in the commentary on F7P, there is little doubt that Sulla wrote about this meeting in his *Autobiography* because of the controversy it caused, and because this was the first official contact between Rome and a representative of the Parthians.¹⁸ It is likely that that the Chaldaean episode was narrated in the *Autobiography* since it took place during this important meeting. The two Chaldaean prophecies in the *Life of Sulla* are, moreover, likely to have been given to Sulla at the same time.¹⁹ The similarities between the two predictions are striking and, since no context is given in F21P for the Chaldaean prophecy, there is no need to assume that it was given to Sulla on a different occasion. It is most likely that Sulla

¹⁴ Cic. *Div.* 2.98; *Tusc.* 1.95. Horace (*Odes* 1.11.2-3: *Babylonios... numeros*) and Tacitus (*Hist.* 1.22.1) appear to have very low opinions of the Chaldaean diviners; they were later banished from Rome by Tiberius: Suet. *Tib.* 36. Plutarch's approach seems to have been mixed: although on some occasions he appears to treat their predictions seriously, such as the physiognomical examination of Sulla in Plut. *Sull.* 5.5-6, at others he is sceptical of their abilities, most notably in the episode of the killing of Cn. Octavius, which was connected with his associations with the Chaldaeans: Plut. *Mar.* 42.7-9; Bertinelli (1997) 413.

¹⁵ Plut. *Sull.* 5.(5-)6.

¹⁶ On this meeting see Livy *Ep.* 70; Flor. 1.46.4; Vell. Pat. 2.24.3; Fest. *Brev.* 15; Ampelius 31. For Sulla's interaction with Ariobarzanes see Sherwin-White (1977b).

¹⁷ Plut. *Sull.* 5.4-5.

¹⁸ Plut. *Sull.* 5.4.

¹⁹ Thein (2009) 92-93; *FRH* 3.291. Giardina (2009) 66 n 14 takes a different view, largely on the basis of the difference between the verbs used and the contrast between the singular Χαλδαῖος in *Sull.* 5.5-6 and the plural Χαλδαίους in *Sull.* 37.2. However, this difference in number is hardly sufficient to suggest that the two were distinct incidents, and the verbs used in the citations in each passage (5.5: ἱστορεῖται; 37.2: λέγει) are both frequently used in citations of the *Autobiography*.

recalled the words which had been spoken to him at a much earlier date, when his career was just beginning, and which were now particularly apt.

If we are to assume that Plutarch's language is a reasonably accurate paraphrase of Sulla's original writing in the *Autobiography*, then the phrase ἐν ἀκμῇ τῶν εὐτυχημάτων has important implications for our understanding of Sulla's formulation of his *felicitas*. Plutarch in the *Life* frequently uses εὐτυχία to refer to *felicitas*,²⁰ and the use of the closely related term εὐτύχημα (which more properly refers to an example of good fortune or a piece of good luck rather than to the more general concept) might be a reflection of Sulla's language in the *Autobiography*, suggesting that he might have used a term related to *felicitas*. The phrase ἐν ἀκμῇ τῶν εὐτυχημάτων also echoes one of the few preserved excerpts of Sulla's original Latin: *in summam perniciem*.²¹ It is tempting to suggest, albeit speculatively, that Plutarch's language may here gloss a phrase such as *in summam felicitatem*, which would set up a particularly striking contrast between the danger which Rome had been facing, and Sulla's ultimate success. At any rate, it is clear that, whatever vocabulary Sulla used, he expressed the idea that he would die at the height of his good fortunes. Since he knew that he was now dying, this implies that Sulla was claiming that, in some way, his current status was the pinnacle of his good fortunes that resulted from his relationship with the gods. It has even been suggested that Sulla gave up his power because of this prediction, so that when he abdicated it was when he was still powerful, rather than when his influence had begun to wane.²²

On the face of it, it is surprising that Sulla should have claimed to have been at the pinnacle of his good fortunes after his retirement, since he was no longer in power and had relinquished almost all of his political responsibilities. The life that Sulla led following his departure from Rome at the end of his consulship in 80, seems to have been filled with the negotiation of local political problems, with writing his *Autobiography*, and with luxurious living.²³ The elements of Sulla's life and career

²⁰ See commentary above on F8P for Plutarch's terminology concerning fate, luck, fortune, and Sulla's relationship with the gods in the *Life of Sulla*.

²¹ Prisc. 9, p. 476 H = F20P.

²² Giardina (2009) 68; this was also suggested by Badian (1969a) 27.

²³ Local political problems: Santangelo (2007a) 168-171, with Plut. *Sull.* 37.3. Writing the *Autobiography* after his retirement: Peter (1914) 270. Sulla's lascivious lifestyle: Plut. *Sull.* 26.1.

which he had attributed to his *felicitas* seem to have focussed on his military successes and the favours which were shown to him by the gods. It is therefore somewhat unexpected for Sulla to claim that the pinnacle of his good fortunes lay in his life following his return to the status of a *privatus*, rather than, for example, his triumph, or even the moment when he stepped down from the dictatorship and became consul. However, this may be explained if Sulla had used ἐν ἀκμῇ τῶν εὐτυχημάτων to refer to the good fortune of the successful return of the state to his newly structured, but constitutional, government.

