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Latin cults through Roman eyes

Myth, memory and cult practice in the Alban hills

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CHAPTER II: Diana Nemorensis and her worshippers

The sanctuary of Diana Nemorensis is set in a landscape that impresses the modern visitor as it did the worshippers in Roman times. The temple – now in ruins – lies at the centre of a small, extinct volcano that is surrounded by densely wooded hills; the blue lake in front of the volcano reflects the crater's edges perfectly and it is easy to see why in antiquity it was known as the *speculum* (mirror) of Diana.¹⁴⁶ The sanctuary and the administering town of Aricia were located about 40 kilometres south of Rome and could be reached via the Via Appia. Aricia was in the heart of Latium Vetus, the region that surrounded Rome and – as we have seen in the introduction – was closely connected to it through a common language, a shared history and ancient economic and juridical links. One of the opening remarks of Carin Green's 2007 study on Diana Nemorensis claims that 'although there were a few kilometres between the city walls and the sanctuary, the cult belonged to the city', thereby referring to Rome.¹⁴⁷ But is this indeed that evident? Was Diana's cult at Nemi fully part of the Roman religious landscape? Sir James Frazer, the most famous scholar of the goddess and her cult in Nemi, appears to disagree completely when he labels the cult barbarous and notes that its ritual activity stood out 'in striking isolation from the polished Italian society of the day'.¹⁴⁸ His claim is supported by Roman authors such as Propertius, who does not consider Diana Nemorensis' temple as belonging to Rome, since he accuses his Cynthia – who went there to worship – of secretly fleeing away from the City.¹⁴⁹ After all, 18 kilometres (about 11 Roman miles) on foot or on horseback is more than a half day travel at Roman speed.

In this chapter, I will look at the relations between the cult of Diana Nemorensis, the Latin communities and the city of Rome, which can be traced back to the archaic (pre-Roman) history of the region but were also emphasized in the cult practices of the Republic and (early) Empire. Did the Romans (i.e. the inhabitants of the city of Rome) perceive the goddess as foreign or un-Roman and, if so, where did this association come from? What do the sources tell us about the ritual activity at the site and the Romans and Latins involved in the ceremonies? And how did Diana Nemorensis' cult interact with that of Rome's own Diana, on the Aventine? To answer these questions and analyse the way Romans and Aricians perceived, worshipped and represented Diana Nemorensis, I will investigate different types of material that represent different areas of religious experience.

¹⁴⁶ Serv. *Ad Aen.* 7.515.

¹⁴⁷ Green (2007) 3.

¹⁴⁸ Frazer (1911) 10. I have used the third and most elaborate edition of the book. For the alterations in the different editions: Smith (1973) 342-351.

¹⁴⁹ Prop. 2.32.1-18.

Beginning with Roman literary traditions that shed light on the diverse mythology around lake Nemi and present different narratives regarding the religious and political significance of the cult, I will then move to the iconography of the goddess and the individuality of her image in regard to other representations of Diana. Modern assessments have often concentrated on the supposedly time-old history of the cult as its defining characteristic, and as we will see this association with the archaic, pre- (and possibly anti-) Roman past penetrates our discussion of the archaeological remains as well.

A discussion of the epigraphic material follows, and provides information on the way she was addressed in private votive offerings, as well as by the communities and magistrates who visited the sanctuary. As we will see, references to the past of the area were never far away: the memories of this past were actively communicated through different media, thereby changing form and meaning over time. As we have been warned before, combining literary and material sources does not necessarily result in a coherent and consistent image of a deity.¹⁵⁰ Encountering Diana in a literary work was indeed very different from encountering her in a sacrifice or as a statue. I explicitly do not want to smooth out potential discrepancies, but consider it crucial to study the available sources with and in relation to one another. One might meet the goddess at different occasions and in different appearances, but it was all those encounters together that constituted the Roman perception of and experiences with the cult of Diana Nemorensis.

2.1 A curious king

In the sacred grove there grew a certain tree around which at any time of the day, probably far into the night, a grim figure might be seen to prowl. In his hand he carried a drawn sword, and he kept peering warily about him as if at every instant he expected to be set upon by an enemy. He was a priest and a murderer; and the man for whom he looked was sooner or later to murder him and hold the priesthood in his stead.¹⁵¹

The complex mythology of Diana Nemorensis has fascinated both ancient and modern authors. The ancient tradition about the succession of the enigmatic priest king, the *rex Nemorensis*, served as a programmatic opening – part of which is quoted above – of Sir James Frazer's *magnum opus* on the

¹⁵⁰ See pages 14ff of the introduction and cf: Feeney (1998) 15-18, Ando (2008) 164-169.

¹⁵¹ Frazer (1911) 8-9.

history of religion, *The Golden Bough*.¹⁵² As such, with a mad murderous priest as her consort and a sanctuary in a cave that was also a *refugium* for escaped slaves, Diana Nemorensis was quickly interpreted as a curious form of the Greek goddess Artemis. Frazer based his analysis mainly on the account of the Greek geographer Strabo in the early Principate, on that of his second century successor Pausanias, and on Servius' commentary on the Aeneid in the fourth century.

According to Strabo, in her appearance as a hunting goddess Diana was a protectress of wildlife and nature who over time incorporated barbarous 'Scythian' elements from her illustrious namesake Artemis Tauropolos:

Above it [Aricia] lies, first, on the right hand side of the Appian Way, Lanuvium, a city of the Romans, from which both the sea and Antium are visible, and, secondly, to the left of the Way as you go up from Aricia, the Artemisium, which they call Nemus. The temple of the Arician, they say, is a copy of that of the Tauropolos. And in fact a barbaric, and Scythian, element predominates in the sacred usages, for the people set up as priest merely a run-away slave who has slain with his own hand the man previously consecrated to that office; accordingly the priest is always armed with a sword, looking around for the attacks, and ready to defend himself.¹⁵³

In his account a few centuries later, Pausanias repeats the story and adds the mythical Hippolytus – a resurrected Orestes, who will return later in this chapter – as the sanctuary's first king.¹⁵⁴ It is not until the fourth century that the crucial detail is added that since then has become so famous:

¹⁵² The scope of the Golden Bough is of course much wider than the violent priesthood discussed here; it encompasses examples of 'primitive superstition and religion' from different periods in time and from all over the world. Within the extent of this thesis, it is not possible to do justice to the depth and impact of the work, for which I gladly refer to one of the biographies of J.F. Frazer: Fraser (1990) and Ackerman (2002). Studies of the literary influence of *the Golden Bough* include Vickery (1973), Beard (1992) 203-224 and Spineto (2000) 17-24.

¹⁵³ Strab. 5.3.12: ὑπέρεται δ' αὐτῆς τὸ μὲν Λανουίου, πόλις Ῥωμαίων, ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς Ἀπίας ὁδοῦ, ἀφ' ἧς ἔποπος ἦ τε θάλαττά ἐστι καὶ τὸ Ἄντιον: τὸ δ' Ἀρτεμίσιον, ὃ καλοῦσι νέμος, ἐκ τοῦ ἐν ἀριστερᾷ μέρους τῆς ὁδοῦ τοῖς ἐξ Ἀρικίας ἀναβαίνουσιν. τῆς δ' Ἀρικίνης τὸ ἱερὸν λέγουσιν ἀφίδρυμά τι τῆς Ταυροπόλου: καὶ γὰρ τι βαρβαρικὸν κρατεῖ καὶ Σκυθικὸν περὶ τὸ ἱερὸν ἔθος, καθίσταται γὰρ ἱερεὺς ὁ γεννηθεὶς αὐτόχειρ τοῦ ἱερωμένου πρότερον δραπετῆς ἀνὴρ: ξιφῆρης οὖν ἐστὶν αἰεὶ περισκοπῶν τὰς ἐπιθέσεις, ἔτοιμος ἀμύνεσθαι.

¹⁵⁴ Paus. 2.27.4: ταύτης τῆς στήλης τῷ ἐπιγράμματι ὁμολογοῦντα λέγουσιν Ἀρικιεῖς, ὡς τεθνεῶτα Ἰππόλυτον ἐκ τῶν Θησεῶς ἀρῶν ἀνέστησεν Ἀσκληπιός: ὃ δὲ ὡς αὐθις ἐβίω, οὐκ ἤξιον νέμειν τῷ πατρὶ συγγνώμην, ἀλλὰ ὑπεριδῶν τὰς δεήσεις ἐς Ἴταλίαν ἔρχεται παρὰ τοὺς Ἀρικιεῖς, καὶ ἐβασίλευσέ τε αὐτόθι καὶ ἀνήκε τῇ Ἀρτέμιδι τέμενος, ἔνθα ἄχρι ἐμοῦ μονομαχίας ἄθλα ἦν καὶ ἱεραῖσθαι τῇ θεῷ τὸν νικῶντα: ὃ δὲ ἀγῶν ἐλευθέρων μὲν προέκειτο οὐδενί, οἰκέταις δὲ ἀποδρᾶσι τοὺς δεσπότας. ('The Aricians tell a tale that agrees with the inscription on this slab [at the sanctuary of Asclepius, near Epidaurus], that when Hippolytus was killed, owing to the curses of Theseus, Asclepius raised him from the dead. On coming to life again he refused to forgive his father rejecting his prayers, but he went to the Aricians in Italy. There he became king and devoted a precinct to Artemis, where down to my time the prize for the victor in single combat was the priesthood of the goddess. The contest was open to no freeman, but only to slaves who had run away from their masters.')

Orestes, after the slaying of king Thoas in the Tauric region, fled with his sister Iphigenia, as we have said above (2.116), and, erected the statue of Diana carried from there, not very far from Aricia. After the rite of the sacrifices had been changed, there was a certain tree in this temple from which it was forbidden to break off a branch. However a power was granted to fugitives so that if anyone were able to carry away a branch from that place, he would contend with the fugitive priest in a duel, for the priest there was [also] a fugitive to symbolize the ancient flight.¹⁵⁵

Here, in explaining the passage about the golden bough (*ramus aureus*) plucked by Aeneas before descending into the underworld, Servius reproduces the story of the *rex Nemorensis* and claims that the ritual duel was preceded by the seizing of a branch from a sacred tree.¹⁵⁶ It is only with this late and rather obscure detail that all the elements of Frazer's analysis come together. But even if Servius' commentary and Frazer's creative interpretation are left aside, there seems to be a certain consensus in the mythology on Diana's cult at Nemi: there was a priesthood taking the form of a kingship, which was obtained by combat and was only available to runaway slaves. Shorter references to the *rex* are found in works of Ovid, Statius and Valerius Flaccus, who suggest that Diana at the lake of Nemi was once the savage cult of the Tauri, but moved from a 'bloodstained land' to Aricia, which is now 'stern to her king alone'.¹⁵⁷

The curious mythology has attracted considerable scholarly attention, especially after the appearance of Frazer's work. Wissowa, in the 1912 re-issue of his famous *Religion und Kultus der Römer*, subtly declared that – notwithstanding the evident eloquence and erudition in Frazer's work – he had not been able to find anything essential for the understanding of Roman religion there.¹⁵⁸ The appraisal has not changed much since then: although Frazer has been much admired for his

¹⁵⁵ Serv. *Ad Aen.* 6.136: *Orestes post occisum regem Thoarem in regione Taurica cum sorore Iphigenia, ut supra (2.116) diximus, fugit et Dianae simulacrum inde sublatum haud longe ab Aricia collocavit. In huius templo post mutatum ritum sacrificiorum fuit arbor quaedam, de qua infringi ramum non licebat. Dabatur autem fugitivis potestas, ut si quis exinde ramum potuisset auferre, monomachia cum fugitivo templi sacerdote dimicaret: nam fugitivus illic erat sacerdos ad priscae imaginem fugae.* The translation is that of Smith (1973) 349, with some adaptations of my own.

¹⁵⁶ Verg. *Aen.* 6.136-141: *Latet arbore opaca aureus et foliis et lento uimine ramus, Iunoni infernae dictus sacer; hunc tegit omnis lucus et obscuris claudunt conuallibus umbrae. Sed non ante datur telluris operta subire auricomos quam quis decerpserit arbore fetus.* ('Hidden in a dark tree is a golden bough, golden in leaves and pliant stem, sacred to Persephone, the underworld's Juno; all the groves shroud it, and shadows enclose the secret valleys. But only one who's taken a gold-leaved fruit from the tree is allowed to enter earth's hidden places').

¹⁵⁷ Val. Flac. *Arg.* 2.35: *Taurorumque locos delubraque saeva Dianae advenit. Hic illum tristi, dea, praeficis arae ense dato: mora nec terris tibi longa cruentis; iam nemus Egeriae, iam te ciet altus ab Alba Iuppiter et soli non mitis Aricia regi.* References to the priesthood in Ovid (*Fast.* 3.260-270) and Statius (*Silv.* 3.1.52-60) will be discussed below, on pages 42-43 and 48-48.

¹⁵⁸ Wissowa (1912) 248, n. 3.

creativity and the broad scope of his book, there are few scholars who have taken his arguments about the *rex Nemorensis* seriously.¹⁵⁹ Wissowa did not deny the existence of the priesthood, but for him it had little role to play in the cult of Diana. The fact that only runaway slaves competed for the position, proved for Wissowa that it had degraded considerably and was held in very low esteem by the rest of the Roman population.¹⁶⁰

Several elements in the ancient sources – that were probably far from independent of one another – have long been recognized as literary inventions by modern interpreters of the cult: the curious golden bough that Servius used to connect the *rex Nemorensis* with Aeneas, as well as the Scythian origins that connected Diana at the lake of Nemi with the cruel Diana of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*.¹⁶¹ Some scarce material remains from the site of the sanctuary at lake Nemi have been connected to the *rex* and to the rite (as will be discussed below), but the evidence is meagre and the priest king has never been attested directly in the epigraphic record. At the same time, the literary testimonies seem to be too numerous and too persistent to be disregarded altogether. To name one final instance: in listing the many examples of how Caligula begrudged the success of other people, Suetonius casually mentions the king of Nemi:

In short, there was no one of such low condition or such abject fortune that he did not envy him such advantages as he possessed. Since the king of Nemi had now held his priesthood for many years, he [Caligula] hired a stronger adversary to attack him.¹⁶²

Even if this is just another case of Suetonius slandering Caligula – which seems rather likely – the context of this fragment is significant. The other instances in which the *princeps* displayed his jealousy all take place in the amphitheatre and involve people who performed well in that context. Was, by Suetonius' time or long before, the ritualised murder perhaps a staged event, a performed

¹⁵⁹ See, for example Smith (1973) 356-359, 370-371 and Beard (1992) 203-212. Beard however also notes (212-220) that the widespread popularity of the Golden Bough and Frazer himself with a general public was striking. She explains this by referring to the way the book could function as a useful compendium for native customs in the British empire and to the way the book appealed to typical Victorian age issues such as the relations between the peoples of the empire and those of (rural) England.

¹⁶⁰ Wissowa (1912) 248.

¹⁶¹ Although Frazer had no doubt about the historicity of the *rex* himself, he acknowledged that myths connecting the priesthood to the Scythian Artemis were – to a high degree – the result of invention and speculation: Frazer (1911) 21-22. See further, for the detail of the golden bough: Spineto (2000) 17-19, Blagg (1986) 211-220, Smith (1973) 342-371, with note 42 for further bibliography. The 'invented' connection with Diana Tauropolis is discussed in: Gordon (1934) 11-12, Alföldi (1960) 141, Pairault (1969) 445-450. The popularity of the *Iphigenia in Tauris* myth and its spread throughout the ancient world, especially through Strabo's writings: Guldager Bilde (2003) 165-183. For a possible dating of the connection between Nemi and the Tauropolis myth, see section 'Myths and memories inscribed', pages 74ff.

