In all the narratives of the Civil War the portrait of a peaceful Sulla, who gets back to Italy and reassures the Italians about his intentions, is closely followed by the proscriptions and the dictatorship. There is no intrinsic contradiction between these two moments, which are in fact different aspects of the same strategy.

After his arrival in Italy, Sulla showed his talent for building fruitful relations with the communities that were prepared to second his interests. The booty he had obtained in the East allowed him to restrain his greed, at least for the first part of the campaign. Overall, he kept quite consistent with this policy, as far as his relations with the communities were concerned.¹ Retaliation affected only the staunchest enemies. Praeneste and Norba, which had become the core of the anti-Sullan resistance and sheltered the most prominent Marians, were sacked.² Norba was even abandoned, and the area was reoccupied only in the Middle Ages, when the city of Norma was founded on a neighbouring site.³ The destruction of Sulmo, the capital of the Paeligni, was probably only announced by Sulla, but never carried out.⁴ Other cities, as I will show in greater detail in the next part, were punished with the settlement of veterans, and an unclear number of communities, which certainly included Arretium and Volaterrae, were deprived of Roman citizenship. Other Etruscan cities, like Telamon, Vetulonia and

¹ Brunt 1971, 286–287 is probably too pessimistic.
² Pompey conquered and sacked Sena Gallica in Picenum: App. b. c. 1.88.401.
³ See Coarelli 1982b, 265–271. The archaeological evidence shows that the city went through a prosperous phase between the Second Punic War and the war between Sulla and the Marians: Quilici Gigli 2003. On Norbanus’ possible connection with Norba, see Linden 1896, 56, fn. 20; Münzer 1936, 926–927.
⁴ See Flor. 2.9.28: nam Sulmonem, uetus oppidum socium atque amicum—facinus indignum—non expugnat aut obsidet iure belli; sed quo modo morte damnati duci iubentur, sic damnatam ciuitatem iussit deleri (“indeed he does not storm into Sulmo, which has long been a friendly ally, nor besieges it, but—what a shameful act—he condemns the city and orders its destruction, in the same way as those who are condemned to death are ordered to be led to execution”). Possibly, the destruction was limited to the fortifications of the city. See Gabba 1970/1971, 462–463 (= Gabba 1973, 363–367); Wiseman 1971, 26.
Saturnia, suffered heavy destructions, which may be due to a Sullan attack. It is however with the punishment of hundreds of individuals that Sulla earned himself the reputation of a blood-thirsty tyrant, which lingered on in the ancient tradition. Indeed, the proscriptions were his most obvious contribution to the making of the Italian elite. They also were the final act of the Civil War, and the most extraordinary one—especially because they were unprecedented.

As soon as Sulla returned to Rome, he started to settle the political affairs in the city. Appian reports a speech which he gave to an “assembly”, surely a contio, where he outlined his intentions for the immediate future.\(^5\) He anticipated an ambitious plan of constitutional and political reforms, and requested complete obedience. Moreover, he announced that all the magistrates who had opposed him after his return from the East and his negotiations with Scipio would be severely punished. After this speech, the proscriptions started.\(^6\) The contio mentioned by Appian was probably held the day after a Senate assembly that took place in the temple of Bellona on 2 November 82 BC, in which Sulla outlined the project of the proscriptions.\(^7\) According to Plutarch, this meeting of the Senate coincided with the actual beginning of the massacres and the confiscations.

The speech reported by Appian is the most thorough and diffused justification of the mass slaughter that is widely known as the Sullan proscriptiones. The elimination of the leading exponents of the factio Mariana was, of course, an essential aspect of the proscriptions, but it would be wrong to view it as the only, or perhaps even the main, one. The history of the word proscriptio reveals the complexity of such a process, and its political importance. The term had long belonged in the technical vocabulary of Roman law and it was commonly used to designate a procedure whereby a document was put up in a public place (pro-scribere), and presented to the whole community. A list of candidates or people deemed suitable for a magistracy could be the object of a proscriptio, but the word is most frequently associated with a public sale. An auction of the goods belonging to an individual,

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\(^5\) App. b. c. 1.95-441-444. Appian uses the word ἐκκλησία.

\(^6\) The best modern discussion on the Sullan proscriptions is Hinard 1985a, 18–223, followed by a catalogue of the victims at 329–411. My debt to this contribution will often be apparent. For a survey of the modern debate on the proscriptions, see Calore 1995, 34–40.

\(^7\) Plut. Sull. 30.3; Dio 33–35, fr. 109.5. The chronology is convincingly outlined by Hinard 1985a, 108–110.