The second of the items which gave Sulla foreknowledge of his death, his so-called ‘last dream’, has caused a number of problems for scholars, since Plutarch and Appian record two different, albeit similar, dreams said to have occurred right at the end of Sulla’s life. Plutarch, in this fragment, narrated a dream – apparently taken from Sulla’s *Autobiography* – in which his deceased son appeared to him, dressed in rags, and called him to join his mother Metella, who had died some time beforehand, and himself, to live in peaceful quietude. The son appears to have been a Lucius Cornelius Sulla who had died in the winter of 82-1 BC at approximately 6 years of age.²⁴ Metella had died shortly after Sulla’s victory at the Colline Gate. Sulla famously refused to visit her when she was ill, and divorced her before her death. Plutarch claimed that this was done in order that Sulla should avoid pollution, and to stay within the confines of the law, although the funeral with which he honoured her broke his own sumptuary legislation with its lavishness and expense.²⁵ This latter detail may suggest that, despite divorcing her in the end, Sulla’s personal relationship with Metella was of some importance to him; so too may the incident when Sulla was incensed by the insults thrown at Metella from the walls of Athens, which was said to have prompted Sulla’s subsequent harsh treatment of the city. Plutarch also argues that Sulla was said to have deferred to Metella ἐν πᾶσι, all of which suggests an exceedingly strong relationship between the two, rather than purely a match entered

²⁴ Chassignet (2004) 247; Bertinelli (1997) 403. Sulla had three other children: Faustus and Fausta were also the offspring of Metella, while after Sulla’s death his last wife Valeria gave birth to another daughter, Postuma.

²⁵ Plut. *Sull.* 35.2-3.

into for political reasons.²⁶ It is perhaps for this reason that the wife mentioned in the dream in F21P was the now deceased Metella, despite Sulla having re-married.²⁷

The understanding of the afterlife encapsulated in the dream of F21P is extremely unusual. While it was not uncommon to envisage some sort of existence after death in this period, and even for that existence to be one of happiness and tranquillity, the appearance of Sulla's son dressed in rags and having to reassure the dying man that he should not be anxious is notable. In particular, since this story originated in the *Autobiography*, it implies that Sulla admitted his anxieties in that text. For the author to admit his own insecurities was perhaps unwise in an autobiography intended primarily to establish a particular public image. It may be suggested that, once Sulla knew that he was about to die, this no longer mattered to him to the same extent, but such an explanation does not tally with the importance given to the *Autobiography* within Sulla's self-representation strategy. The writing of an autobiography seems to have been chiefly concerned with the management of the opinions of one's contemporaries; so, for example, P. Rutilius Rufus, who thought that he had been exiled and punished unfairly, wrote his autobiographical account to exonerate himself from blame.²⁸ At the same time, however, it is clear that the autobiographers of this period were thinking of posterity as well, and, drawing on traditions such as the *laudationes funebres* and the wax ancestor masks displayed in houses and carried in funerals, these men were aware that their accounts of their own lives would be retained and read long after their own deaths. From this point of view, it is not a viable suggestion that Sulla, once he knew that he was dying, no longer minded what others thought of him. If that were true, then he would simply have stopped writing. Some alternative explanation for Sulla's final anxiety must, therefore, be found, if it is not merely the admission of a fear of dying.

The answer to this problem may be found in the reasons for Sulla's decision to include the story, since it is best interpreted as further evidence of the special

²⁶ Plut. *Sull.* 6.12. See the commentary on F8P for Sulla's relationship with the Metelli.

²⁷ The problem of Sulla's wives may not be solved unless further evidence should be found; Plutarch's suggestion that Sulla had married an Ilia, followed by an Aelia, then a Cloelia (*Sull.* 6.11) is unverifiable. There is in particular no satisfactory identification of Ilia. *FRH* 3.292.

²⁸ See the Introduction for the autobiographical writing and self-portrait of Rutilius Rufus.

relationship that Sulla had with the gods. Although there were many stories in antiquity of people who were given foreknowledge of their own deaths, it was not a common occurrence in everyday life. It is possible that Sulla's anxiety is included in order to present a contrast between his feelings before the dream, and afterwards. If Sulla, who was so often given special foreknowledge of events in his lifetime, was not afraid of death because he alone had been given special insight into what would be waiting for him, then this story stands as a further illustration of Sulla's favoured status with the divine.

The same is true of Appian's account of Sulla's final dream which, although it is less detailed, appears at first sight to contradict Plutarch's version on one key issue. While the information concerning Sulla's afterlife was presented to him by his deceased son in Plutarch, Appian's version has a δαίμων as the source of the information. In this version, Sulla was not given any details of what awaited him, but knew that he was about to die since the δαίμων was calling to him.²⁹ Although this is an important difference between these two accounts, there are also points of similarity. For instance, both Sulla's son and the δαίμων were seen to call Sulla to them. Moreover, these two dreams were both epiphany dreams; that is, the sort of dream in which a figure, either a god or someone that the dreamer may have known personally, appeared to the sleeper and presented privileged information to him. In this sort of dream, even if the figure giving the information had the appearance of a human being whom the sleeper knew, the true source of the information was often thought to have been divine in some way, and that a deity might be using the appearance of someone known to the sleeper as a vehicle through which information might be imparted.³⁰ When it comes to Sulla's dreams, we are fortunate to have the statement recorded by Plutarch and taken directly, we may suppose, from Sulla's *Autobiography*, that Sulla thought that information imparted in dreams was the most reliable, and, significantly, that it came from a δαίμων.³¹ It may be a coincidence that the word recurs in Appian's dream, but both he and Plutarch seem to have frequently chosen to paraphrase passages of the Latin *Autobiography* in light of their own intentions and interests, it is possible that the two authors could have been translating

²⁹ App. *BC.* 1.105.

³⁰ Harris (2009) 128.

³¹ Plut. *Sull.* 6.6 = F8P (d).

a term that they encountered in the *Autobiography* such as *numen* or *genius*, and that Sulla's original version of the story did not have his son appearing in a dream, but the *numen* or *genius* of his son, which our two extant texts have interpreted in different ways. If this was the case, then it is no longer clear that Appian and Plutarch were referring to different incidents at all.