¹⁶² Suet. Cal. 35.3: *Nullus denique tam abiectae condicionis tamque extremae sortis fuit, cuius non commodis obtrectaret. Nemorensi regi, quod multos iam annos poteretur sacerdotio, validiorem adversarium subornavit.*

battle that took place in the little theatre that was part of the sanctuary?¹⁶³ The presence of actors in the sanctuary has been attested through inscriptions (see below) and we know – through studies on Roman mythology for example – that theatrical performance can function as a strong creative force in the creation and circulation of memories.¹⁶⁴ So, the popularity and persistence of the tradition of the *rex Nemorensis* – however little we know of its origins – may be related to games or spectacles performed on the site. All in all, the current state of the evidence leaves us with a priesthood that was and is rather well-known (and infamous), but of which very little is actually known – apart from the violent way it was passed on. A plausible yet unprovable possibility is that the succession of the *rex Nemorensis* was – by the late Republic or early Principate – reinterpreted in a dramatic context and ritually staged in the small theatre on the site.

2.2 'Minor' deities

The complexities of the mythology of Diana Nemorensis do not end with her mysterious priesthood. In the same passage mentioned above, Strabo continues to describe the luscious surroundings of the temple and the lake side. One of the springs that feed the lake, he says, is called Egeria, after a 'certain deity'.¹⁶⁵ Vergil and Juvenal also speak of an Egeria who was venerated at the lake.¹⁶⁶ The sources reveal little detail, but there is another tradition that portrays the nymph as the wife or consort of king Numa. Plutarch and Dionysius of Halicarnassus claim that Numa received counselling and wisdom from Egeria, although they rationalize the story by presenting it as a justification of Numa's religious reforms.¹⁶⁷ Ovid provides the most imaginative account and connects Egeria with Diana, the violent priest king, and king Numa:

Teach me, nymph, who serves Diana's lake and grove:
Nymph, Egeria, wife to Numa, speak of your actions.

¹⁶³ Cf: Pascal (1976) 31. For the discussion of the theatre and the site itself, see section 'Temples and votives', pages 58ff.

¹⁶⁴ For the actors, see page 72. On the relation between performance and memory in general and an overview of recent studies in the field, see: Plate and Smelik (2013) 1-24. In a Roman context, it is mainly Peter Wiseman who has been exploring possible connections between performances on the Roman stage and the development of Roman historical traditions. His general argument is that, in a largely illiterate society, public spectacles (plays, triumphs, funerals, games) constituted an important medium for the circulation, appropriation and eventual recording of popular traditions and memories. See, for example: Wiseman (1994) 1-22, Wiseman (1995) 129-149, Wiseman (1998), Wiseman (2004).

¹⁶⁵ Strab. 5.3.12: τούτων δ' ἐστὶν ἡ Ἥγερία καλουμένη, δαίμωνός τινος ἐπώνυμος.

¹⁶⁶ Verg. *Aen.* 7.764-765: [...] *eductum Egeriae lucis umentia circum litora, pinguis ubi et placabilis ara Dianae.* Juv. *Sat.* 3.12-17: *in vallem Egeriae descendimus [...]*, Juvenal describes a stroll into the countryside and does not mention Nemi nor Aricia specifically. For the assumption that it was indeed Nemi he was speaking of, see Schol. Juv. 3.17. Later commentators have assumed that Juvenal's spring was closer to Rome: Braund (1996) 175-177.

¹⁶⁷ Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.60; Plut. *Numa* 4.2. Cicero hints at the same: Cic. *Leg.* 1.1.4.

There is a lake in the vale of Aricia, ringed by dense woods,
 And sacred to religion from ancient times.
 Here Hippolytus hides, who was torn to pieces
 By his horses, and so no horse may enter the grove.
 The long hedge is covered with hanging threads,
 And many tablets witness the goddess's merit.
 Often a woman whose prayer is answered, brow wreathed
 With garlands, carries lighted torches from the City.
 One with strong hands and swift feet rules there,
 And each is later killed, as he himself killed before.
 A pebble-filled stream flows down with fitful murmurs:
 Often I've drunk there, but in little draughts.
 Egeria, goddess dear to the Camenae, supplies the water:
 She who was wife and counsellor to Numa.¹⁶⁸

As so often, Ovid's lines are fascinating and puzzling at the same time, because they connect a number of stories that in the modern mind hardly seem to fit together. The strong hands and swift feet no doubt refer to the *rex Nemorensis*, who was both a murderer and a victim of murder. But how about Egeria, who was the wife of Numa and a nymph of lake Nemi at the same time? Elsewhere, in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid contrives a creative solution: after Numa's death, Egeria was so overwhelmed with grief that she eventually melted away with her tears and transformed into a spring.¹⁶⁹

The fragment from the *Fasti* is dense with mythological detail and poses many more questions than it answers. Apart from Egeria, Ovid associates another divinity with the cult at the lake: Hippolytus. The mythical hero is known from plays of Euripides and Sophocles, where he is dragged to death by his horses after being cursed by his father Theseus.¹⁷⁰ Vergil and Ovid have him resurrected, after which he is given the new name Virbius and migrates to Italy to reign with Diana

¹⁶⁸ Ov. *Fast.* 3.261-276: *Nympha, mone, nemori stagnoque operata Dianae; nympha, Numae coniunx, ad tua facta veni. Vallis Aricinae silva praecinctus opaca est lacus, antiqua religione sacer; hic latet Hippolytus loris direptus equorum, unde nemus nullis illud aditur equis. Licia dependent longas velantia saepes, et posita est meritae multa tabella deae. Saepe potens voti, frontem redimita coronis, femina lucentes portat ab Urbe faces. Regna tenent fortes manibus pedibusque fugaces, et perit exemplo postmodo quisque suo. Defluit incerto lapidosus murmure rivus: saepe, sed exiguis haustibus, inde bibi. Egeria est quae praebet aquas, dea grata Camenis: illa Numae coniunx consiliumque fuit.*

¹⁶⁹ Ov. *Met.* 5.547-551.

¹⁷⁰ The story is known particularly from Euripides' *Hippolytus*, but was also narrated in Sophocles' *Phaedra*, of which only fragments remain. For a recent translation and commentary of *Hippolytus*: Shaw (2007), with a discussion of the (few) fragments of *Phaedra*: Lloyd-Jones (1994) 323-331.

at her sanctuary.¹⁷¹ In the complicated mythological interweavings that have been discussed so far, the story of Hippolytus/Virbius appears several times. Pausanias, for example, has him moving to Aricia to become the first king.¹⁷² In Servius' commentary on the Aeneid, as was shown above, this kingship is instituted as a reminder of the flight of Orestes who brought Diana from the land of the Tauri to Italy; he is yet another Greek hero whose mythological history is woven into the landscape of memory around lake Nemi.¹⁷³

The fact that Egeria, Hippolytus and Orestes were connected to Diana Nemorensis can be easily traced back to the energetic creativity of poets like Ovid or the aetiological speculations of grammarians like Servius. There is no evidence for any of these minor deities outside of the literary context and one may seriously doubt if they were ever part of the actual cult practice. At the same time, it is too easy to conclude that they were therefore of little or no importance for the people that came to worship at the lake. In the introduction, we were warned by Denis Feeney and others not to isolate the literary sphere from a material sphere that was somehow more 'real' or believable.¹⁷⁴ Seen from this perspective, the context of the religious message must be taken into account, and we should acknowledge that worshippers were able to attach different meanings to the cult at different circumstances. So, in one occasion they might perform rituals that were solely centred on Diana Nemorensis, while at another instance they would encounter Diana in a story or poem and as part of the same mythological surroundings of lake Nemi, of which Egeria, Hippolytus and Orestes also were integral and fully accepted parts.

2.3 Trivia and the moon

To explore this multifaceted character of the cult, we must return to Diana Nemorensis herself, or, as she is often called by the Latin Poets: Diana Nemoralis.¹⁷⁵ We meet the goddess for example in the work of the Augustan poet Grattius. His *Cynegeticon*, a poem on hunting, includes a lustration rite that was – unsurprisingly – directed at Diana. Although Grattius does not specify the goddess by means of an epitheton, the description of the woodland surroundings has led modern interpreters to assume that it was Diana Nemorensis who was evoked by the poem:¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ Verg. *Aen.* 7.774-779; Ov. *Met.* 15.479-546. For a more elaborate discussion of Hippolytus / Virbius, see: Podemann Sørensen (2000) 25-28

¹⁷² Paus. 2.27.4.

¹⁷³ Serv. *Ad Aen.* 6.136.

¹⁷⁴ See: 'Necessary contextualization', on pages 14-16.

¹⁷⁵ Ov, *Fast.* 6.59; Luc. 6.75; Mart. 13.19.

¹⁷⁶ See for example the Loeb translation and the latest text editions: Verdière (1964), Formicola (1988).

...the deity [Diana] must be summoned from high Olympus and the protection of the gods invoked by suppliant ritual. For that reason we construct cross-road shrines in groves of soaring trees and set our sharp-pointed torches hard by the woodland precinct of Diana, and the whelps are decked with the wonted wreath, and at the centre of the cross-roads in the grove the hunters fling down among the flowers the very weapons which now keep holiday in the festal peace of the sacred rites. Then the wine-cask and cakes steaming on a green-wood tray lead the procession, with a young goat thrusting horns forth from tender brow, and fruit even now clinging to the branches, after the fashion of a lustral ritual at which all the youth both purify themselves in honour of the Goddess and render sacrifice for the bounty of the year. Therefore, when her grace is won, the Goddess answers generously in those directions where you sue for help: whether your greater anxiety is to master the forest or to elude the plagues and threats of destiny, the Maiden is your mighty affianced and protection.¹⁷⁷

The dominion of Diana over hunting and wildlife seems an obvious sphere of influence in the green surroundings of her sanctuary at the lake and, as we will see later in this chapter she often appears in the form of a huntress.¹⁷⁸ In a literary context however, the wildlife aspect is rarely all there is to her character. Even in Grattius' poem, which is specifically about hunting, Diana is assumed to have powers far beyond that domain. To begin with, Grattius sets the scene of the ritual in a significant context: a grove that was the centre of crossroads (*compita*). This reminds us of a well-known feature of Diana, who was typified with the epithet Trivia ('at the crossroad') several times in Augustan and later literature; in other works the names Diana and Trivia are used interchangeably.¹⁷⁹ This was the case with Diana in general, but more in particular with Diana's grove at Aricia: several authors refer to it as Trivia's lake or grove.¹⁸⁰ Diana shared the association and the epithet with Hecate,

¹⁷⁷ Grattius, *Cyn.* 481-496: [...] *ex alto ducendum numen Olympo, supplicibusque vocanda sacris tutela deorum. Idcirco aeriis molimur compita lucis spicatasque faces sacrum ad nemorale Dianae sistimus et solito catuli velantur honore, ipsaque per flores medio in discrimine luci stravere arma sacris et pace vacantia festa. Tum cadus et viridi fumantia liba feretro praeveniunt teneraque extrudens cornua fronte haedus et ad ramos etiamnum haerentia poma, lustralis de more sacri, quo tota iuventus lustraturque deae proque anno reddit honorem. Ergo impetrato respondet multa favore ad partes, qua poscis opem; seu vincere silvas seu tibi fatorum labes exire minasque cura prior, tua magna fides tutelaque Virgo.* The Loeb editors point out the many connections between the ritual described here and the Ambervalia, a spring festival in which agricultural lands were ritually cleansed and that involved an animal carried in a procession that was killed at its conclusion (Cf: Cato *Agr.* 141; Strabo 5.3.2; Macr. *Sat.* 3.5.7; Serv. *Ecl.* 3.77).

¹⁷⁸ See pages 65ff.

¹⁷⁹ Trivia is the earliest epithet known for Diana, as it apparently appeared in Ennius' Tragedies: Enn. *Trag.* fr. 127 (Loeb translation) = Varro *L.L.* 7.16. Cf: Varro *A.R.* fr. 276 Cardauns = August. *C.D.* 711. Diana and Trivia used interchangeably: Verg. *Aen.* 6.35.69; 10.537; Cat. 34.15. See further: Alföldi (1960) 140-141, Green (2007) 128-135.

¹⁸⁰ *Triviae Lacus*: Verg. *Aen.* 7.516; *Triviae nemorosa* [...] *regna*: Mart. 9.64.3; *Arcinum Triviae Nemus, ipsa* [...] *Diana*: Stat. *Silv.* 3.1.55, 68. For the fragment of Statius see below, page 44-45.

traditionally the mediator between the world of the living and the underworld. Consequently, as Diana Trivia, the goddess looked over the junction of paths, particularly the *trivium*, but was also the goddess of crossroads in a more figurative sense, namely at the intersection between life and afterlife.¹⁸¹ A procession of women carrying torches – mentioned by Ovid and Propertius as part of the festival of the Nemoralia – is often associated with this aspect of Diana as a somewhat ominous figure that guided paths that led into a darker realm.¹⁸²

In addition to these elements of transition or liminality, Roman poets describe Diana as a goddess who was threefold in essence. Vergil, for instance, speaks of a triple faced Virgin Diana (*tria virginis ora Dianae*) and Horace labels her as *diva triformis*.¹⁸³ From these examples it becomes clear that the triplicity was presented as an essential characteristic of Diana; sometimes it was expressed with the epithet Trivia, but at other times the Roman poets chose different phrases to emphasize the multifaceted nature of the goddess. Although there is a discourse of poetic syncretism between Artemis and Hecate in Greek literature, the explicit reference to Diana's threefold nature developed in Roman-era poetry and seems to be used specifically with regard to Diana Nemorensis.¹⁸⁴ But what exactly were her three faces meant to represent or symbolize? In Seneca's *Phaedra* a nurse prays to Diana and provides us with a possible answer. She ascribes attributes to the goddess that we have seen before, calling her 'great goddess of woods and groves' and 'three-formed Hecate'.¹⁸⁵ In the same passage however, a third aspect of Diana appears, when she is described as the 'bright star of heaven, glory of the night, by whose changing beams the universe shines clear'.¹⁸⁶

It is clear that Seneca refers to the moon and its workings, a heavenly domain that is usually mythically looked after by the goddesses Selene or Luna.¹⁸⁷ The reference in the *Phaedra* is by no means the only occasion in Roman literature where Diana is linked to the moon, as similar allusions are made by Catullus and Horace; in the works of Varro and Cicero, 'Diana' appears as a synonym for describing the moon.¹⁸⁸ Apart from her role as huntress and guardian of the wild and her dominion over crossroads – in both a literal and metaphorical sense – Diana thus assumes a third role as a

¹⁸¹ Pairault (1969) 465-470.

¹⁸² *Ov. Fast.* 3.270 (cited above, on pages 42-43) and *Prop.* 2.32.15.

¹⁸³ *Verg. Aen.*, 4.511; *Serv. Ad. Aen.* 4.511; *Hor. Carm.* 3.22.

¹⁸⁴ For the association between Artemis and Hecate, mainly established through the myth of Iphigenia, see: Pairault (1969) 456-472.

