



## Myth in the Greek and Roman Worlds: the Temple of Diana at Nemi

*The Temple of Diana at Nemi: Herm*

### **Penny Boreham:**

Every object in the Sanctuary of Diana has its story to tell and the archaeologist's job is to piece those stories together. In many cases the information we can glean from archaeology is complementary to the information we can glean from myth. Katharina Lorenz shows us one such piece of archaeology and it's a piece of sculpture known as a herm.

### **Katharina Lorenz:**

Now what we have in front of us here is a so-called herm, a statue of a woman, a woman called Fundilia. Now a herm is the name for a statue which consists of a head and then a box-like shape for the body, so the body is not sculpted, it looks like a pillar, pretty much. However, in this particular case the interesting thing is actually that the herm bit of this Fundilia statue is not just left plain in plain marble, but is actually decorated as if to look like a human body, so we see her breasts, they are kind of sculpted out of the rectangular, column shape or pedestal shape, and we also get a very good idea about the things she wears, her garment is very specifically rendered, and we can see that she's wearing something like a thin undergarment, and on top of that she wears a little mantle or stola, as it is called in Roman society. And these two pieces of drapery already indicate that we're dealing with someone from the upper classes, someone of some standing, a proper Roman matrona, probably also like the female head of the house, the domina who runs the place together with her husband.

### **Penny Boreham:**

The whole depiction of Fundilia seems motivated by a desire to give her gravitas and authority.

### **Katharina Lorenz:**

Now when we look at her portrait, it's quite interesting because she's got a very delicate face, but also a face which indicates that she's already quite mature, a lady perhaps in her, I don't know, late forties, mid-fifties, even perhaps a bit older, and her hair is also very, very peculiar because she has a fairly short haircut when we look at her from the front, but then we can see that at the back on top of her hair there's a little kind of pile of hair, as it were, and this is, this is pile of hair in Roman culture called a tutulus and that's interestingly a very old fashioned type of hair coiffure. It seems to have been very fashionable in the Republican period, the 2nd Century BC, as something the matrona would wear to indicate that she's the female head of the household.

### **Penny Boreham:**

So Fundilia had been given an old fashioned haircut. The herm itself was an archaic form of sculpture, which could trace its roots back to crude decorations of ancient crossroads. And it may well be that for this reason it was a deliberate stylistic choice for the sculpture of Fundilia. The process of deliberately making things look archaic is well known in Roman art. An artist would adopt an older style to convey a particular message, and the message must have had something to do with the person who commissioned the piece.

### **Katharina Lorenz:**

In the inscription we are told that this is the depiction of Fundilia Rufa, but the inscription also tells us that this statue was put up by a specific person, namely Fundilius Doctus. Fundilius Doctus was a very interesting figure because from the archaeological record we know that he was an actor. He refers to himself as a "parasite of Apollo" and "a guest of Apollo", and this is like the trade name of actors in the Roman world. But he was rich enough, wealthy enough, important enough to put up a statue in the sanctuary, and along with a big statue of himself and various other pieces, in order to document his position in society.

**Penny Boreham:**

Like many actors Fundilius Doctus was an ex-slave, and this statue was a tribute to the woman who had once been his slave owner, but whom he now saw as more like a patron. In commissioning the sculpture he was seeking to convey a particular statement about Fundilia. But he also commissioned another sculpture, which conveys a particular statement about himself.

**Katharina Lorenz:**

He depicts himself more like a, like an upper class Roman citizen really, and shows himself as an intellectual. He has a book scroll with him, and a couple of book scrolls at his feet, and he wears a toga so it's a presentation that's actually not of a slave, but of a proper Roman citizen.

**Penny Boreham:**

This may reveal another dimension to Fundilius Doctus's decision to commission the sculpture of Fundilia Rufa in a deliberately archaic style.

**Katharina Lorenz:**

He depicted Fundilia as if she was his ancestor, and this was probably in order to create something along the lines of a family lineage, so that Doctus is not just the freedman of Fundilia but actually she could just be his grandma. This is probably done by Doctus in order to show "look, I come from a background". We found this interest in family relationships and affiliation throughout Roman history and Roman society. It's something especially kind of prominent in the funerary context where people have an interest, obviously, to make a point about what kind of background they come from.

**Penny Boreham:**

For successful ex-slaves, like Fundilius Doctus, there were only limited opportunities to parade their achievements. Funerary monuments were one and votives at sanctuaries were another. The reason Fundilius Doctus chose the latter may be down to a personal connection. We know from the archaeological record that the sanctuary had a theatre attached.

**Katharina Lorenz:**

So one of the explanations for Doctus's interest in Nemi could be that perhaps he was actually someone who performed at the theatre, who was perhaps part of the group of actors who would perform at that theatre, so he was directly linked to the Sanctuary of Diana and had a very direct interest in depicting himself right there. Perhaps he was the most important actor at Nemi perhaps, and this is why he chose to depict himself in this place and celebrate his background with them.

**Penny Boreham:**

We'll never know for certain who Fundilius Doctus and his fellow donors were, or what rituals went on at the Temple of Diana. But every scrap of evidence, however fragmentary, provides a social context for the original consumers of myth. And knowledge of this social context can only help us in our understanding of the myth itself.