Giardina has argued, on the contrary, that the dream recorded in Appian is not the same as the one in Plutarch, and that the dream that Sulla apparently had two days before his death was not the one that featured his son.³² His argument rests on the differences between the accounts of the dreams: on the identities of the sources of the information, whether Sulla's son or a δαίμων, and on his assertion that the *Autobiography* did not end at Sulla's death but at the end of the consulship in 80, so that if the dream had been recorded by Sulla in the final book of that work, then it must have occurred at this point in Sulla's life. This theory does offer an explanation for some of the problems associated with the ending and the completion of Sulla's *Autobiography*: for example, it would answer the question of Epicadus' role in the completion of the work, since it implies that Sulla died leaving the work unfinished, and that Epicadus would have written the account of all events beyond this point, including Sulla's retirement, death, and funeral.³³

However, this is not a satisfactory reconstruction of the evidence concerning Sulla's work in the final years of his life. As has been established with reasonable certainty,³⁴ there is no evidence that Sulla discussed in the *Autobiography* matters that occurred after his triumph; there was almost certainly no account in antiquity in which Sulla defended or explained either his actions during the dictatorship, or his decision to give up this office and become consul for the following year. Giardina's assumption that this was the endpoint of the *Autobiography* is thus not sufficiently secure. Moreover, Giardina interprets the message conveyed by Sulla's dead son literally, rather than metaphorically. The boy bidding his father to cease from his anxious thoughts and to go to live in peace and quietude was thus an instruction that Sulla should give up his political career, and retire to a quiet, private life. However,

³² Giardina (2009) 63-64. Pliny also mentions a 'last dream' of Sulla's: *NH* 7.138: *quod ut dissimulaverit et supremo somnio eius, cui immortalis quodammodo est, credamus ab uno illo invidiam gloria victam...*

³³ Giardina (2009) 66 n 15.

³⁴ Tatum (2011) 165-166.

this leaves many questions unanswered. The message was not coming from a living relative, or someone with whom Sulla might be able to spend time following his retirement. It was an inherently supernatural message, since it was conveyed by his deceased son, who was calling him to be with himself and with his mother Metella (σὸν ἀὐτῷ...μετ'αὐτῆς), who had also died. It is illogical to interpret this in any way other than the boy calling his father to be with them in death, and therefore an omen of Sulla's own imminent demise.

It is thus clear that there is no need to doubt that the two omens of Sulla's death, the Chaldaean prophecy and the dream, were narrated in the *Autobiography*. The apparent difficulty posed by Sulla having written these details just before his death is easily explained. Firstly, while Plutarch includes the Chaldaean prophecy at this point in his narrative of Sulla's life, it is not made explicit that the story of the prophecy was in the twenty-second book; it is simply stated that Sulla finished writing in the twenty-second book and, in a new clause, that he reported the story of the Chaldaean prophecy. It is possible, if not even likely, that this prophecy was originally recounted at the point in the narrative that corresponded to the time when Sulla received the message. This may have been the meeting with Ariobarzanes and Orobazus, although the presence of Chaldaeans in Rome too makes this impossible to determine. The dream of Sulla's son may only reasonably be interpreted as a reference to the ailing Sulla's imminent death, and, as such, it would naturally have been included at the very end of the work. It is possible that this was the last matter which Sulla wrote about, before his poor health made it impossible for him to continue writing, though it is more likely that this detail was added by Epicadus after Sulla's death.³⁵ It is, after all, the intervention of Epicadus which best explains the positive assessments in the ancient tradition concerning his funeral, most notably the assertion in Plutarch's account that his *τύχη* lasted to his very end, illustrated by the rain which fell as Sulla's funeral pyre began to go out.³⁶

Whether or not Sulla ever actually had this dream, it was an extremely useful narrative device with which to end the story of Sulla's life, since it shows him looking forward to a peaceful afterlife with his loved ones, and the special knowledge that he was given revealed that his privileged relationship with the gods had lasted to the very

³⁵ Valgiglio (1975) 275; Pascucci (1975) 292-293.

³⁶ Plut. *Sull.* 38.3.

end of his life, and had not finished when he was no longer acting in a public capacity. And by combining this story with the Chaldaean prophecy, Plutarch shows a keen understanding of the scope of Sulla's vision of this relationship. The gods had given Sulla foreknowledge of his death when he was still young, promising that he would retain his good fortunes until that time; when he was old and dying, the δαίμων once again reassured Sulla that his death ought not to be the cause of anxieties (φροντίδες), but that he should go calmly to his meet his son and his beloved wife.

Conclusion

The *Autobiography* formed the centerpiece of Sulla's sophisticated and mature attempt to create a striking public image of himself. The detailed overview of the fragments that has been developed in the preceding commentaries has brought out its complexity and historical significance. By building on themes that he had been developing throughout his public life, Sulla could emphasize the attributes to which he wished to draw attention both through a careful reconstruction of his career, and through a comprehensive reassessment of his interactions both with his allies and with his enemies. The focal point of this strategy, and the theme that bound together the work, was Sulla's special status of being *Felix*, possessing a privileged relationship with the gods. This *felicitas* was manifested in a number of different ways throughout the *Autobiography*.

Firstly, and most conspicuously, the work opened with a thematic discussion of the subject, perhaps couched as advice to the dedicatee Lucullus.¹ Here, Sulla set out his interpretation of *felicitas*, both in general terms, and in the way he saw it acting within his career. The discussion appears to have touched on a very wide range of aspects of Sulla's *felicitas*, including the communications that he received from the gods in his dreams. It has been argued in this thesis that Sulla's choice to feature his epiphany dreams so prominently in his *Autobiography* was exceptional, and appears to have been an attempt to express his special status as a man whom the gods favoured. This depiction, established in the introductory remarks, was strengthened by the breadth of the religious subject matter discussed in the following books: not only Sulla's dreams, but those of other people, as well as countless portents and prophecies which, when combined, gave the unmistakable impression that Sulla was a man whose whole life had been marked by his enjoyment of *felicitas*. This was a complex literary effort, which no doubt reflects not only Sulla's own intellectual interests, but also the increasingly intense concentration among the political and social elites on philosophical and conceptual explorations of specific themes, especially in the religious domain.