¹⁸⁵ *Sen. Phaedr.* 406-412: [...] *magna silvas inter et lucos dea [...] Hecate triformis.*

¹⁸⁶ *Sen. Phaedr.* 410-411: *clarumque caeli sidus et noctis decus, cuius relucet mundus alterna vice.*

¹⁸⁷ Who are, in their turn, often associated with Hecate as well. For lunar gods and discourses on the moon in Rome: Lunais (1979).

¹⁸⁸ *Hor. Carm. Saec. 2: Lucidium caeli decus*; *Catull.* 34.16: *tu cursu, dea, menstruo metiens iter annum.* Cf: *Hor. Carm.* 4.6.38; *Ov. Met.* 196. Diana as synonym for the moon: *Varro, Ling.* 5.68; *Cic. Nat. D.* 2.68-69, 3.51, 5.38.

lunar goddess.¹⁸⁹ According to the influential hypothesis of Andreas Alföldi, this threefold appearance of Diana Nemorensis was the established notion of the goddess in Italy from the early Roman Republic onwards.¹⁹⁰ Alföldi dismisses any relation with the bloody cult of Artemis Tauropolis as a late and rather incoherent invention. Instead, he argues that the existence of the time-honoured threefold (and therefore potentially confusing) image of the goddess was the reason for mythological speculation in the first place.

Here we touch upon discussions on the original nature of Diana in Rome and Italy, over which modern interpreters have debated considerably and to which we will return later. For now, it is important to accentuate that the diffuse picture we have of Diana Nemorensis derives mainly from the Roman (poetical) writers, who creatively used multiple characteristics to create an image of an enigmatic, intangible goddess. As was shown throughout the analysis above, authors like Ovid and Horace employed the variety of mythological stories surrounding Diana and lake Nemi to its fullest extent. When the goddess is visited or honoured in their poems, her assumed sphere of influence is seldom straightforward: she appears as huntress, guardian of liminal spaces and moon goddess all at the same time or in changing combinations. The references to the strange *rex Nemorensis* and minor deities Egeria and Hippolytus seem to add complexity to a mythological discourse that – in modern eyes – is already confusing and difficult to relate to cultic practice. Perhaps the most vivid illustration of Diana's multifaceted identity is displayed by Statius' *Silvae*, which describes a summer ritual for the goddess in all her complexity:

It was the time when the heaven's vault broods over the earth at its most torrid and fierce Sirius, hit by Hyperion's lavish rays, burns the panting fields. Now the day was nearly come when Trivia's Arician wood, apt for runaway kings, makes smoke and the lake privy to Hippolytus shines with many a torch. Diana herself wreathes her veteran hounds and furbishes her darts and lets the wild beasts go in safety; all the land of Italy celebrates Hecate's Ides at its chaste hearths.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ The fourth century grammarian Servius provides an explanation of the association between the deities: *Ad Aen.* 511: 'when she is above the earth, she is believed to be the Moon; when she is on earth, Diana; when she is under the earth, Proserpina. Some see her as being triple because the Moon has three appearances [...] (*cum super terras est, creditur esse Luna; cum in terris, Diana; cum sub terris, Proserpina. quibusdam ideo triplicem placet, quia Luna tres figuras habet*).

¹⁹⁰ Alföldi (1960) 137-144.

¹⁹¹ *Stat. Silv.* 3.1.52-60: *Tempus erat, caeli cum torrentissimus axis incumbit terris ictusque Hyperione multo acer anhelantis incendit Sirius agros. Iamque dies aderat, profugis cum regibus aptum fumat Aricinum Triviae nemus et face multa conscius Hippolyti splendet lacus; ipsa coronat emeritis Diana canes et spicula terget et tutas sinit ire feras, omnisque pudicis itala terra focus Hecateidas excolit idus.* The Ides mentioned here are those of August, when it was indeed very hot and when, more importantly, there is a general festival of Diana confirmed in other sources such as several inscribed *fasti*. Cf: Scullard (1981) 173-174 and pages 56ff of this chapter.

Statius sets the ritual in the mysterious scenery of a torch-lit lake, mentions multiple dimensions of Diana but is – like other poets earlier – not very explicit in his details about the cultic activity itself. While I want to stress again that encountering a god in a poem was just as much part of the religious experience of lake Nemi as performing a ritual on site, a number of questions nevertheless remains unanswered. One might wonder, for example, what kind of ritual activity – apart from a procession with torches – took place at the sanctuary, and who the participants were. Were all of Diana's faces equally addressed in these ceremonies? And was Diana Nemorensis indeed – as Statius suggests above – venerated in the whole of Italy? Later in this chapter we will investigate the material evidence that can shed further light on the cultic experience around the lake, but first we must continue our exploration of the literary sources, including some of the more historical narratives. As will be shown, these accounts broaden the perspective on the origin and identity of Diana Nemorensis even further and also connect the goddess with the city of Rome and the Diana venerated there.

2.4 Wives and mothers?

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Georg Wissowa was not particularly impressed by Frazer's analysis of the cult of Diana Nemorensis and the dominant presence of the violent *rex* in that analysis. His own evaluation of the cult was very different, although he based it on many of the same sources. According to Wissowa, Diana was first and foremost a protectress of women, whom she assisted in the 'needs of their gender' – particularly with reproduction and childbirth.¹⁹² He labels the goddess as one of the *di novensides* ('new gods', imported in the Roman pantheon, according to Wissowa) from Italian origin and reads the sources accordingly. Servius for example, so often drawn upon by Frazer, presents an etymological explanation of Diana's identity that fits well into Wissowa's assessment:

Some call the same goddess Lucina, Diana and Hecate because they attribute to the one goddess the three powers of birth, growth and death.¹⁹³

The epithet *Lucina* was usually reserved for Juno, in her role as a goddess of birth.¹⁹⁴ Servius is however not the only nor the first ancient author who uses it as a characterization for Diana.

¹⁹² Wissowa (1912) 199: [...] *Schützerin und Helferin der Frauen in den Nöten ihres Geschlechts*.

¹⁹³ Serv. *Ad Aen.* 511: *non nulli eandem Lucinam, Dianam, Hecatem appellant ideo, quia uni deae tres adsignant potestates nascendi valendi moriendi*

Catullus, for example, states that Diana is called upon as Juno Lucina by 'women in pains of childbirth'.¹⁹⁵ Varro makes the same claim and explains it by a complex etymology that connects Diana's association with the moon – that shines (*lucet*) – with Juno Lucina: as the goddess of the moon, Diana guided births into the light of day.¹⁹⁶ The attempt to connect Diana's various spheres of influence finds a parallel in works of Cicero and Pliny, who rationalize her association with Luna/Selene by combining Diana's moon character with the menstrual cycle necessary for reproduction.¹⁹⁷

According to Wissowa, the sanctuary at Nemi testified to the particular Italian identity of Diana, who as a goddess cared for women in labour and was venerated by wives and mothers. She had developed her Artemis-iconography and diverse spheres of influence only when she came into contact with the Hellenistic world. All other mythological speculation – such as to Egeria, Virbius and the moon – would be derived from her maternal character. Few others have emphasized this feminine role as clearly as Wissowa did, but the idea that Diana's guidance over women was an essential characteristic of her cult at Nemi has influenced scholarship on the site for decades.¹⁹⁸ Recently, Carin Green has gone so far as to assume that women specifically went to the sanctuary to receive assistance in pregnancy: good food, kind attention and comfort, which was, according to Green, given by Diana's priests on the site.¹⁹⁹

It is clear that in Roman myths – and in antiquarian investigations of those myths – Diana as a goddess was sometimes associated with feminine spheres of life. But is there evidence of the cult at Nemi being especially visited by women – in search for advice on pregnancy or motherhood, as Green suggests? In the scarce descriptions of religious activity at lake Nemi we have seen so far, a few female worshippers are specified. Ovid is most explicit, as he portrays the procession that was part of the celebrations as an occasion where garlanded women whose prayers were answered by

¹⁹⁴ Juno Lucina is well known for her concern for mothers: she had a temple on the Esquiline and was venerated during the *Matronalia*, on the Kalendae of March. See further: Palmer (1974) 19-21, Ziolkowski (1992) 67-73.

¹⁹⁵ Cat. 34.12-13: *tu Lucina dolentibus / Iuno dicta puerperis*.

¹⁹⁶ Varr. 5.69: *Quae ideo quoque videtur ab Latinis Iuno Lucina dicta vel quod est et Terra, ut physici dicunt, et lucet; vel quod ab luce eius qua quis conceptus est usque ad eam, qua partus quis in lucem, luna iuvat, donec mensibus actis produxit in lucem, ficta ab iuvando et luce Iuno Lucina. A quo parientes eam invocant: luna enim nascentium dux quod menses huius.* ('She appears therefore to be called by the Latins also Juno Lucina, either because She is also the Earth, as the natural scientists say, and shines [*lucet*]; or because from her light in which conception takes place until that one in which there is a birth into light, the Moon continues to help, until She has brought it forth into the light of day when the months have passed, the name Juno Lucina was made from *iuvare* [to help] and *lux* [light]. From this fact women in labor invoke her; for the Moon is the guide to those that are born, since the months belong to her'.)

¹⁹⁷ Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.69; Plin. *NH* 7.38, 16.190-191. Other references to Diana as goddess of birth: Ov. *Fast.* 2.447-42; Sen. *Ag.* 367; Mart. *Spect.* 12.1, 13.5-7.

¹⁹⁸ Latte (1960) 170, Dumézil (1974) 240, Scullard (1981) 173, Scheid (2013). Cf: Green (2007) 113.

¹⁹⁹ There is no (material or literary) proof for these activities on the site. Green (2007) 137-138.

the goddess carried torches towards the sanctuary.²⁰⁰ Propertius' mistress Cynthia seems to have participated in the ritual, but Propertius does not specify whether it was a women-only ceremony or if men were also present.²⁰¹ Statius certainly seems to suggest the latter when he mentions the procession as part of a festival for families and hunters.²⁰² Finally, the cultic activity that was described in Grattius' poem on hunting, does not designate women as exclusive or special participants, nor speaks of specifically female preoccupations of Diana herself.²⁰³ While the goddess is attributed with healing qualities here, birth or reproduction are not specified as such.²⁰⁴

Of course, Wissowa based his argument on more than literary material alone – we will deal with his evaluation of some inscriptions and votive material later – but in the literary material it is very difficult to find evidence in support of his statement that the cult in Nemi was predominantly a cult for women or mothers (to be). Historical sources like Livy or Dionysius of Halicarnassus do not mention any special relation between Diana Nemorensis and women, although it must be added that in general they devote very little attention to the cult at lake Nemi or to its administrating city Aricia. What does emerge from these sources however, is a political 'face' of the goddess Diana, that shows her as a patroness of the affairs Rome had with its neighbours; and a face that has had a profound influence on our understanding of her cult at Nemi as well. This political discourse will be the subject of the final section of my treatment of the literary material.

2.5 Diana Nemorensis and Diana Aventinensis

As previously mentioned, a considerable part of the scholarly debate concerning Diana Nemorensis was centred on the early history of the cult and the original meaning of the deity. Therefore, unsurprisingly, a lot of attention went out to the earliest splinter of Roman literature that mentions the sanctuary, a fragment of the *Origines* of Cato the Elder from the second century BC, preserved by the fourth century grammarian Priscian:

Egerius Baebius of Tusculum, the Latin dictator, dedicated the grove of Diana in the wood of Aricia. The following peoples took part jointly: people of Tusculum, Aricia, Lanuvium, Laurentum [i.e. Lavinium], Cora, Tibur, Pometia, Rutulan Ardea.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ *Ov. Fast.* 3.269-270. See page 42-43.

²⁰¹ *Prop.* 2.32.14-16.

²⁰² *Stat. Silv.* 3.1.52-6. See page 47-48.

²⁰³ Grattius, *Cyn.* 481-496. See page 44-45.

²⁰⁴ For Diana's healing qualities, see: Green (2007) 235-256.

²⁰⁵ *Cat. Or. Fr.* 58 (Peter) = 28 (Cassignet): *Lucum Dianium in nemore Aricino Egerius Baebius Tusculanus dedicavit dictator Latinus. Hi populi communiter: Tusculanus, Aricinus, Lanuvinus, Laurens, Coranus, Tiburtis, Pometinus, Ardeatis Rutulis.* The translation is that of Cornell (1995) 297. Laurentum was the mythical seat of king Latinus, who

The fragment seems to reflect a dedication ceremony, in which a magistrate with the title of Latin *dictator* dedicated a grove to the goddess Diana on behalf of a number of Latin communities. It has been observed that Cato might have transcribed the dedication from an original inscription at the site, which would explain its somewhat fragmented formulation.²⁰⁶ However, the interpretation of the dedication is seriously complicated by the fact that Priscian was only interested in the form 'Rutulan Ardean' (*Ardeatis Rutulis*) and did not quote Cato any further; this means that it is unclear whether there were other communities present than the ones mentioned and, most crucially, if Rome was involved in the dedication as well.

Nevertheless, most scholars have assumed that Cato's fragment is a reflection of the joint efforts of the Latin tribes *against* Rome and that the ceremony was performed somewhere before 493 BC, when the *foedus Cassianum* established Roman superiority over the people of Latium Vetus, the so-called *Prisci Latini*.²⁰⁷ Thus, the fragment would be a commemoration of a significant moment in the sixth or very early fifth century BC, when the sanctuary of Diana Nemorensis was a political and religious centre for a number of Latin towns. Seen from this perspective, Cato's use of the word 'grove' (*lucus*) is quite significant: this is usually defined as a section of consecrated woodland, and according to Roman literary tradition, there were a number of *luci* that served as meeting places for Latin tribes.²⁰⁸ According to Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, these tribes held several assemblies to organise their efforts against Rome at the *lucus Ferentinae*, which has never been archaeologically traced but was probably located somewhere on the southern slopes of *mons Albanus*, the sacred mountain towering over lake Nemi.²⁰⁹ Other *luci* that served as meeting places are mentioned near Anagnina, were the Via Labicana and the Via Latina split, and at Corne (near Tusculum), the latter even being a *lucus* devoted to Diana, according to Pliny.²¹⁰ Furthermore, Filippo Coarelli has argued that many of the other large Latin sanctuaries in Latium – at Gabii and Tibur, for example –

received Aeneas when he landed in Italy for the first time (Verg. *Aen.* 7.45-49). In historical times, the town was identified with Lavinium by Roman writers. For Egerius Balbus and his possible (etymological) connection with the nymph Egeria, see Malaspina (1994-1995) 18 and bibliography.

²⁰⁶ Cornell (1995) 297. Cf. Fest. 128L.

²⁰⁷ See: Pairault (1969) 440-441, Momigliano (1984a) 390-391, Blagg (1986) 211-212, Cornell (1995) 297-298, Chiabà (2011) 35-38. For the identity of the *Prisci Latini* ('old Latins'), who are mainly mentioned in the sources in the context of the *feriae Latinae*, see chapter IV, pages 151ff.

²⁰⁸ For *luci* as religious and political meeting places for Latin tribes, see: Sherwin-White (1973) 11-20, Cornell (2000) 293-295, Cornell (1995) 271-272. Further elaboration on (sacred) groves can be found in the conference proceedings of a colloquium on the subject: Scheid and De Cazanove (1993), with a useful discussion of the terminology by Scheid (1993) 13-20.

²⁰⁹ Liv. 1.50.1; 2.38.1; 7.25.5; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 3.45; 3.51; 4.45; 5.61; Fest. 256L. For the *mons Albanus*, see chapter IV from pages 143 ff.

²¹⁰ Anagnina: Liv. 27.4.12; Corne: Plin. *NH* 16.242.1. Like the *lucus Ferentinae*, these meeting places have never been identified in the landscape.

originated as sacred woods, a feature that was respected in the later monumentalized sanctuaries by the maintenance of a sacred garden around the temples.²¹¹

So, apart from a religious focal point, Diana's *lucus* at Nemi could have been a centre of Latin political bonds as well: an anti-Roman association that was remembered well into the Roman Republic (if we interpret Cato's fragment in this way). Diana's face as a political goddess gains extra significance if we confront the history of the cult at Nemi with Diana's cult in the city of Rome, where her main temple was on the Aventine hill. In the literary tradition concerning this temple, its dedication is dated back to the time of Servius Tullius, who established Roman superiority over its neighbours and – taking inspiration from the temple at Ephesus – persuaded the Latins to build a temple to Diana. According to Livy, king Servius, after he:

[...] had promoted the grandeur of the state by enlarging the City, and had shaped all his domestic policy to suit the demands of peace as well as those of war, he was unwilling that arms should always be the means employed for strengthening Rome's power, and sought to increase her sway by diplomacy, and at the same time to add something to the splendour of the City. Even at that early date the temple of Diana at Ephesus enjoyed great renown. It was reputed to have been built through the cooperation of the cities of Asia, and this harmony and community of worship Servius praised in superlative terms to the Latin nobles, with whom, both officially and in private, he had taken pains to establish a footing of hospitality and friendship. By dint of reiterating the same arguments he finally carried his point, and a shrine of Diana was built in Rome by the nations of Latium conjointly with the Roman People. This was an admission that Rome was the capital—a point which had so often been disputed by arms.²¹²

²¹¹ Coarelli (1987) 89-90. The evidence can however be considered meagre: archaeological traces of such a garden have been discovered only in Gabii (Lauter (1968) 626-631, Jimenez (1983) 52-55). This feature has then been extrapolated to the other sanctuaries, but neither archaeological, nor literary nor epigraphic sources confirm the assumption. Rüpke (2007) 175-176, Rous (2010) 205-207. See further, on the analysis of the sanctuaries as a prescriptive rather than a descriptive tool: page 29ff.

²¹² Liv. 1.45.2-6: *Aucta civitate magnitudine urbis, formatis omnibus domi et ad belli et ad pacis usus, ne semper armis opes acquirentur, consilio augere imperium conatus est, simul et aliquod addere urbi decus. Iam tum erat inclitum Dianae Ephesiae fanum; id communiter a civitatibus Asiae factum fama ferebat. Eum consensum deosque consociatos laudare mire Servius inter proceres Latinorum, cum quibus publice privatimque hospitia amicitiasque de industria iunxerat. Saepe iterando eadem perpulit tandem ut Romae fanum Dianae populi Latini cum populo Romano facerent. Ea erat confession caput rerum Romani esse, de quo totiens armis certatum fuerat.* The translation is slightly adapted from the Loeb edition.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus relates a similar story and adds that Servius set up a stone to commemorate the meeting between the Latin tribes and establish the rules that were agreed upon on that occasion. He was able to see the plaque for himself, apparently still in place centuries later, and for him the ancient Greek letters proved that these early Romans were no barbarians:

And to the end that no lapse of time should obliterate these laws, he [Servius] erected a bronze pillar upon which he engraved both the decrees of the council and the names of the cities which had taken part in it. This pillar still existed down to my time in the temple of Diana, with the inscription in the characters that were anciently used in Greece. This alone would serve as no slight proof that the founders of Rome were not barbarians; for if they had been, they would not have used Greek characters.²¹³

The archaeological remains of the temple have never been securely identified, although on the basis of a fragment of the *Forma Urbis Romae*, the current hypothesis is that it was located at the north-western corner of the Aventine, in the area between the Santa Sabina, the Santa Prisca and the San Alessio churches.²¹⁴ The temple probably faced northwest, overlooking the forum Boarium and the Tiber river.²¹⁵ The *stèle* with regulations that Dionysius of Halicarnassus saw in the first century AD and that regulated the affairs between the Romans and their Latin neighbours, might have become some sort of role model for the regulation of other cults: from several *leges sacrae* (inscriptions with cult regulations) we know of a *lex Area Dianae in Aventino* in which the arrangements at Diana's cult seem to be a reference point for cults in Roman colonies.²¹⁶ The best known example is from the

²¹³ Dion. Hal. 4.26.5: ἵνα δὲ μηδεὶς χρόνος αὐτοὺς ἀφανίσῃ, στήλην κατασκευάσας χαλκῆν ἔγραψεν ἐν ταύτῃ τά τε δόξαντα τοῖς συνέδροις καὶ τὰς μετεχούσας τῆς συνόδου πόλεις. Αὕτη διέμεινεν ἡ στήλη μέχρι τῆς ἑμῆς ἡλικίας ἐν τῷ τῆς Ἀρτέμιδος ἱερῷ κειμένη γραμμάτων ἔχουσα χαρακτῆρας Ἑλληνικῶν, οἷς τὸ παλαιὸν ἡ Ἑλλὰς ἐχρήτο. Ὅ καὶ αὐτὸ ποιήσαιτ' ἂν τις οὐ μικρὸν τεκμήριον τοῦ μὴ βαρβάρους εἶναι τοὺς οἰκίσαντας τὴν Ῥώμην. Οὐ γὰρ ἂν Ἑλληνικοῖς ἐχρῶντο γράμμασιν ὄντες βάρβαροι. ἔχουσα χαρακτῆρας Ἑλληνικῶν, οἷς τὸ παλαιὸν ἡ Ἑλλὰς ἐχρήτο. ὁ καὶ αὐτὸ ποιήσαιτ' ἂν τις οὐ μικρὸν τεκμήριον τοῦ μὴ βαρβάρους εἶναι τοὺς οἰκίσαντας τὴν Ῥώμην. οὐ γὰρ ἂν Ἑλληνικοῖς ἐχρῶντο γράμμασιν ὄντες βάρβαροι.

The inscription was probably in Latin, but the archaic characters must have looked Greek to Dionysius. See further: Beard, North and Price (1998)II: 239-243

²¹⁴ The fragment was identified by its inscription *Cornificia[e]* or *Cornificia[nae]*, because Diana's temple was known by that name after its restoration by L. Cornificius during the reign of Augustus (Suet. *Aug.* 29). Cf: CIL VI 4305. Vendittelli (1995) 12, Vendittelli (2005) 237-238.

²¹⁵ Laura Vendittelli presented an overview of earlier attempts to find the temple and uses the evidence to suggest a more precise location: Cassatella and Vendittelli (1985) 442-451 and fig. 11-12, Vendittelli (1995) 11-13, Vendittelli (2005) 235-247. Quaranta (2004) 143-156, argued instead that the FUR fragment suggests a location more to the northeast of the Aventine, but this interpretation has many problems: Tucci (2007) 477-478.

²¹⁶ Not to be confused with the *lex Icilia de Aventino publicando* that arranged the conversion of public land to private land on which plebeians could build houses (which turned the Aventine into a plebeian

altar dedicated to Augustus at Narbo, where the inscription – after mentioning some specific rules for the sanctuary – reads 'the other laws for this sanctuary shall be the same as those for the altar of Diana on the Aventine'.²¹⁷ The paradigmatic status of the *lex* should not be exaggerated – otherwise it would have perhaps been quoted more often – but it has been argued that the cult of Diana on the Aventine was a principal site for negotiating the status and cooperation between Rome and its neighbours, and so in provincial contexts it became a model for cult practice as a meeting-ground between Roman and non-Roman peoples.²¹⁸ So, in the context of the expanding Roman empire, the early relation between Romans and Latins acquired a metaphorical meaning and the narratives surrounding the early history of Diana gained new significance.

The allusion that Diana was patroness of the relation between Romans and their neighbours is further strengthened by a casual comment of Varro, who, when he investigates the etymological origin of the Aventine, offers as one of the explanations that the hill was named after the word *adventus*, the 'coming of people, because there a temple of Diana was established in which all the Latins had rights in common'.²¹⁹ The cultus of Diana reflects a tradition of joint history and shared celebrations, but also an early and fundamental element of rivalry. While the Latins had joined the Roman cause, the fact that they had once fiercely opposed Rome was remembered and communicated as well. The thin line between partnership and competition of Rome and its surrounding communities is well illustrated by an anecdote in Livy, which allegedly took place after the construction of the temple, still during the reign of Servius Tullius. While the Romans were almighty in the region and the surrounding tribes had given up almost all attempts to rival their supremacy, a Sabine man appeared with a gigantic cow at the sanctuary of Diana on the Aventine. The cow was considered a prodigy because the citizens of the state who would sacrifice it to Diana, would make their state the seat of an empire. However, the Sabine man was cleverly deceived by a Roman priest, who sent the man away to purify himself, quickly sacrificed the cow himself and thus

neighbourhood) and that was supposedly also placed in the sanctuary of Diana, in 456 BC: Liv. 3.31; Dion. Hal. 10.32.

²¹⁷ CIL XII 4333 = ILS 0112: ... *ceterae leges huic arae titulisq(ue) / eadem sunt quae sunt arae / Dianae in Aventino*. Other examples: a dedication to Jupiter Optimus Maximus from Salona, Croatia (CIL III 1933 = ILS 4907) and an inscription from what was possibly a temple to Salus in Ariminum (modern Rimini) (CIL XI 361). The last inscription has the formula in an abridged form: *H(aec) A(edes) S(alutis) A(ugustae) H(abet) L(eges) Q(uas) D(ianae) R(omae) IN A(ventino)*. This suggests that the formula (and therefore the status of Diana's sanctuary) had a certain renown and that its regulations – to a certain degree – became standardized.

²¹⁸ Beard, North and Price (1998)I: 330. For the problems of such a reading and the problematic extension of Roman law to a provincial context in general, see: Ando (2009) 99-113.

²¹⁹ Varro, *ll.5.43: Aventinum aliquot de causis dicunt...alii A<d>-ventinum ab adventu hominum, quod co->m>-mune Latinorum ibi Dianae templum sit constitutum*.

secured the supremacy of the Roman state. Livy states that the horns were still in the vestibule of the temple, testifying to the prodigy many generations later.²²⁰

2.6 Signs of syncretism

The fact that traditions of collaboration and rivalry between Rome and its neighbours existed around both Diana Nemorensis and Diana Aventinensis, has sparked a vivid modern debate about the relation between both goddesses, the antiquity of their temples and the presumed federal status of their cult practices.²²¹ The long and complex discussion – most clearly articulated by Andreas Alföldi and Arnaldo Momigliano – centres around a few questions that with the current state of the evidence are difficult to answer.²²² The first problem concerns the actual age of both sanctuaries. While the first activity on the site of Nemi can be traced back to protohistoric times and there was probably a temple on the site from the third century onwards, the absence of secure archaeological data on the Aventine makes a real comparison impossible.²²³ Much of the discussion has therefore dealt with their relative chronology and was based on the literary sources alone. Consequently it is inextricably linked to fundamental debates about the trustworthiness of the literary tradition on early Rome. Difficulties include – but are not limited to – the uncertain rule of Servius Tullius and the Etruscan kings and the limited knowledge of the organisation of the Latin League(s) in the sixth, fifth and fourth centuries BC.²²⁴ This chapter is not the place to go into all these discussions, but what can be stated is that most scholars have now agreed on the hypothesis that the sanctuary at Nemi preceded that in Rome. Many have recognized literary commonplaces in the origin story of Servius' dedication of the Aventine cult and, at the same time, have adopted Alföldi's position that the dedication of the *lucus* by the *dictator Latinus* at Nemi (tentatively dated to the early fifth century BC) did not mark the start of the activities there, but happened in a later stage of the cult practice.²²⁵ With some reservations with regard to the scanty evidence and the identity of the early goddess that was later associated with Diana, we may therefore assume that the cult in Nemi preceded that in Rome.

²²⁰ Liv. 1.45.4-7. Cf. Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 4, Val.Max. 8.3.1. The story is probably also commemorated by a coin of A. Postumius A.f. Sp.n. Albinus (RRC 372/1).

²²¹ For a short overview of this debate, see: Pairault (1969) 426-430, Gjerstad (1970) 99-107, Malaspina (1994-1995) 15-36

²²² The different positions are most clearly expressed in: Alföldi (1960) 137-144, Alföldi (1963) 48-55, Momigliano (1966) 641-648.

²²³ For the archaeological remains in Nemi, see section 'Temples and votives', on pages 58-65.

²²⁴ The best introduction to these issues to my opinion still is Cornell (1995), see especially pages 1-30 (on the reliability of the sources), 173-197 (on the traditions of Etruscan Rome and Servius Tullius) and (on Roman Latin relations). Cf. Smith (1996a) 185-223, Forsythe (2005) 59-79, 93-124. For similar issues regarding the kingship of Tarquinius Superbus and his interference with Roman religion, see chapter IV, pages 143ff.

²²⁵ Malaspina (1994-1995) 15-36, Cornell (1995), Vendittelli (1995) 11, Green (2007) 105-106.

With this, however, the second question is not automatically resolved: were both of the sanctuaries federal cults for the Latins and what was the relationship between them? In other words: was the sanctuary in Rome explicitly built to rival the federal cult at lake Nemi, or – vice-versa – does the dedication narrated by Cato reflect an attempt of the Latins to politically isolate the Romans and give a new significance to the existing cult at Nemi? Alföldi, and Wissowa before him, maintained that the Arician cult was not only the oldest of the two, but that Diana Nemorensis protected the political relationships between the Latins from the earliest history of the sanctuary onwards – the moment recorded by Cato being only a rededication or refocus of that association.²²⁶ The other position, again most strongly advanced by Arnaldo Momigliano, claims that it was Servius Tullius' temple and festival in Rome – inspired by the Artemis cult at Efese – that established Diana's guardianship over the Latin political bonds. The other tribes would have resisted this by asserting a competing claim to the goddess at Nemi.²²⁷

Apart from arguments based on iconography, which will be discussed later in this chapter, the fact that both Dianas celebrated their festival on the same day has played an important part in the discussion. As we have seen, Statius claims that 'all of Italy' celebrated the Arician cult on the Ides (the thirteenth) of August, hereby implying – as emphasized by Alföldi – that the cult at Nemi took priority over that in Rome.²²⁸ The obvious primitive elements in Nemi – around the *rex Nemorensis*, that is – would add to this argument. Nevertheless, the same date appears in the inscribed *fasti*, referring specifically to *Dianae Aventinae*.²²⁹ According to Festus this was a *dies natalis* dedicated especially to slaves, because Servius Tullius was born from a slave woman himself.²³⁰ Plutarch also explains the date by connecting it to slaves and Servius' Tullius background, adding that it was also a day on which women – after slave women started the custom – ritually washed their hair.²³¹ Momigliano and others consider it very significant that the Roman date is remembered

²²⁶ Wissowa (1912) 39, Alföldi (1960) 141-144, Alföldi (1963) 87-88. Gordon (1932) 177-192 had earlier emphasized the original Latin nature of Diana, *contra* Altheim (see note 232 below) who had emphasized the Greek origin of the goddess, who had come to Rome and then moved on to Nemi. Alföldi's thesis was broadly supported, for example by: Pairault (1969) 445-447, Gjerstad (1970) 101-102, Blagg (1986) 211, Green (2007) 107-108.