Sulla created an account of his life that emphasized this point at every turn. Although it may not have been historically accurate at all times, Sulla represented

¹ See the commentary on F2P.

himself in the narrative has having received divine support for his every action. When combined with the introduction, this would have allowed the reader to understand Sulla's reconstruction of his career as a man who possessed, and was especially closely connected with, *felicitas*. By the time that the narrative reached the final stages of Sulla's career, when he assumed the *cognomina Felix* and Ἐπαφρόδιτος, the picture of himself that demonstrated those qualities would have been comprehensively established. Indeed, his *felicitas* was no mere literary creation, however cleverly Sulla had reinterpreted his career in order to demonstrate its importance to him. The use of the *cognomina* in epigraphy in both Italy and the Greek East serves to demonstrate the appearance of this theme long before the composition of the *Autobiography*.² The two *cognomina*, although etymologically unrelated, reveal a consistent emphasis on the role that the gods had played throughout his career.

The meaning of *Felix* in the context of Sulla's self-representation does not present serious interpretative difficulties: it stood as a statement that he was favoured by the gods in all his undertakings, and also suggested that his possession of *felicitas* was a permanent attribute.³ It is difficult to determine precisely when the *cognomen* began to be used, although it does not appear until the final few years of Sulla's career. Sulla's use of the *cognomen* does imply, importantly, that his interpretation of *felicitas* must have been fairly widely accepted, or at least understood, in order for this to have been a useful political statement.⁴

Epaphroditos is much more problematic. As is discussed above in the commentary on F15P, Sulla's relationship with Venus/Aphrodite has frequently been overstated by scholars, who have claimed, for example, that he established a cult of

² The use of the *cognomina* in Greece and the East: *RDGE* 18 (Stratoniceia), 20 (Thasus), and 49 (Cos); in Italy: *ILLRP* 352 (Rome, Vicus Laci Fundani), 353 (Minturnae), 355 (Alba Fucens), 356 (Clusium). It is worth noting that all the examples of *Felix* in epigraphy stem from dedications to Sulla, rather than constructions erected by the man himself.

³ Ericsson (1943) is still the fullest exploration of the semantic scope of *felicitas* as Sulla understood it; see also Erkell (1952) 41-128; Santangelo (2007a) 199-213; Thein (2009).

⁴ The explanation of *felicitas* in the introduction to the *Autobiography* would not appear until the publication of the work after Sulla's death; since no questions are raised as to the meaning of the name, we must assume that there were no problems of interpretation. For all we know, he may have voiced it in public in other contexts. Certainly, questions that were raised later concerning Sulla's *felicitas* focused on whether it was fair for him to have had such fortune, not on whether the fortune was true. *Sen. Cons. Ad Marc.* 12.6; on this passage see below.

Venus Felix, and that the *cognomen* is to be understood as ‘favourite of Venus’,⁵ neither of which stands up to scrutiny.⁶ Appian’s suggestion that the name was given to him by senatorial decree in 82 has caused many of these problems;⁷ there is no other evidence for the senatorial ratification of the name, which Sulla was already using in Greece and the Greek East in the Mithridatic War.⁸ Rather than implying a personal relationship between Sulla and Venus/Aphrodite, the term only appears in the Greek-speaking world, and often in a way that emphasised his role as magistrate, and therefore representative, of the Roman people. In this way, Sulla was not portraying himself as the favourite of Venus/Aphrodite, but instead calling on the mythical origins of Rome as a city founded by Venus/Aphrodite’s son Aeneas, and which could therefore claim this goddess as its ancestress.⁹ Sulla’s choice to call himself Ἐπαφρόδιτος in Greece and the Greek East may thus be seen to be part of his negotiation of his and Rome’s positions in those areas, a problematic issue given the complex political affinities of the Greek-speaking communities of the Eastern Mediterranean. The name was never used in a Latin-speaking context and, despite Appian’s statement, there is no evidence that it was bestowed on him, or approved, by the senate. Instead, by calling himself Ἐπαφρόδιτος, Sulla was calling to mind his privileged position as a man who enjoyed the special favour of the gods – but specifically in his role as Roman magistrate – while *Felix* implied a personal relationship with the divine, and would be used primarily in Latin-speaking contexts.¹⁰ In this way, the two *cognomina* were related, since they conveyed similar messages, but catered to two very different political audiences.

This complex strategy may legitimately be deemed to be encompassed by the modern notion of ‘propaganda’, because the terms also drew upon a consistent self-portrait established in all elements of Sulla’s self-representation strategy. According to

⁵ Carcopino (1931) 109; for refutation of this translation see Balsdon (1951) 8 n. 91.

⁶ Venus Felix: see the commentary on F15P. On the translation of Ἐπαφρόδιτος see below.

⁷ App. *BC* 1.97.

⁸ It appeared, for example, on the monument commemorating Sulla’s victory at Chaeronea. Plut. *De Fort. Rom.* 4 = *Mor.* 318d. See discussion of this passage in the commentary on F15P.

⁹ Santangelo (2007a) 199-213.

¹⁰ It is misleading to suggest that these two *cognomina* might be further connected through the idea of ‘luck’ since in the context of games of dice, ‘Venus’ referred to the best possible throw: Hor. *Carm.* 2.7.25-26. For the connection between Venus and luck see Smykov (2013) 147-148.