²²⁷ Momigliano (1966) 644.

²²⁸ Stat. *Silv.* 3.1.52-60. See page 47 and note 191.

²²⁹ Fast. Ant. Mai.: *Dianae*; Fast. Vall.: *Dianae in Aventino*; Fast. Allif.: *Diana[e] Vortumno in Aventino*; Fast. Amit.: *Dianae Vortumno in Aventino*; Fast. Ant. Min.: *Diana in Avent(ino)*; Fast. Guidizz.: *Diana(e)*; Fast. Filoc.: *N(atalis) Dianes*. Degrassi (1963) 17, 148-149, 180-181, 190-191, 208, 235, 252-253, 494-496, Scullard (1981) 173-175, Donati and Stefanetti (2006) 95-97.

²³⁰ Fest. 460.33-36L: *Servorum dies festus vulgo existimatur Idus Aufgusti], quod eo die Ser[vius] Tullius, natus servus, aedem Dianae dedicaverit in Aventino, cuius tutelae sint cervi; a quo celeritate fugitivos vocent cervos.*

²³¹ Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 100: 'Διὰ τί ταῖς Αὐγούσταις εἰδοῖς, Σεκστιλίαις δὲ πρότερον λεγομέναις, ἑορτάζουσιν αἱ τε δοῦλοι καὶ οἱ δοῦλοι πάντες, αἱ δὲ γυναῖκες μάλιστα ῥύπτεσθαι τὰς κεφαλὰς καὶ καθαίρειν ἐπιτηδεύουσιν;' ἢ διὰ τὸ Σερούιον τὸν βασιλέα κατὰ ταύτην τὴν ἡμέραν ἐξ αἰχμαλώτου γενέσθαι θεραπευνίδος ἄδειαν ἔργων ἔχουσιν οἱ θεράποντες, τὸ δὲ πλύνειν τὰς κεφαλὰς ἀρξάμενον ἀπὸ τῶν θεραπεινίδων διὰ τὴν

at several instances and by several authors, and that it is presented in connection with Servius Tullius and his efforts to unite and control the Latins.²³² In absence of additional references to the Latin league at Nemi (other than the Cato fragment), they judge the connection of the Aventine cult with the political relationships and rivalries of the Latins as older and more important than that at Nemi.

As mentioned before, the debate has not produced any definite answers so far.²³³ While further archaeological exploration of the Aventine perhaps might provide some insight on – absolute or relative – chronologies, it is likely that the specific role of Diana will remain one of the many uncertainties that surround Roman-Latin relationships in the archaic era. However, what has not been emphasized enough, to my opinion, is that the many similarities between both Dianas in later (Republican and Imperial) times are significant by themselves. They show that by the time our sources were written there was a considerable degree of syncretism between the respective literary traditions and the memories sustaining and surrounding them. Their common connection with Latin political bonds and the shared festival date are perhaps the most illustrative parallels between Diana Nemorensis and Diana Aventinensis, but the overview of literary sources in this chapter has brought out others as well. For one, both goddesses had an established literary association with servitude: the *rex Nemorensis* was necessarily a runaway slave whilst the cult on the Aventine was allegedly visited by slaves, in remembrance of Servius Tullius' background. Furthermore, the discourse about Diana Nemorensis' special bond with women worshippers – so important in modern analyses of the cult, as we saw earlier in this chapter – finds a parallel in Plutarch's remark about women visiting the Aventine sanctuary. Finally, even the accounts involving the nymph Egeria, the consort of king Numa that was venerated in the form of a spring at lake Nemi, coincide with accounts of another spring dedicated to her at Rome. According to Livy and Plutarch, king Numa consulted Egeria in a 'dark grove' near the Porta Capena, which was at the foot of the Aventine hill

έορτήν ἄχρι τῶν ἐλευθέρων προῆλθεν. ('Why is it that on the Ides of August, formerly called Sextilis, all the slaves, female and male, keep holiday, and the Roman women make a particular practice of washing and cleansing their heads? Do the servants have release from work because on this day king Servius was born from a captive maidservant? And did the washing of their heads begin with the slave-women, because of their holiday, and extend itself to free-born women?'). In another fragment (C.G. 16), Plutarch refers to Diana's association with servitude as well: Gaius Gracchus, after being defeated in his attempt at revolution, flees to the temple and out of disappointment prays to Diana that the Romans 'might never cease to be in servitude' (μηδέποτε παύσασθαι δουλεύοντα).

²³² Momigliano (1966) 642-643, 647. Momigliano derived part of his arguments from Morpurgo (1903) 297-368, Altheim (1930) 93-172, Altheim (1941) 145-147. After him, contributors to the debate that chose Momigliano's position include: Latte (1960) 173, Ampolo (1988) 236, Liou-Gille (1997) 760-761.

²³³ As have concluded Malaspina (1994-1995) 35-36, Smith (1996a) 218.

and through which a little stream ran. Suggestively, it was located roughly at the point where Diana's temple overlooked the valley of the Tiber.²³⁴

What becomes clear from this short comparison is that the supposedly rival cults of Diana Nemorensis and Diana Aventinensis in fact showed a considerable degree of resemblance. The modern attempts to attribute certain characteristics or cult practices to either the Arician or the Roman goddess miss the point, to a certain degree, because they fail to acknowledge the many ways the ancient memorial cultures around both Diana's had grown towards each other over time. In our desire to understand the role of Diana Nemorensis in the Roman landscape, it is important to recognize the syncretism with Diana Aventinensis, because it shows a religious dynamism that has often been denied to the cult. In other words: it was not a static relic from a long forgotten past, which stood, 'in striking isolation to the polished Italian society of its time'.²³⁵ On the contrary, the literary sources show Diana Nemorensis as a multifaceted goddess, whose many faces were surrounded with stories and memories that brought her into direct contact with not only the city of Rome and its inhabitants, but also with her supposed opponent Diana on the Aventine.

One could argue that the observed dynamics in Diana's character were merely a result of literary playfulness, a creative or intellectual enterprise that had little to do with the cultic reality at lake Nemi or the Aventine. While poetic elements can certainly be recognized in many of the descriptions we have seen so far, it would be, to my opinion, mistaken to see this syncretism as solely a literary phenomenon. We have already seen that in the case of the festival on the Ides of August, the literary and epigraphic sources can be seen to overlap, and different versions of the Latin past complement but also contradict each other. It makes no sense to try to distinguish between literary discourses that would be somehow less 'real' or 'believable' than ritual practices or material remains: these representations might be relevant at different occasions or situations, but together – as I have argued before – they formed an image of Diana Nemorensis. With this in mind, we now turn to some of the material remains that shed further light on the worshippers that visited lake Nemi, the ritual and memorial practices that occurred there and the goddess that was at the centre of the ceremonies.

2.7 Temples and votives

As mentioned above, many modern scholars assumed that the mythology around Diana's cult at lake Nemi reflected a time-old cult practice, with roots in archaic pre-Roman times. At the moment the site of the sanctuary was definitively identified by lord Savile Lumley, ambassador to the British

²³⁴ Liv. 1.21.3; Plut. *Numa* 8.6. Green (2007) 224-225.

²³⁵ Frazer (1911) 10.

Crown in Rome in the late nineteenth century, the excitement was quite high, not the least because of the large quantities of sculpture that were discovered in its votive cells. The site was excavated – one might say plundered – in several short campaigns that unearthed a rather complex arrangement of building structures.²³⁶ The hasty and largely undocumented search for sculptural treasures in these early excavations has proved an obstacle for later studies, and although excavations since then have provided us with new insights on the sanctuary, its individual elements and its natural setting, many of the big questions regarding the cult practice remain open. While promising results have been recorded in the latest campaigns – culminating in a recent book and an exhibition – it remains difficult or even impossible to relate the various remains and building periods to each other and to the literary sources available. The aim of the brief survey of the archaeological evidence in this chapter is not to solve all these matters – which is impossible – but to present their implications for our understanding of Diana Nemorensis in the Roman religious landscape.

Of course, the archaeological evidence for the sanctuary of lake Nemi consists of more than just the remains of buildings. The earliest evidence of activity on the site is formed by miniature pottery and a variety of bronze objects dating from the late eighth or early seventh centuries BC, and large deposits of sixth century material have been found as well.²³⁷ Strangely, material from the fifth century seems absent, but after that gap, votive activity continued well into the middle and late Republic.²³⁸ The material itself is closely comparable to other votive depots in Latium: apart from pottery, there are considerable quantities of fibulae, small statuettes in bronze (mostly of Diana), coins jewellery, (miniature) weapons and large quantities of terracotta figurines and anatomical votives from the fourth and third centuries BC.²³⁹ In these anatomical votives, which include an uterus and male and female genitals, Wissowa saw his theory confirmed that Diana originally and primarily watched over the affairs of women, and many have followed his suggestion.²⁴⁰ However, a

²³⁶ The earliest excavations are described in Rossbach (1890) 147-165, Wallis (1893), Borsari (1895) 424-431. There were a few earlier finds as well, summarized in: Blagg (1983) 22. A good overview of the early campaigns is provided by Ghini (1993) 277-280 and note 6. With regard to the excavation of the sculptures and their transportation to Nottingham, Pennsylvania and Copenhagen, see: Blagg (1983) 21-23, Guldager Bilde and Moltesen (2002) 7-14, Moltesen (1997b) 26-33. The sculptures themselves are briefly discussed on pages 65-66.

²³⁷ Bouma (1996b) III 61-62.

²³⁸ The fifth century decline in votive material is visible in all of Latium, and is also clear from the small number of new religious sites identifiable in the archaeological record and the large number of sixth century sites that ceased to exist. Although it is possible that we do not recognize certain types of votives or that the century is underrepresented because of a lack of archaeological research, the decline seems sufficiently strong to assume that the lack of votive finds also represents a lack of votive activity. A satisfying explanation for the phenomenon has however not been found yet. Rous (2010) 78-81.

²³⁹ A more complete overview, with the finding locations of the deposits, in: Bouma (1996b) 60-64. See also: Gierow (1966) 39-40.

²⁴⁰ Wissowa (1912) 199-200. For the literary aspects of this interpretation, see page 48-49, with notes.

closer examination of the material, in the light of general studies on Latial votive culture and recent evaluations of the role of gender in Roman religion, points to another conclusion. Comparative research has shown that votives referring to fertility and pregnancy are very common in sanctuaries across Latium, and that the habit was not limited to either female or male deities.²⁴¹ Furthermore, the votive deposits are only rarely gender exclusive – in the sense that they show only breasts and uteri or only phalluses. Nemi was no exception to this: both male and female genitals were found and in (relative) quantities that are comparable with other sites. A few remarkable finds – notably an inscribed spear with a dedication to Diana from a *noutrix* (wet-nurse) *Paperia* – have perhaps coloured our view but in light of the bigger Latial picture, the votives do not characterize Diana Nemorensis as a special goddess for women.²⁴² Modern attempts to categorize her as such have overlooked the actual diversity of the material and the multifaceted nature of the cult practise itself.²⁴³

The votives show that the cult had an early phase in which there was no stone temple, as the earliest structural remains on the site date from the late fourth or early third century BC. Foundations from this time were recently discovered in the building that since the earliest excavations by Lord Savile has been labelled as the main temple of the sanctuary, and that has become known as ‘building K’ on site maps (see figures 2.1 and 2.2).²⁴⁴ Giuseppa Ghini and Francesca Diosono, the latest excavators, have established three building phases in building K: after the beginnings in the fourth or early third century BC, the temple was completely rebuilt and reoriented in the second half of the second century BC, after which it – with much of the rest of the

²⁴¹ For overviews of votive material in Latium, see: Comella (1981) 717-803, Bouma (1996a). With regard to the religious position of women in Republican society, Celia Schultz (2006a) has convincingly argued that many cults were not gender restricted and that women worshipped largely the same gods as men did. Although modern scholarship has often identified cults as being either male or female, ancient evidence (inscriptions, votives) does not support this.

²⁴² Blagg (1986) 214. The spear point (CIL I² 45) has been studied by Holland (2008) 95-115, who denies the specific female connotation but suggests that the *noutrix* may have been a *liberta*; the spear point being a symbolic reference to Diana as a patroness of freedom. According to Holland, there was a parallel with Diana’s dominion over animals as well: manumission turned slaves from the legal status of animals into the status of human beings. Although her reconstruction of *Paperia*’s status of freedwoman (based, e.g. on the *gentilicium*) seems plausible, the entire hypothesis to me seems a bit far-fetched.

²⁴³ A similar point could be made with regard to Diana’s qualities as a healing goddess, much emphasized by for example by Green (2007) 235-236. The typological overviews show that health concerns were expressed at many sites and that a great number of gods – certainly not all with healing aspects – received anatomical votives. Other evidence for Diana’s healing qualities is scarce, and votives alone are not reason enough to label a cult as a specific healing cult. Cf: Schultz (2006a) 119, Glinister (2006) 16-32 and see the introduction, pages 33-34.

²⁴⁴ The first – imprecise – map of the sanctuary was published in: Wallis (1893). See for the highly problematic documentation of the first excavations: Guldager Bilde (2000) 93-110

sanctuary – took its final form in the middle of the first century BC.²⁴⁵ Large numbers of architectural decorations, like terracotta antefixes and pedimental sculpture, have been found, as well as exquisite gilded bronze revetments, dating from about 300 BC to early Imperial times.²⁴⁶ The earliest fragments reveal a rich and highly diverse roof decoration scheme but it is unclear to what extent they can be connected to one of building phases of building K established by Ghini and Diosono – or more accurately: if they can be connected to (a refurbishment of) that structure at all.²⁴⁷ Even more uncertain is the status of the fragments of two or more votive model temples, which have been dated to the fourth century BC, and may have depicted the earliest temple on the site. Debates remain about how to reconstruct these miniature temples, but at first sight their design does not seem to match the foundations from the fourth century BC at all.²⁴⁸

Here, we touch upon some of the great interpretation problems regarding the temple at lake Nemi. Apart from the diverging chronologies of the architectural decorations and temple foundations, the main difficulty is presented by a fragment of Vitruvius, who briefly comments on Diana's temple and categorizes it in a list of temples that had an unusual shape. They had 'columns added right and left on the sides of the pronaos', the length of their cellae was twice its width and this meant that 'all the features which are customary on the front are transferred to the flanks'.²⁴⁹ From the other examples Vitruvius gives it becomes clear that this meant that the cella of the temple was not positioned in line with the pronaos, but was rotated 90 degrees, a feature which in modern literature has been labeled as a transverse cella and may have been a convenient solution in case there was limited space available. Problematic in the case of Nemi is that none of the excavated ground plans of building K seem to match Vitruvius' description. Ghini and Diosono have suggested that the second building phase (early second century BC) might have resembled the transverse cella

²⁴⁵ Ghini (2012c) 273-275. I have recently understood (from the director of the excavation campaigns, dr. Francesca Diosono) that the last excavations (in the summer of 2015) have produced traces of an earlier small temple building, with fragmentary terracotta decorations and a small stretch of wall that seems to predate the fourth century BC wall. If the chronology is correct, this structure would predate the Roman dominance over the cult and could thus be connected to the early Latin cult site noted by Cato (*Or. Fr.* 58, see pages 50ff with notes). For the moment however, the finds are still under investigation and have not been published yet.