Ellul's criteria, they may certainly be described as evidence of integration propaganda.¹¹ Sulla's *felicitas* was a polyvalent concept that could be beneficial to him in a number of different fields; the *cognomina* reflect just one way in which he could draw on this self-portrait throughout the Mediterranean world, expressing subtly different messages about himself and his status as a representative of Rome, catered to audiences in different areas.¹²

These themes saw their fullest exposition and explanation in the *Autobiography*, where Sulla was able not only to set out his own interpretation of the concepts of fate, luck, fortune, and a relationship with the gods, but also to demonstrate the importance of these concepts throughout his career through consistent references to them in the course of the narrative. By maintaining that, throughout his lifetime, his major undertakings had been preceded by communications of divine favour, Sulla could confirm his possession of *felicitas* that he had expounded in the *Autobiography*. There is no need to assume that all of these divine communications were necessarily factual, or, conversely, that they were all invented for the purposes of illustrating Sulla's *felicitas*. There is simply insufficient evidence to determine the extent of the fabrication of these events in the *Autobiography*. To argue that Sulla referred to these messages throughout his *Autobiography* might imply that, at times, he had fabricated divine communications in order to demonstrate their reliability. Even if this were true, however, there is little evidence that his *felicitas* were doubted in antiquity,¹³ which, in turn, implies that he was thought in his own lifetime to be a man with a particularly special relationship with the divine.

It is thus highly likely that the exposition of *felicitas* was one of Sulla's chief motivations in the composition of the *Autobiography*, but the fragments of the work reveal that self-justification and apologia played an equally important role in Sulla's

¹¹ Integration propaganda is that which seeks to reinforce messages and ideas that had already been disseminated; see the discussion of Ellul's work on (and definitions of) propaganda in the Introduction.

¹² The breadth of these concepts may also be seen in the names given to Sulla's children, Faustus and Fausta, terms that also refer to a privileged relationship with the divine, although in slightly different terms. Appian's statement that Sulla also took the name Faustus (*BC* 1.97) is undoubtedly incorrect, either because he garbled the evidence of his sources, or because the γραφή from which he derived his material preserved incorrect information: Santangelo (2007a) 211. Since the γραφή cannot be identified, further conclusions on the matter are unsafe.

¹³ Seneca, for example, had deep misgivings about Sulla's moral character, but nonetheless conceded that he was *felicissimus*: *Cons. Ad Marc.* 12.6.

conception of his own career, as will have become apparent in the commentaries that form the core of this study. Sulla's narrative of his own career was very carefully constructed, and contained both explicit apologia, answering specific negative traditions that had arisen concerning his career, and implicit self-justification, in which events were simply re-told in a way that exculpated Sulla. The most important example of the former is F17P, in which, even without giving lengthy quotations of the text, Plutarch revealed how Sulla had not only given his own interpretation of his engagement with Archelaus, but also confronted specific charges and criticisms that had been laid against him.¹⁴ Sulla's *felicitas* could also be argued to have played an important role in his self-justification, since he illustrated the divine support that he enjoyed throughout his lifetime, including during his more controversial actions. The numerous omens that accompanied his second march on Rome, for example, simultaneously demonstrated divine favour for Sulla and prevented accusations of wrongdoing, since the gods were shown to be supporting him.¹⁵ In the majority of the fragments, however, evidence is preserved of Sulla's more subtle self-justification; his narrative of the actions of Marius in the Jugurthine and Cimbric Wars, and his opponents in the Civil Wars, removed from himself all blame for the calamities that had befallen the republic, emphasizing throughout one of his most important arguments: it was Marius that had been responsible for the dispute between the two men and the hostilities that had followed.

Indeed, it seems that presenting an alternative interpretation of recent history that stood as a counter-argument to the version of events expounded by Marius was another of the key motivations that prompted Sulla to compose his *Autobiography*. This may also be seen to be reflected in his treatment of the trophies erected by Marius following the Jugurthine and Cimbric Wars, which seem to have been torn down by Sulla, only to be restored or rebuilt later by Caesar.¹⁶ This was a powerful action, which implied the illegitimacy of Marius' claim to victory in both of those conflicts. The *Autobiography* picked up on this theme, with Sulla placing great emphasis on his role in securing the surrender of Jugurtha, and on the actions of Catulus in attaining victory at Vercellae.¹⁷ Similarly, Sulla's *Autobiography* illustrated that his later actions were undertaken for the good of the Republic; his second march on Rome was described in

¹⁴ See the commentary on F17P above.

¹⁵ See the commentary on F18P above.

¹⁶ Suet. *Iul.* 11: *tropaea Gai Mari de Iugurtha deque Cimbris atque Teutonis olim a Sulla disiecta restituit.*

¹⁷ On the erection of the Bocchus statue group as a statement of the illegitimacy of Marius' claims, see the commentary on F7P.

terms that revealed that he was not culpable for the conflict, but instead was endeavouring to save the city and the state from those who would destroy it.¹⁸ Although this was not the first autobiographical work of the Republican period, and others had set out to present specific character portraits, either for literary or political reasons,¹⁹ there is no evidence that any of Sulla's precedents had carried out so thorough a reconsideration of recent events, or combined a literary presentation with a comprehensive set of propaganda in a wide range of media, including monuments, building projects, coinage, and inscriptions. In these respects, the *Autobiography* was thoroughly innovative.

One may also see innovation in the ways in which Sulla negotiated his personal relationship with the divine. Although it was not unknown for individual Romans to claim that they had a particularly close relationship with the gods, the extent to which Sulla did this in the *Autobiography* is without parallel. Even the fragments of Augustus' later autobiography, which also illustrated its author's *felicitas*, do not suggest that there was as strong an emphasis on the theme as was present in Sulla's work.²⁰ On the other hand, *felicitas* was a Roman value that would have been readily understood by Sulla's audience, and even if the prominence with which Sulla described his *felicitas* was exceptional, the fundamental concept was intelligible. This was not the case with all of the religious themes discussed in the fragments of the *Autobiography*. Most strikingly, F7P contains the story of the Chaldaean prophecy that recalled ideas of fate and inexorable destiny that were alien to Roman religious thought in this period. The Chaldaean, after examining Sulla, declared not that he would become the greatest man, but that he must.²¹ In the religious landscape of the Republican period, ideas of fate and destiny were not part of mainstream thinking (or indeed ritual practice), and for Sulla to bring attention to that prophecy was exceptional. The extent to which this would have surprised his audience is diminished to a certain degree by the way in which the story is narrated, if we assume that the presentation of the episode in Plutarch broadly mirrors Sulla's own handling of the incident: the examination and proclamation are reported, but without any comment on their accuracy, truthfulness, or reliability. There is no

¹⁸ See for example F20P, describing the crisis that was Rome was facing, and F18P, which illustrated the divine support that Sulla received after his return to Italy in 83.