²⁴⁶ The terracotta building decorations are thoroughly investigated by Känel (2000) 131-139. He identifies four main phases in roof decoration: the first terracotta's were produced around the year 300 BC, a second style appeared around the middle of the second century BC and subsequently there are antefixes that can be connected to the monumental refurbishment of the sanctuary around 100 BC. Finally, some antefixes and a relief plaque remain from the early Imperial age. Especially the first two stages of this chronology do not match the building phases of building K. See further, for the terracotta's: André (1940) 282-283, Blagg (1983) 31-34. For the fragments of the gilded bronze frieze: Morpurgo (1903) 318-330.

²⁴⁷ Some of the later antefixes (100 BC) most certainly belong to the area of the porticus and the theatre (see below), but the contextualization of the earlier fragments is insecure.

²⁴⁸ Blagg (2000) 83-90.

²⁴⁹ The temple of Castor on the Circus Flaminius and the temple of Veiovis (on the Capitol) apparently had this unusual layout as well, *Vitr.* 4.8.4: [...] *Nemori Dianae columnis adiectis dextra ac sinistra ad umeros pronai. [...] ex is omnia quae solent esse in frontibus, ad latera sunt translata.*

type from one sight point, but given the very fragmentary state of the evidence at this moment – even the location of the entrance in this building phase is uncertain – this seems rather premature.²⁵⁰ Also, it seems unlikely that Vitruvius would include a temple in this category that by his time had long been rebuilt and was orientated differently. So, either Vitruvius was wrong in labelling the temple in Nemi as one with a transverse cella, or building K was not the main temple of the sanctuary. In the latter case, it has to be searched for elsewhere.

Before we however turn to possible solutions for this problem, we must briefly discuss the other elements of the sanctuary. Most visible today, are the walls and niches that surrounded the main terrace and can be dated to the late Republican monumental refurbishment of the sanctuary. The terrace measures approximately 250 by 200 metres and is supported on the side of the lake by a series of triangular niches. On the other (north east) side there is a high wall with circular niches that supports the terrace above; in front of this a colonnade of which some bases and columns remain. Also against this wall, are the so-called *celle donarie*: a set of covered rooms that have produced the rich amount of statuary that was mentioned above, and that was of both votive and honorary nature.²⁵¹ A small theatre, first built in the first century BC and already mentioned as the site of the possible reinterpretation of the duel of the *rex Nemorensis*, was excavated in the early 20th century but is at the moment covered by the buildings and grounds of a modern farmhouse.²⁵² Finally, adjoining the theatre, part of a small thermal complex has been identified, as well as rooms that possibly housed *sacerdotes* and visitors of the sanctuary.²⁵³

With the late Republican terracing, the colonnade and the theatre, the sanctuary has many of the characteristics of the standard monumental Latial sanctuary and indeed it has been included in the typology by Filippo Coarelli.²⁵⁴ There are, however, some notable discrepancies: the theatre, the baths and the housing facilities have a different orientation than the rest of the buildings and, being outside the walls and porticos, they do not seem to be included in the area of the *temenos*. Although the landscape has obviously been altered (by the construction of terraces) to provide a

²⁵⁰ Ghini (2012c) 275.

²⁵¹ See for the sculpture, pages 65-66. Due to the undocumented and very uncertain finding conditions it is hard to establish the context of these finds, but there is a reasonable suggestion that at least part of the material was not found in situ but deposited in a later stage, either in antiquity or later, as a destiny for a lime kiln: Guldager Bilde (2000) 101. Remarkable for example, is the fact that many of the architectural decorations were found in the votive rooms, apparently preserved there after a rebuilding of the temple in the first century BC. The mixed display of honorary portraits and cultic statues in several rooms is also significant, but this seems an original characteristic of the sanctuary layout, rather than the result of later deposition.

²⁵² These excavations are published in Morpurgo (1931) 237-305. See further: Poulsen (1941) 1-52, Ghini (1993) 280-281

²⁵³ Published along with the theatre in: Morpurgo (1931) 237-305.

²⁵⁴ Coarelli (1987) 165-185.

scenic background for the sanctuary, building K is not at the centre of this arrangement and, moreover, is positioned not at the highest but almost at the lowest point of the slope.

Earlier, we have been warned against using the model of the monumental Latial sanctuary as a prescriptive rather than a descriptive tool, and this might seem reason enough to accept the somewhat unusual layout of Diana Nemorensis' sanctuary as one of the many idiosyncracies that existed within this category of Latial sanctuaries.²⁵⁵ Yet, there still is the problem of Vitruvius' description that does not match the excavated remains on the site. To solve the inconsistencies, Coarelli – and others before and after him – has proposed that the main temple of Diana Nemorensis was not building K but was located higher on the slope, on the upper terrace overlooking the other buildings.²⁵⁶ Excavations since 2003 have indeed brought forward substantial Roman remains on this terrace, but nothing that resembled a temple, let alone one with a transverse *cella* (figure 2.3). Instead, a monumental nymphaeum was excavated, which was probably connected to a natural spring and is consequently – but hypothetically – interpreted as a place of worship for the nymph Egeria.²⁵⁷ The nymphaeum itself is very big and extends over two terraces. It can be dated to the first century AD, and was the refurbishment of an already existing cistern from the first century BC. It was richly decorated, with a monumental façade on the first terrace and a basin in the form of a *cavea* on the second.

In their publications of the finds, the excavators have attributed the monumental fountain on the basis of the bricks and decoration used to the Julio-Claudian age, more specifically to the reign of Caligula.²⁵⁸ This would be another proof of the emperor actively interfering in the sanctuary of Diana Nemorensis. We already saw his involvement with the ritual of the *rex Nemorensis*, and his presence at lake Nemi is further confirmed by the famous luxury ships that were lifted from the bottom of the lake in the 1920s, only to be destroyed by fire in the final stages of the second world war.²⁵⁹ In recent years, the connection between Nemi and Caligula has become even stronger, with the discovery of a larger than life statue of an emperor, wearing typical soldiers boots and seated on an elaborately decorated throne (figure 2.4).²⁶⁰ Although much of the body is missing, the figure was quickly identified as Caligula: the archaeological remains of the find spot (on the south east side of

²⁵⁵ See the Introduction, pages 29-31.

²⁵⁶ Coarelli (1987) 172-173, with earlier bibliography. Other scholars who have assumed that the main temple was on another – higher – terrace: Pairault (1969) 448-452, Blagg (1986) 216, Rous (2010) 190, who calls it a plausible theory.

²⁵⁷ Ghini and Diosono (2013) 234, De Mincis (2013) 235-247.

²⁵⁸ Diosono, Romagnoli and Batocchioni (2012) 285-289, Diosono and Ghini (2013) 35-41, Ghini and Diosono (2013) 231-236.

²⁵⁹ For an introduction of the history of the ships, see: Ghini (1992), Bonino (2003). The ships are attributed to Caligula on the basis of lead pipes that were inscribed with his name (*C. CAESARIS AUG. GERMANIC*) and that also prove the presence of plumbing and running hot water on the ships.

²⁶⁰ The stylistic elements of the statue are described in: Ghini (2012c) 279-288.

the lake) consequently were assumed to be a plausible location for the palace of the *princeps* that was long hypothesized there.²⁶¹

The reasoning has somewhat of a circular character, since the ships are the only finds that can be attributed to Caligula with some degree of certainty. At the present state of research, the statue, imperial villa and monumental nymphaeum cannot be dated to the *princeps'* reign specifically, and with one hypothesis building on the next, the verifiable basis of Caligula's presence at the lake is actually quite weak. At the same time, it is at least clear that the first century AD was a period of great activity for the sanctuary, which underwent big changes and was further monumentalized. The involvement of the Julio-Claudian dynasty in this process would not be out of the ordinary, and since we already have multiple references to Caligula in the literary sources and in the epigraphic record (which we will discuss further ahead), he may very well be our best candidate. In any case, within this context of prosperity and renewed attention, endorsed by the involvement of the imperial family, it is conceivable that the stories around Diana's sanctuary were re-emphasized and reformulated, and thus gained new meanings.

For now, we must conclude our analysis of the archaeological record with a few of the most recent and exciting finds on the upper terrace of the sanctuary. Here, in 2009, a square structure with low walls was found with a clearing in the middle that was tiled with pieces of brick (figures 2.3 and 2.5).²⁶² It was located next to stairs that led up from the location of the votive cells and connected both terraces. Behind the square structure, there is a rock-strewn area with materials dating from the late Bronze age, apparently untouched by later monumentalization of the sanctuary. The square brick walls are difficult to date and even more difficult to interpret, but this has not prevented the excavators and other commentators from drawing a rather striking conclusion: the square structure would be the base of the sacred tree of the *rex Nemorensis* and the rock-strewn area a reminiscence of the *lucus* that was the religious focus and the very beginning of the site. Further analysis is eagerly awaited, but at present there seems to be good reason for caution in the interpretation of these remains. Even if they prove to be the base of an actual tree – which to me seems hard to believe in the first place, considering the tiles bricks that would prevent any roots from growing inside – and some sort of *lucus*, these are not straightforward testimonies of the existence of the *rex Nemorensis*.²⁶³ We would be skipping at least one important step: what we

²⁶¹ See, on the presence of the emperor at the lake: Ghini and Diosono (2013) 231-236.

²⁶² Diosono and Ghini (2013) 41, Diosono (2013) 81-82. The square structure has not been precisely dated by the excavators, but they claim the walls are in *opus quasi reticulatum*, which would date them to the late Republic. A quite devastating modern reconstruction however makes the analysis – and any personal observations – of the structure even more difficult.

²⁶³ It has been suggested that the tree was ceremonially placed there and removed again after the rites, which would make it a sort of *bonsai avant la lettre*. Ghini and Diosono (2012) 135.

primarily would see is the conscious choice of an individual or a group to commemorate the tradition of the priest king and the *lucus* and to inscribe it in the landscape. This would constitute a significant memorial practice, in a society that was well aware of the ancient roots of Diana's cult and actively promoted them. But again, on the basis of the square structure alone, this scenario is not very likely.

2.8 Images old and new

While the excavations in Nemi continue and many questions remain open, the archaeological remains of Diana's temple have attracted much scholarly attention. Not only because of Frazer, his *rex* and the possible connection with Rome's archaic past, but also because of the remarkable amount of statuary that the excavations have produced. The bulk of these finds was, as we have already discussed, discovered in the so-called *celle donarie* in the centre of the colonnade of the lower terrace. The most elaborate of these rooms seems to have been the *ala* of Servilius Quartus, which was decorated in the late Republic with a mosaic floor that had an inscription in a *tabula ansata* that devoted all the things that were in the room to Diana.²⁶⁴ A few decades later, in the Claudian period, the room was redecorated to display the honorific statues and herm portraits of the so-called Fundilia group, named after the local *patrona* Fundilia Rufa.²⁶⁵ Apart from her life size statue, there is a herm with Fundilia's portrait and a statue of her *libertus*, C. Fundilius Doctus, who erected the sculptures of both Fundilia and himself. Furthermore, the room revealed a statue of a local magistrate and several portrait herms, of which two *libertae* and one *rhetor* can be identified with certainty.²⁶⁶

The display of public sculptures in a votive room dedicated to Diana is remarkable, and many questions remain about the position of Fundilia's group in the sanctuary and its relation to the cult practice. The hasty excavation of its context has done little to solve these problems, nor does the fact that the statuary is now spread over three museums. I will discuss the social status of some of the public figures later on in this chapter, but the artistic and technical characteristics of the statues themselves have been discussed and described many times, and are of little interest for our current discussion of Diana Nemorensis. I therefore gladly refer to the earlier studies on the subject, such as the overviews by Mette Moltese and Pia Guldager and the excellent discussion in

²⁶⁴ CIL XIV 4183: *M(arcus) Servilius Quartus alam expolit et [3] / et quae intus posita sunt Dia[nae]*.

²⁶⁵ Guldager Bilde (2000) 101 and earlier interpreters have dated the statues to the Tiberian age, based on the hairstyles that resemble the courtly hairstyles of that period. Fejfer (2008) 285-290 however, points out that the sharp lines and asymmetry in the elderly faces are not in line with the idealistic values of the early Julio-Claudian period and seem more fitting for the later Claudian age.

²⁶⁶ Because of the accompanying inscriptions. The *rhetor*: CIL XIV 4102: *Q(uintus) Hostius Q(uinti) f(ilius) Capito / rhetor*. For the *libertae*, see page 72.

Jane Fejfers study on Roman portrait statues.²⁶⁷ Among the rest of the sculptures found in the sanctuary, it is not surprising that images of Diana occur most frequently. Still, the finds confirm the presence of a number of other gods and goddesses as well, like Bacchus, Apollo and Venus, of which it is uncertain whether they had a decorative function only or were 'visiting deities' of some religious importance.²⁶⁸ In lack of epigraphic or literary evidence for cult activity for these deities, we can only hope that further investigation of the terraces of the sanctuary (were most of the sculpture was found) brings forward more of the architectural context of the finds.

Part of the sanctuary probably had a strong Egyptian connection, as we know of figurines of Bes and Harpocrates that were found at the site, along with a small ivory head of Isis and a fragment of a marble frieze (dated to the first century AD) with a Nilotic scene of two playing pygmies and a crocodile.²⁶⁹ It is likely that this decoration was connected to the worship of Isis and Bubastis, who – according to a treasury inscription excavated in the theatre area – had a *fanum* on the sanctuary grounds and received rich gifts there.²⁷⁰ While the relation between Diana Nemorensis and Isis remains unclear – some have suggested syncretism on the basis of their common interest in the workings of the moon – it seems clear the Egyptian gods were part of the cultic activity on the sanctuary grounds.²⁷¹ At the same time, we must realise that the sanctuary may have displayed a sculptural programme that does not fit our distinction between 'decorative and 'religious' imagery as neatly as we would like.

For this moment, we will concentrate on the portrayals of Diana herself and look at the iconography of the goddess. Can we distinguish a distinctive appearance of Diana Nemorensis, one that sets her apart from Diana's with other epithets elsewhere? Looking at representations of the goddess that were found at the sanctuary, in the form of statuettes, terracotta's and a bronze figurine, this does not seem noticeable. From the earliest evidence – votive images in the third century BC – onwards, Diana is clearly depicted as the huntress: a young woman wearing a *chiton*, a cloak wrapped around her waist and sometimes carrying a bough, a quiver or both.²⁷² She is occasionally accompanied by a hunting dog, and at other times by a deer or a stag.²⁷³ Also notable are the statuettes in which Diana's hair is styled with a characteristic bow knot on top of her head:

²⁶⁷ Moltesen (1997a) 141-146, Guldager Bilde (2000) 93-110, Fejfer (2008) 285-307. For Fundilia, see also: Murer (2013) cat. nr. 18.

²⁶⁸ Guldager Bilde (2000) 103-104.

²⁶⁹ Guldager Bilde (2009) 262-264; Bald Romano (2013) 255-256. For the dating of the Nilotic frieze: Versluys (2002) 456.

²⁷⁰ CIL XIV 2215. For further discussion, see: Leone (2000) 31.

²⁷¹ See especially: Moltesen (2009) 345-368.

²⁷² Simon and Bauchhens (1984) 792-855, Moltesen (1997a) 154-157, 157-164, Guldager Bilde (2000) 103, Guldager Bilde and Moltesen (2002) 24ff, Green (2007) 76-81.

²⁷³ For example: Blagg (1983) 48 no 67.

the hair is tied in two loops, a string of hair in the middle ties the knot, and bundles of locks lead towards it (figure 2.6).²⁷⁴

Interestingly enough, some of the Republican antefixes – dated to the second century BC – show a female head with a bow knot and thus may be recognized as representations of Diana as well.²⁷⁵ Somewhat harder to identify, are the two larger than life-size marble acrolithic heads of late Republican date that have been found in the most southern votive room (figures 2.7 and 2.8).²⁷⁶ Because of their size, the quality of the marble and the find context, they have been identified as cult-statues of Diana, but the iconography of the heads does not confirm this with complete certainty. Both heads exhibit a mature character, and their faces have been described as queenly or maternal.²⁷⁷ As such, they are rather different from the young and fierce posture that we know from the smaller statuettes. One of the acroliths, although the back of the head is severely damaged, does seem to have the a coiffure that closely resembles the bow knot that is so characteristic for earlier Diana images.²⁷⁸ Besides, it might be entirely possible that the late Republican statues carried a bough or a quiver that distinguished them as Diana in her hunter guise, but from the remaining heads we cannot tell.

Aside from these uncertainties, it is clear that from the earliest depictions onwards until Imperial times, the young female hunter was the most widely used representation of Diana in her sanctuary at Nemi. The association was reinforced by the terracotta building decorations of the different temple phases, in which multiple boughs and quivers appear.²⁷⁹ It is clear that by the fourth century BC, when she becomes recognisable as an anthropomorphic figure, Diana had appropriated the visual image of Artemis, the Greek goddess of hunting. This iconographic syncretism is by no means unique for Nemi: as early as the sixth century BC it had taken place all over Latium, and a possible depiction of the archaic statue of Diana on the Aventine shows the goddess in her hunting guise as well.²⁸⁰ For the Nemi representations, the bow knot may have been a distinctive

²⁷⁴ Such as: Blagg (1983) 50 no 178, Simon and Bauchhens (1984) no 216.

²⁷⁵ Morpurgo (1903) 317-318, Guldager Bilde and Moltesen (2002) 25.

²⁷⁶ Morpurgo (1903) 318, Guldager Bilde (2000) 103-104, fig. 6, Blagg (1983) 31-37. The largest one (figure 2.7), which is about 48 cm in height, is now in the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania (cat. no. MS3483), a slightly smaller one (figure 2.8) is kept in the Glyptothek in Copenhagen (cat. no. 1517). Both heads were found during the 1895 excavation campaign, probably in the same room and in a secondary context, although the unclear excavation rapport leaves room for doubt. Guldager Bilde (2000) 99-100, Guldager Bilde and Moltesen (2002) 19.

²⁷⁷ Guldager Bilde (1995) 191-217, Green (2007) 80.

²⁷⁸ Guldager Bilde (1995) 201-212

²⁷⁹ Känel (2000) 133-136.

²⁸⁰ Malaspina (1994-1995) 15-36. The image is presented on a coin: RRC 448.3. For discussion see: Simon and Bauchhens (1984) no 223, Ampolo (1970) 200-201. The latter suggests that the coin represented the cult statue copied from the Artemis temple at Massilia (cf. Strab. 4.1.5), which was built in the sixth century BC. He uses this to suggest a sixth century dating for the statue in Rome as well, and assumes that the temple for Diana in

feature, since it appears on several of the archaic and Republican heads, but the lack of material does not allow for any definitive conclusions. All in all, we have not been able to establish a distinct image of Diana Nemorensis so far, one that was either older than or different from other Artemis and Diana representations of the time.

The perspective changes, however, when we shift our attention away from the sanctuary finds and take into account numismatic sources as well. Andreas Alföldi, in an influential article from 1960, suggestively argued that an illustration of the original archaic statue of Diana Nemorensis may be found on the reverse of a denarius, issued in 43 BC by the *quattorvir monetalis* P. Accoleius Lariscolus (figure 2.9).²⁸¹ The coin image had previously been identified as three Querquetulanae, nymphs of the oak groves, but Alföldi identified the depicted trees as a grove of pines. Furthermore, he established Aricia as the *origo* of the moneyer Accoleius, by relating the name to inscriptions of local Accoleii found at the sanctuary.²⁸² The triple cult statue in the front of the picture, he then recognized as the original archaic statue of Nemorensis. It shows three representations of the goddess standing side-by-side and connected by a bar at shoulder level. The figure at the right holds a bow in her right hand and that at the left holds a flower in her left. The figure at the right wears a *chiton*; the other two seem to wear a *peplos*. There are three dies of the obverse with three different archaistic heads and different hairstyles: each coin is thought to have represented one of the heads of the triple statue.²⁸³

Alföldi suggested that the triple image represented Diana Nemorensis in her appearance as Diana Trivia: the connected deities being Diana the huntress, Selene the moon goddess and Hecate, the goddess of the underworld. The connection of the three deities finds parallels in the Greek world, but the maker of the cult statue was – according to Alföldi’s interpretation – more likely trained in the artistic language of the Etruscans, making the representation a local tradition.²⁸⁴ If we follow Alföldi’s interpretation, the representation on the coin gives us an idea of the original cult image from the sixth century BC, which was already present in the *lucus* before the first temple and was the real focus point of the Latin alliances in pre-Roman times. In 43 BC it still stood, as a valuable relic of the past. The presence of the time-old image, in Alföldi’s view proved that the cult

Rome must be dated to this early age as well. The argument seems tenuous at best, if only because the copy (if the image on the coin indeed represents a copy) could have been made long after the supposed original.

²⁸¹ RRC 468.1-3. Alföldi (1960) 137-144. The coin is also analysed in detail by Beard, North and Price (1998) 15.

²⁸² CIL XIV 4196: *M(arcus) Iulius M(arci) f(ilius) M(arcus) Accoleius M(arci) f(ilius) aed(iles) d(e) s(enatus) s(ententia)*; CIL XIV 4197: *L(ucius) Pontius [3] / Q(uintus) Petreiu[s] 3] / C(aius) Pupiliu[s] 3] / M(arcus) Luvca[i]3] / L(ucius) Acculei[us] 3] / L(ucius) Veciliu[s]*. These are the only Accoleii we know of, so the *gens* seems to have been fairly small.

²⁸³ Alföldi (1960) 137-138, where he argues that the different obverses of RRC 468 represent a deliberate choice of the moneyer in charge of the design. – in contrast with the reverse, which was becoming cruder because the design was too complicated for the average die-cutter.

²⁸⁴ Alföldi (1960) 142.

at lake Nemi was long established before the (re-)dedication of the *lucus* in the Cato fragment took place. It also meant that the cult practice preceded that of the Aventine Diana in Rome.

The identification of the triple statue on the *denarii* of Accoleius Lariscolus as a representation of Diana Nemorensis – as Diana Trivia – has found general acclaim, and many scholars have also followed Alföldi in his suggestion that the coin presents a genuine archaic image.²⁸⁵ In support of that theory, Poul Jørgen Riis suggested that a bronze head from the fifth century BC, found in the town of Aricia, was one part of the original triple statue (figure 2.10).²⁸⁶ A marble head from the early Imperial age, found on the sanctuary site, was interpreted by Enrico Paribeni as a copy of such an archaic image of Diana Trivia as well (figure 2.11).²⁸⁷ Strikingly, the hairstyle of both the bronze and the marble head very closely resembles the bust on the obverse of the Accoleius coin and so the parallels strengthen the idea of the continuity of an archaic statue type. Finally, somewhat more arguable, Filippo Coarelli suggested that the unusual triangular form of some of the Diana antefixes from the second century BC alluded to this archaic image of Diana Trivia as well.²⁸⁸

Whereas the presence of a triple statue of Diana at Nemi was widely agreed upon, Alföldi's further analysis was not. We already discussed the view of Arnaldo Momigliano, who insisted that the beginning of the Diana worship in the region was on the Aventine in Rome, and thus concluded that the statue at Nemi could not have preceded the reign of Servius Tullius.²⁸⁹ Others, most notably Mark Fullerton, have maintained that the image copied on the coin was not an archaic but an archaizing statue, which cannot be dated earlier than the second quarter of the first century BC and was modelled after archaizing trends from the Hellenistic world that took root in the late Republic.²⁹⁰ Still, even when the statue was made to feign an archaic image of Diana rather than actually being one, the allusion to the early history of the cult of Diana Nemorensis is in my opinion very significant. Admittedly, the archaic and archaistic appearances of Diana Trivia are highly outnumbered by the images that present Diana as a hunting deity, but the triple goddess does seem to be an appearance that was that of Diana Nemorensis alone. When the moneyer P. Accoleius Lariscolus depicted the triple statue on his coin issues, he used the old and venerable connotation of

²⁸⁵ Most influentially: Crawford (1975) 497, no 468.1-3. See further: Paribeni (1961) 55-56, Riis (1966) 67-75, Pairault (1969) 450-470, Blagg (1986) 212, Beard, North and Price (1998) 15, Farney (2007) 267-268, cat. no. E33.

²⁸⁶ Riis (1966) 67-75.

²⁸⁷ The head was found during the excavation of the theatre in the 1920's and is now in the collections of the Museo Nazionale Romano. Morpurgo (1931) 259, fig. VI, Paribeni (1961) 55-56, Simon and Bauchhenss (1984) no. 106.

²⁸⁸ Coarelli (1987) 169. See note 275.

²⁸⁹ Momigliano (1966) 641-648. See pages 55-57 of this chapter.

²⁹⁰ Fullerton (1990) 15-22, who argues that the coin types are modelled after the 'Alkamenean' archaistic hekateion, which was a popular reference point for sculptural archaism at the time and with which the triple statue shares a similar garment style.

the cult of Diana Nemorensis to promote his own *origo*. Whether the statue really was old or was an archaistic invention does not really matter, since it was the allusion to the past that gave the image – and therefore Lariscolus' *origo* – its authority. The reference to the religious past could thus be made into an asset in the competitive aristocratic society of Republican Rome, and – vice-versa – the tradition of Diana of Nemi was re-actualized and re-emphasized by the issue of the coin type and the circulation of the imagery on it. This example may perhaps be considered debatable, but we see the same phenomenon of *monetarii* using archaic images of their hometown deities in the next chapter on Juno Sospita.

2.9 Epigraphic testimonies

So far, we have observed that the various literary traditions around Diana Nemorensis have stimulated modern authors to speculate on her original nature, specific character and archaic history. The epigraphic record offers a new chance to confront this rich story world with the tangible reality of her cult practice at the lake. Overall, we know of about 60 inscriptions that can be connected to the sanctuary and its cult practice. More than half of them are votive plaques, which commemorate private dedications to Diana Nemorensis and sometimes to other deities as well.²⁹¹ Apart from these humble – and often fragmentary – testimonies of individual worshippers visiting the sanctuary, larger building inscriptions and honorary statue bases testify to the involvement of local communities, Roman generals and even the imperial family. As we have seen earlier in this chapter while discussing the archaeological remains of the temple and the iconography of the goddess, modern attempts to label the cult and create easy dichotomies are challenged by the variety of the material sources themselves. At the same time, some key patterns can be discerned and interestingly enough, some of the expressions of communicative memory that we have seen traces of earlier in this chapter are detectable in the epigraphic record as well.

From the time of the middle Republic onwards, inscriptions increasingly seem to be the medium of choice for addressing Diana, replacing the offering of anatomical and other votives.²⁹² This distinction should however not be taken too rigidly, since the earliest dedications are inscribed on crafted objects in bronze and stone, and were discovered in a deposit with non-inscribed votives as well. The oldest example is the arrowhead already mentioned, which bears the inscription *diana mereto / noutrix paperia* and dates from about 300 BC.²⁹³ It was quickly interpreted as an offering *pro*

²⁹¹ Such as the inscription for Isis and Bubastis (CIL XIV 2215, see page 62).

²⁹² This is a phenomenon that is observable in all of Latium and Italy: Schultz (2006a) 100-102 although at Nemi the practice of offering votive materials seems to have continued relatively long in comparison to other Latin cult sites. Rous (2010) 221.

²⁹³ CIL I² 45.

lacte and consequently as a proof of Diana's guardianship over women.²⁹⁴ A small bronze plaque, found in the same deposit and datable to the early second century BC, might support this notion: it refers to a woman who bestowed a little statue to Diana on behalf of her son.²⁹⁵ The other inscriptions from the third and second centuries BC however, lack this feminine interest: some do not mention the dedicant's name, the others are from men. Ovios Scarbenios for example, devoted a small *simpulum* (a libation ladle), Cn. Arbusseius Bas(s)sus and L. Lucretius Sedulus dedicated a small statuette to the goddess and a bigger one was donated by Marcus Livios, possibly a local praetor.²⁹⁶

When we look at the later votive plaques and statue bases, it is clear that the notion of Diana as a goddess who was only, or mainly, worshipped by women cannot be upheld. Within the surviving corpus of private dedications, only a few women appear. Aerentia, daughter of Lucius, devoted a small statue with inscribed bronze plaque to Diana in the early first century AD.²⁹⁷ Two women acted as part of a couple. First, there is Lania Thyonoe, wife of the Roman baker P. Cornelius Trophimus, who in 100 AD made a dedication to Diana Nemorensis Vesta.²⁹⁸ On the basis of this inscription, Frazer has suggested that Vesta appeared here as an otherwise unknown epithet for Diana, but it seems more likely that the baker chose to honour Diana together with the patron goddess of his profession.²⁹⁹ The other woman to appear together with her husband is Vargunteia Nais, wife of L. Curius Eutrapelus, whose dedication to Diana from the second century AD is not entirely certain because it is formulated in an abridged formula that is difficult to interpret.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁴ The inscription was linked in modern literature to an un-inscribed bronze breast found in the same deposit, but there is no indication that the finds were donated at the same time or were otherwise related – no more than the other inscriptions and votives were related to each other. Holland (2008) 99-100. That the arrowhead and the breast formed a pair was first stated in the CIL by Mommsen, and then repeated by Degraasi in ILLRP 81 and by Dessau in ILS 3235. Diana as a women's goddess: see note 198.

²⁹⁵ CIL I² 42: *Poublilia Turpilia Cn. uxor / hocce seignum pro Cn. filiod / Dianai donum dedit*. The woman dedicated the *signum* for (the health or birth of) her son, here without a full name and thus possibly a newborn. See: Hänninen (2000) 47, Schultz (2006a) 104.

²⁹⁶ *Simpulum*: CIL XIV 4122.1: *Ov(ius) Scarbenio(s) C(ai) l(ibertus)*; statuette, inscription on small base, inscribed on three sides with two names.: *Cn(aeus) Arbusse(ius) Cn(aei) f(ilius) Dianae / d(onum) d(edit) l(ibens) m(erito) / Bas(s)us / L(ucius) Lucreti(us) / L(uci) f(ilius) Sedulus / Dianae d(onum) d(edit) / l(ibens) m(erito)*. Bigger statue, inscription on base of approximately 60x60x45 cm: CIL XIV 4182a: *Diana / M(arcus) Livio(s) M(arci) f(ilius) / pra-e-i-tor dedit*. Mommsen states that Marcus Livios was probably a local magistrate. See further: Granino Cecere (2000) 35, 42.

²⁹⁷ CIL XIV 4182: *Aerentia / L(uci) f(ilia) / Dianae sacr(um) / d(onum) d(edit) l(ibens) m(erito)*.