¹⁹ On Cato the Elder and Rutilius Rufus see the Introduction.

²⁰ On *felicitas* in Augustus' autobiography see Thein (2009). It is arguable that Augustus deliberately avoided creating too close an association between himself and *felicitas*, for fear of comparison with Sulla.

²¹ Plut. *Sull.* 5.6 = F7P: εἶπεῖν ὡς ἀναγκαῖον εἶη τοῦτον τὸν ἄνδρα μέγιστον γενέσθαι.

suggestion in the ancient tradition that Sulla declared, either in his *Autobiography* or elsewhere, that it was his fate to become the greatest of men. Furthermore, the ritual and analysis are carried out by a Chaldaean, figures who at this stage stood outside of the customary boundaries of religious thought and experience in Rome. Sulla could thus report that he had received this prophecy, which further illustrated his privileged and special religious status, but without committing himself to ideas that his contemporaries may have found difficult to accept.

A story expressing a similar idea is found in the *De viris illustribus*. We are told that, when Sulla was a baby, a mysterious woman appeared and predicted to his nurse that he would be *tibi et reipublicae tuae felix*, before disappearing.²² Although no source is cited for this information, the reference to Sulla's *felicitas* raises the strong possibility that it was from Sulla himself that this idea stemmed. This sort of prophecy implied that Sulla had a fate or destiny, and that his life was inevitably moving towards the day when he became *tibi et reipublicae tuae felix*, just as the Chaldaean predicted that he would become the greatest ὡς ἀναγκάϊον. If these incidents reflect Sulla's own presentation of his life, either in the *Autobiography* or elsewhere, then they provide very strong evidence that he was willing to engage with ideas of fate and destiny that were potentially problematic.²³ There is no reason to doubt that Sulla should have been afraid to carry out such innovations, though, since we can also see significant breaks with tradition in his coinage. *RRC* 359 marks the first appearance of the jug and *lituus* together on a Roman coin,²⁴ and on *RRC* 381 he depicted the equestrian statue that had been voted for him.²⁵ In portraying an image of this statue, he was indirectly featuring himself since, even though the coin did not directly bear a portrait of Sulla, it displayed a portrait of a portrait. This was completely unprecedented in Rome in this period, and

²² [Aur. Vict.] *De vir. ill.* 75.1: *Cornelius Sylla, a fortuna Felix dictus, cum parvulus a nutrice ferretur, mulier obvia: Salve, inquit, puer tibi et reipublicae tuae felix; et statim quaesita, quae haec dixisset, non potuit inveniri.*

²³ It is, of course, also possible that the story preserved in the *de Viris Illustribus* reflects later reception of Sulla, and not a reference to a story narrated in the *Autobiography*.

²⁴ Crawford (1974) 373-4.

²⁵ Crawford (1974) 397. There is some debate concerning the legend of this coin, which mentions both the name *Felix* and the office of dictator. The statue seems to have been voted for Sulla before he became dictator, if we are to believe Appian's chronology (*BC* 1.97). Crawford's suggestion here seems correct: that, even if Sulla was not yet dictator when the statue was voted, it could have been set up after his assumption of that office. For Sulla's equestrian statue see App. *BC* 1.97; Vell. Pat. 2.61.3; Dio 72.18.2. Cicero expresses the view that we might have expected the statue to elicit – that of revulsion that it was so brazen (*Phil.* 9.13) and argues that it was not voted by the senate willingly (*Phil.* 5.41).

reveals something of the extent to which Sulla was willing to deviate from established canons of self-representation.

It is tempting to question whether Sulla's increasingly poor health had prompted him to devote such intensive efforts to securing his legacy. Although we cannot be certain of Sulla's health at the time of his retirement, Plutarch's description of his illness strongly suggests that he was already becoming seriously unwell.²⁶ There is compelling evidence that Sulla had constructed and maintained his public image with great care during his career, and it is far from controversial to suggest that the *Autobiography* was intended to be both the culmination and the greatest expression of the ideas that he had been developing for many decades. Whether or not it was already clear that Sulla was dying from his illness, he claimed in the *Autobiography* that in his final few days he knew that he was going to die.²⁷ It is possible that the determined effort on Sulla's part to compose this lengthy account of his life, in which he recounted his career in the way that portrayed him in the best light and demonstrated his *felicitas*, was inspired in part by an awareness that this was his final chance to have an effect on the way in which people would view him after his death; we must not forget, however, that Sulla would also have been writing for a contemporary audience, and that the expression of his lack of culpability for Rome's catastrophes would have had a significant impact on his contemporaries.

To a certain extent, of course, it may be argued that Sulla was unsuccessful in his intentions. Just as much of his legislation was annulled or reversed within a few years of his death, it does not seem that his own interpretation of his life and career had a significant impact on the politics of the decades that followed. While Sulla was undoubtedly an important precedent to be confronted by Pompey, Caesar and Augustus, for example, there is little to suggest that he was remembered in the way in which he would have chosen. The proscriptions, the marches on Rome, and the dictatorship loomed large in Rome's memory of Sulla, and despite his careful attempts to manage his legacy, it is not clear that the *Autobiography* was widely read in the years after his death.²⁸ On the other hand, the preservation of fragments in the works of Cicero and Pliny, for example, and the consultation of the text by later writers such as Plutarch and the grammarians show that the text of Sulla's work had survived, and was read in the

²⁶ Plut. *Sull.* 36.2-37.4.

²⁷ F21P = Plut. *Sull.* 37.1-2.

²⁸ On the reception of Sulla after his death see Thein (2006).

years that followed, albeit not as widely as Sulla must have wished. The presence in the tradition of questions concerning Sulla's character and nature attest either a lack of circulation of Sulla's work, or perhaps a reputation for being unreliable, since those who, like Seneca, wondered what Sulla was really like were apparently not persuaded by Sulla's self-portrait in his *Autobiography*.²⁹ It certainly appears that, as time went on, the influence of Sulla's self portrait faded, not least due to the works of superior writers such as Sisenna;³⁰ the negative traditions concerning Sulla became more firmly established, and Sulla's own account of events became lost in the multitude of alternative interpretations. Although the *Autobiography* was intended to dispel negative traditions by presenting an authoritative, and inevitably favourable, interpretation, it does not appear to have been able to do so.

Even if we were to argue, however, that the enterprise ultimately failed, the *Autobiography* is still of the greatest importance to historians. The fragments reveal mere glimpses, but those brief excerpts demonstrate a complex and sophisticated treatment of difficult and frequently controversial subject matter. It was an important intellectual endeavour, and one of the earliest attempts in Rome to engage with a comprehensive series of propaganda. The combination of different elements of self-representation into one coherent narrative was an extraordinarily impressive undertaking. If the text of the *Autobiography* had survived, we can only speculate how deeply our understanding of this most turbulent period would be altered. But even with the few passages that have survived, it is possible to see that Lucius Cornelius Sulla's *Autobiography* was a pivotal text in a number of respects, setting precedents for those who followed in how to negotiate power, how to establish a character portrait, how to write apologia without admitting weakness, and how to manage the perception of oneself by others through invoking and bringing together a range of religious themes and associations. The text seems to have fallen out of favour within a relatively short time after Sulla's death, but the importance of the undertaking cannot be overestimated. Even

²⁹ Sen. *Cons. ad Marc.* 1.12.16. It may be suggested, although it would be rather surprising if this were the case, that Seneca was unaware of, or had not read, the *Autobiography*.

³⁰ Cicero praised Sisenna as being easily the finest historiographer of the age: *De Leg.* 1.7; *Brut.* 228; while Sallust argued that Sisenna's history of this period was by far the best, although he could be accused of having spoken without sufficient frankness: *neque enim alio loco de Sullae rebus dicturi sumus et L. Sisenna, optime et diligentissime omnium qui eas res dixere persecutes, parum mihi libero ore locutus videtur.* Sall. *Iug.* 95.2. Varro's treatise on the writing of history bore the alternative title of *Sisenna*: Gell. 16.9.5. On the influence of Sisenna on the tradition concerning the late Republic see Rawson (1979).

though it was essentially lost, the *Autobiography* of Sulla still stands as one of the most significant historical texts from the late Republic and, as I hope to have shown throughout, a complex strategy of self-representation and propaganda can be reconstructed from the fragments. One can only wonder what the rest of the text would have told us.

Appendix: F17aP = Tac. Ann. 4.56.2: a false attribution

When attempting to give evidence of the long-standing loyalty of their city towards Rome, the Smyrnaeans cited Sulla as a testis that when Sulla's troops were encamped nearby during a bad winter, they suffered a shortage of clothing; when this was reported to the people of Smyrna, all those present at the meeting took off their clothes to send them to the aid of the Roman troops.

Tacitus relates that in AD 26 a number of Asian communities petitioned the Senate for the right to erect a temple to Tiberius. Smyrna, the eventual victor, cited several pieces of evidence for their long-standing friendship towards Rome, including the passage designated as F17aP by Peter that apparently cites Sulla. This passage has caused a number of problems for scholars due to the nature of the citation of Sulla, and serious doubt has been cast on whether it is a fragment of the *Autobiography* or another, unnamed text, since there is no certainty that the citation *L. Sullam testem adferebant* refers to the *Autobiography*; moreover, if it does refer to the *Autobiography*, it is difficult to find an incident to which the text might allude.

If the passage does draw on Sulla's *Autobiography* and describes an incident in which Sulla took part, then it must have been in the context of Sulla's time in Asia; scholars have therefore argued that it took place in 85/4, when Sulla was preparing to pursue Fimbria, following the negotiation of the Peace of Dardanus, thus making it a description of a military event in which he took part.¹ However, it is not clear that this is the case; there is nothing to suggest that it was a particularly harsh winter, and there is no record of any instance in which Sulla and his troops encountered particular hardship while in Asia - certainly none that could be described, even with some exaggeration, as

¹ Lintott (1976) 490-491. Peace of Dardanus and Sulla's subsequent actions in Asia: Hind (1994) 161-164, with F17P above. Detailed military narrative in Sulla's *Autobiography*: see commentaries on F12P and F13P, and F19P. There would, however, be no reason for Sulla to mention the event if it had occurred, since it presents him in an entirely negative light as a leader who was unable to provide for his troops and allowed their supplies to be reduced to such an extent that his soldiers were forced to ask for clothing from local communities. This is a striking contrast from the presentation in the *Autobiography* of his actions in the Cimbric War, when he was said to have procured such an excess of provisions for Catulus' troops that there was enough to share with the army of Marius too; see the commentary on F4P above.

a *gravissimum discrimen*.² If, therefore, the incident did not concern Sulla himself, the event to which the passage refers must be established. The analysis of Lewis (1991c) is surely correct,³ which connects the Tacitean passage with Aelius Aristides 41.766, referring to an incident in 130/129 BC in which Aristonicus was confronted by the proconsul P. Licinius Crassus Mucianus Dives (*cos.* 131).⁴ The Roman general was defeated and captured in the region of Leucaea, near Smyrna, and subsequently killed.⁵ The circumstances of the Roman troops in Asia in this earlier period provide a much more credible explanation for the dating of the incident mentioned by Tacitus.

This leaves us with three possibilities. Either (a) Sulla mentioned this story as an historical aside in the course of the narrative of his own time in Asia, (b) Sulla narrated the story in an account of Smyrna's good relationship with Rome in a vehicle other than the *Autobiography*, or (c) the Smyrnaeans fabricated the reference to Sulla, or meant to imply that if Sulla were alive and present, he would agree.⁶ We may swiftly disregard (c); there would be no benefit to the Smyrnaeans in fabricating a reference to Sulla, and we know that copies of Sulla's *Autobiography* were still available in this period, even if the work was not widely read or circulated, so the details could have been checked.⁷ There is no reason to suppose that the Smyrnaeans would have adduced Sulla as an individual who would have agreed with their statement if he were still alive. By the early first century AD the reception of Sulla was generally hostile, and it is doubtful that a significant city such as Smyrna, with deeply-rooted and important ties to Rome, would be unaware of Sulla's later career and the resulting souring of his reputation. We may also disregard (a), since it would imply a fairly lengthy aside about an event in Roman history that was not closely connected to his own story. There is nothing to suggest that Sulla indulged in digressions which recorded interesting facts concerning places which he visited while in Asia, and there is no reason that the history of Smyrna should have received an in-depth treatment in the *Autobiography*. Although Sulla did discuss the deeds of his ancestors and include some thematic digressions, there are no parallels for

² Tac. *Ann.* 4.56: *gravissimo in discrimine*. Lewis (1991c) 126. An alternative approach has been to suggest that Sulla requisitioned supplies from the Smyrnaeans in 85/4 BC and presented the action as a freely-given gift. *FRH* 3.298. Smyrna during this period of the late Republic: Cadoux (1938) 154-163.

³ Lewis (1991c) 126-127.

⁴ The connection is also made by Cadoux (1938) 147, 157.

⁵ Livy. *Per.* 59; Justin 36.4.7; Strabo 14.1.38. See *MRR* 1.503.

⁶ *FRH* 3.298.

⁷ The circulation of the work in antiquity is difficult to estimate, but since Plutarch seems to have known it well, it survived in some form until his day at least.

Sulla narrating in some detail an earlier event in Roman history in which he himself played no part.⁸

The most likely solution, therefore, is to assume that the text to which the Smyrnaeans refer in Tac. *Ann.* 4.56 was indeed written by Sulla, but was not the *Autobiography*. It is not difficult to surmise what type of text this might have been: a letter accompanying a *senatus consultum* confirming an earlier grant of freedom made by Sulla to the city.⁹ There are several such letters preserved from this period, and these offer an insight into the probable origin of F17aP. The letter of Sulla, accompanied by a *senatus consultum* confirming Sulla's earlier grants to Stratonicēia, is a particularly close parallel. This decree records substantial rewards granted to the township of Stratonicēia, including a clause (lines 129-131, *RDGE* 18) allowing envoys of Stratonicēia extraordinary audience in the Senate in the future. It is not out of the question that Smyrna too could have received such a clause in a *senatus consultum* accompanied by a letter from Sulla. It is much more plausible that the Smyrnaeans would have produced a document of this sort during their appeal to the senate than Sulla's *Autobiography*.¹⁰

It may thus be deduced that Tacitus does indeed preserve a text written by Sulla, but it was not an excerpt from the *Autobiography*. Peter assumed that, since the *Autobiography* is the only lengthy literary text which Sulla authored, then it must be the *testem* proffered by the Smyrnaeans.¹¹ It is clear, on the contrary, that it was either an *s.c.* confirming Sulla's grant of freedom to the city, or that it was a letter from Sulla himself, preserved in stone, originally accompanying such a grant, which mentioned

⁸ Ancestors: F2P. Thematic digression on *felicitas*: Conclusion, and the commentary on F8P. No fragments of Republican autobiographies preserve evidence that suggests the treatment of historical events unconnected to the author himself.

⁹ Lewis (1991c) 129. See also Lintott (1976) 490; *FRH* 3.298.

¹⁰ Confirmations by *s.c.* of Sulla's grants of freedom: *RDGE* nos. 17-21 (pp. 100-123). Letters of Sulla to communities in Asia: *RDGE* nos. 18, 20. Letter to Stratonicēia (no. 18; pp. 105-111). The rewards granted to Stratonicēia are remarkable; Sherk's suggestion (111) that this was to show the benefits of loyalty to Rome at a time when many communities in Asia were suffering is surely correct, and Smykov (2013) 152 has even suggested that we are to treat the series of grants (and punishments) as "propagandistic".

¹¹ Sulla is also said to have written *Atellanae*, bawdy farcical plays, although even if this assertion is true it can hardly be suggested as a location for Sulla's dialogue concerning Smyrna. See Athen. 6.261, with Bardon (1952) 152; Garton (1964) 141; Keaveney (1980) 169. Keaveney (2005) 8 suggests that Sulla was instrumental in the development of Atellans from rustic improvised comedies to a written art-form.

Smyrna's generous actions towards Rome in the past, including the help they offered to the army in 130/129.¹²

Peter's decision to view this as a fragment of the *Autobiography*, a decision followed in all subsequent editions of the fragments,¹³ is, as should now be apparent, one that does not stand up to scrutiny. Even those scholars who have noted the difficulties posed by including this as a fragment have nonetheless chosen to keep it.¹⁴ Peter's fragments are those which either (a) include a direct reference to the *Autobiography*, in which the text is named as well as Sulla, or (b) name Sulla but without naming the *Autobiography*, if the *Autobiography* has been named elsewhere in the work of that author. The Tacitus fragment does not fulfil these criteria.

¹² Lewis (1991c) 129. See also Brennan (1992) 108 n. 9 who places it within the context of an illustration of Sulla's "personal magnetism", while acknowledging that F17aP is probably not from the *Autobiography*.

¹³ F27S, F19C, although Smith does draw a distinction and describes this as a "Doubtful Fragment" (498).

¹⁴ Chassignet (2004) 245; *FRH* 3.298-299.

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