²⁹⁸ CIL XIV 2213: *Dianae / Nemore(n)si Vestae / sacrum Dict(atore) / imp(eratori) Nervae Traiano Aug(usto) / Germanico III co(n)s(uli), praef(ecto) / eius T(ito) Voltedio Mamiliano, / quaestorib(us) / L(ucio) Caecilio Urso II, M(arco) Lucretio / Sabino II, aedilib(us) Q(uinto) Vibenna Quieto, Ti(berio) Claudio Magno / P(ublius) Cornelius Trophimus pistor / Romaniensis ex reg(ione) XIII idem cur(ator) / vici Quadrati et Lania C(aii) f(iliae) Thyonoe coniux / eius votum libens solverunt*. The couple came from the fourteenth regio of Rome, in which there was a vicus Quadratus (see CIL VI 975), of which the man apparently was a *curator*.

²⁹⁹ Frazer (1911) 13, who even proposes the presence of a perpetual fire in Diana's temple. For the reference to Vesta as a baker's goddess: Hänninen (2000) 47, 50. For the title of *dictator*, see below, pages 77-78).

³⁰⁰ CIL XIV 2214: *L Curius Eutrapelus Vargunteia Nais V S D N E R I M*. In the CIL, Detlefsen (after an older transcription) reads: *L(ucius) Curius Eutrapelus Vargunteia Nais v(otum) s(olverunt) D(ianae) N(emorensi) E R I M*. The meaning of the last letters is insecure and the inscription was already lost by the time it was presented in the

In an honorary context, inscriptions belonging to the herms and statues discussed above testify to the activity of Fundilia, who was acting both as benefactress and as beneficiary. Furthermore, Volusia Cornelia, a lady of senatorial rank, seems to have been involved in a restoration of the theatre and some water works (perhaps baths), since her name appears on a building inscription and on lead pipes.³⁰¹ In general, these inscriptions show that women were involved in the development and daily worship at the sanctuary, but their number is limited and there is no mention of gender-specific issues like motherhood or fertility. What we have earlier established while discussing the literary sources and anatomical votives, can apply to the epigraphic record as well: the categorization of Diana Nemorensis as a women's goddess who was visited mainly by female worshippers and for female reasons, is largely a modern construct that is not supported by the gender diversity of the ancient material.

With regard to the social background of the worshippers, a similarly divergent picture emerges. Modern scholars, like Robert Schilling and more recently Carin Green and Lora Holland, have proposed that the cult at Nemi held a special attraction to slaves or former slaves, who might have found some self-identification in the rite of the *rex Nemorensis* and visited the sanctuary to offer thanks for their freedom.³⁰² In light of the literary tradition, which connected Diana's cult on the Aventine specifically with slaves and servitude, and the established parallels between Diana Nemorensis and Diana Aventinensis, one might expect that this patronage would be reflected in the remaining traces of the cult practice at lake Nemi. Certainly, there are several *liberti* present in the epigraphic record, Fundilia's freedman C. Fundilius Doctus probably being the most prominent one. He identifies himself as an actor and was probably active in the theatre on the site.³⁰³ Two other herms found in the *ala* of Servilius Quartus are identified by their inscriptions as the portraits of female *libertae* and the man who a few decades earlier devoted the room to Diana was possibly – since no filiation is given in his name – a freedman as well.³⁰⁴ The list of probable *liberti* continues with the Roman baker just mentioned – whose wife appears with a filiation in their votive

CIL, which makes interpretation difficult. The same couple devoted an inscription to Latona (XIV 2157), found in Aricia. See: Hänninen (2000) 47.

³⁰¹ Building inscription: AE (1932) 68: *Volusia Q(uinti) filia) Cornelia theatrum / vetustate corruptum restituit et excoluit*. The lady must be the daughter of Q. Volusius Saturninus, consul of 56 AD or the granddaughter of the consul (12 BC) of the same name: Raepsaet-Charlier (1987) 365). Lead pipes: Coarelli (1987) 182-183.

³⁰² Schilling (1964) 650-667, Green (2007) 185-207, Holland (2008) 95-115.

³⁰³ CIL XIV 4273, on the base of his statue: *C(aius) Fundilius Doctus Apollinis parasit(us) // C(aius) Fundilius / Doctus / Apollinis / parasitus*. The name is in the nominative case, which suggests Fundilius raised the statue for himself. As a *parasitus* of Apollo, the man was an actor and a stock character in ancient comedy. Guilds of these actors are known through several inscriptions. Fejfer (2008) 286.

³⁰⁴ *Libertae*: CIL XIV 4202: *Liciniae Chrysarioni / M(arcus) Bolanus Canusaeus / h(onoris?) c(ausa?) D(ianae?) N(emorensi?) s(acrum?) / Liciniae Chrysarioni / M. Bolanus Canusaeus / h(onoris) c(ausa) d(edicavit) n(epti) s(uae)*; CIL 4203: *Staia L(ucii) L(iberta) Quinta*. Servilius Quartus: CIL 4183: *M(arcus) Servilius Quartus alam expolit et [3] / et quae intus posita sunt Dia[nae]*.

inscription while he does not – and the couple L. Curius Eutrapelus and Vargunteia Nais, whose Greek *cognomina* may reveal a servile background.³⁰⁵ The status of the oldest reference to a possible freedwoman is insecure: the *nutrix* who offered the arrowhead may have been a wet-nurse for the *gens* Papiria, who was given freedom in reward for her services, but she may have been a slave of the family as well – the nomenclature for *liberti* was not yet fully developed in the Middle Republic.³⁰⁶ Finally, a peperino plaque from the late second century AD demonstrates the presence of *tibicines* and *fidicines* (flute- and lute-players) and *magistri* on the sanctuary grounds.³⁰⁷ The musicians were probably united in one *collegium* and accompanied the ritual proceedings for Diana Nemorensis. That they too were *liberti* (or perhaps even slaves) is likely, as it is in the case of the *magistri*, the members of cult personnel – perhaps involved with the daily maintenance of the site – who donated the plaque.³⁰⁸ All in all, it is clear that former slaves form a substantial group in our corpus of inscriptions.

At the same time, however, we have seen in the introduction that freedmen are well (or over-) represented in inscriptions from all over Italy, a group specific preference for epigraphic representation that was far from limited to the cult at lake Nemi.³⁰⁹ In none of the Nemi inscriptions, the act of manumission is specified as such and there is no indication that the dedications and donations of *liberti* were specifically connected to that change of status, as some scholars have suggested.³¹⁰ The traces of their presence have provided a number of interesting insights into the functioning of the sanctuary, such as the presence of actors and *collegia* of musicians, but they do not characterize Diana as a goddess for slaves or freedmen. In fact, local and Roman aristocrats left their marks as well, and with the presence of several Imperial dynasties (discussed below), it becomes clear that the highest ranks in Roman society affiliated themselves with Diana Nemorensis just as gladly as freedmen did.

³⁰⁵ That the baker was a freedman is supported by his title of *curator vici*, which probably stands for the office of *vicomagister*. After the urban reorganization of Augustus, there were four *vicomagistri* in each newly instituted *vicus*, where they had administrative as well as religious functions, such as taking care of the shrines of the *lares compitales* and the *genius Augusti*. From the epigraphic evidence available from Rome, we know that these offices were typically held by rich freedmen. See: Rüpke (2005) 928 and Rüpke (1998) 27–44.

³⁰⁶ Schultz (2006a) 55, Holland (2008) 101–106.

³⁰⁷ AE (2007) 307: *D(onom) d(ant) tibi(cines), fidi(cines). / Mag(istri) coerave(runt); / [-] Caili(us) P. l. / [-] Sexstili(us) Sext. l. / [- - -] + l. / - - - -*. See for the first thorough discussion of the plaque: Granino Cecere (2000) 37 and fig. 2, who dates the inscription to the late second century BC. There is a parallel in Praeneste: CIL I 3070. For the *collegia* of *tibicines* and *fidicines* in general, see Rüpke (2005) 28–29.

³⁰⁸ As we know from comparable evidence from other cult sites. See, for the *magistri* and *magistrae* as paid cult personnel: Schultz (2006a) 70–72, Gaspar (2012) 142–147, Hemelrijk (2015) 89–90, notes 174–175.

³⁰⁹ Mouritsen (2005) 38–63. See pages 28–29 of the introduction.

³¹⁰ Holland (2008) 111 refers to metal collars – mostly of Imperial date – that were found at Nemi and are now preserved at the Museo di Villa Giulia in Rome. According to her, this could be slave chains that were offered by *liberti* as relics of their awarded freedom. From my personal observation of the collars however, it is clear that this theory makes little sense, as they are far too small for human heads and too large for human wrists.

Once again, establishing a primary character for Diana seems impossible and contradictory to the variety in both the literary material and the literary sources. Does this mean that any parallel between the literary tradition and the epigraphic record is bound to be misleading? Not necessarily. We have already seen that the tradition of the *rex Nemorensis* gains a new dimension in light of the archaeological remains of the theatre and the – apparently influential – actors that were active there. The individual donations inform us on the functioning of the sanctuary and its interactions with the local community, Rome and the bigger world around it. In a few cases, as we will see, these inscriptions testify to Diana’s worshippers actively engaging with the myths and memories of kingship and Latin leadership surrounding the cult site. Vice-versa, the inscriptions suggest that the memories themselves were influenced by the individuals and groups visiting the site.

2.10 Myths and memories inscribed

As we have discussed earlier, the first century BC was a time of great prosperity for the sanctuary of Diana Nemorensis: the sanctuary was significantly enlarged with the wealth from the Roman conquests in the east and cultic activity was booming. There are indications, however, that the conquests not only brought wealth to the sanctuary, but also had a decisive influence on the myths surrounding the rites. Two inscriptions from the first century BC may give us an insight into this changing story world. First, there is a bilingual statue base, donated by the Mysians living in Abbaitis and Epiktetos to the Roman *legatus* C. Sallvius Naso, because he had saved them during the war against Mithridates.³¹¹ We do not know Sallvius Naso from other sources, but his action was probably an early episode in the Third Mithridatic war (73 – 63 BC), when the Romans won a decisive victory in the land of the donors. A second inscription probably refers to this war as well: it is a now lost epistyle made of Travertine limestone that marks the erection of a building, possibly a temple, by a [...] Leicinius L. f. and a C. Voconius L. f.³¹² The latter figure we can identify as a member of the *gens* Voconia – a local family from Aricia – and he may have been the Voconius who, according to Plutarch, was an officer under the commander L. Licinius Lucullus in 73 BC.³¹³ So, at the the sanctuary grounds in Nemi we have at least one but perhaps two monuments recording Roman victories in the Third Mithridatic war. Why were these victories in the far east celebrated at Diana’s

³¹¹ CIL XIV 2218: *C(aio) Sallvio C(ai) f(ilio) Nasoni leg(ato) propr(aetore) / Mysei Ab[b]aitae et Epic[tete]s / quod eos bello Mithrida[tis] / conservavit virtutis ergo*. Granino Cecere (2000) 38.

³¹² CIL XIV 2222: *] Leicinius(!) L(uci) f(ilius) // [3] Voconius L(uci) f(ilius)*. The dating is supported by the use of Travertine as building material and the spelling of *Leicinius*. Coarelli (1987) 178.

³¹³ Plut. *Luc.* 13-15. Coarelli (1987) 178-179, Guldager Bilde (2003) 165-183. Licinius Lucullus was probably also involved in the monumentalization of the sanctuary of Juno Sospita, see pages 108ff of chapter III.

sanctuary on the shores of lake Nemi, not only by the commanding officers but also by the grateful Mysians of Abbaitis and Epiktetos?

According to Pia Guldager Bilde, the connection between Diana Nemorensis and the Third Mithridatic war does not need to surprise us: we know – through Plutarch – of at least two instances where an offer or vow to Artemis was of crucial help to the Romans in their war efforts, including one in which the local officer Voconius was involved.³¹⁴ As the goddess had been so helpful throughout the war, it would have made sense for the returning officers to express their gratitude to Artemis in a temple for Diana. For the communities from the east seeking to honour a local Latin commander, the context of the Diana sanctuary would be fitting as well. As we will also see further ahead – when discussing the sanctuary of Juno Sospita in Lanuvium – the local history of the Latin sanctuary at this point becomes intertwined with the larger political and military developments of the expanding Roman Empire. While local elites like Voconius may have sponsored the sanctuary of Diana Nemorensis out of commitment and pride for their hometown, it was the wealth coming from the Roman victories in the east that probably paid for the constructions.³¹⁵

Guldager Bilde goes one step further, however, and connects this Mithridatic history to the myths of bloodshed that surrounded the cult of Diana Nemorensis. As we have seen in the first section of this chapter, the violent succession of the *rex Nemorensis* is often presented in the literary sources as a barbaric and alien custom, a Scythian element that somehow persisted in the rites. It is Strabo who first presents the *aition* of the Latin cult being a copy from that of Artemis Tauropolis, who according to the famous Euripides play *Iphigenia in Tauris* required human sacrifices.³¹⁶ The play – which was based on an already existing narrative – was written around 412 BC, and was by Strabo's time (the late first century BC) well known over the entire Mediterranean.³¹⁷ But how did the myth of Iphigenia become an aetiological explanation specifically for the rites in Nemi? According to Guldager Bilde, the connection was not invented by Strabo himself, but originated in the aftermath of the Third Mithridatic war. The Artemis cults in the Black Sea region were, by the time the Romans conquered these lands and visited the temples, thoroughly influenced by the Tauropolos myth, both in their iconography and in their rituals.³¹⁸ When the victorious officers and appreciative communities after the wars expressed their gratitude to Artemis in the sanctuary of Diana at Nemi, they may have taken along Black Sea Artemis' association with the the human

³¹⁴ Voconius incident: Plut. *Luc.* 13.1-4; other incident: Plut. *Luc.* 24.4-7.

³¹⁵ For the first century monumentalization of the sanctuary of Juno Sospita, see page 105ff.

³¹⁶ Strab. 5.3.12; cf. (for the more developed version) Serv. *Ad Aen.* 6.136. See page 37ff and footnotes.

³¹⁷ The bloodthirsty Tauric goddess first appears in Herodotes (4.103). For discourse of human sacrifice in the Euripides play and beyond: O'Bryhim (2000) 29-37.

³¹⁸ Guldager Bilde (2003) 165-183. See as well: Guldager Bilde (2009) 303-332.

bloodshed of Artemis Tauropolis – which in turn would have become an aetiological explanation for the rite of the *rex Nemorensis*.

The line of reasoning is fairly thin, as Guldage Bilde rightfully admits, and in my opinion cannot serve as a final explanation for the violent element in Diana Nemorensis' mythology. Nevertheless, the inscriptions referring to the Third Mithridatic war prove that the Roman conquests not only brought wealth to Diana Nemorensis, but also brought her into contact with the Artemis cults of the east. There, the cult practice for the goddess had gradually become more closely associated with the bloodthirsty deity of Iphigenia in Tauris. And so, it is quite possible that the tradition of the violent rite at Nemi – however ancient or archaic it may have been – gained a new significance in the aftermath of the Third Mithridatic war.

There is a second instance where the epigraphic record may reveal an interaction with the literary discourse surrounding the mythical priest king of Nemi, and this time it is connected (albeit indirectly) to an emperor whom we have seen before in this chapter: Caligula. A curious building inscription offers insight into two moments of construction on the sanctuary grounds: it commemorates that the emperor Hadrian restored a *fanum* (a small temple, of which the location is unknown) that was originally built by a son of the Parthian royal family.³¹⁹ There has been a debate on the reconstruction of the inscription on the damaged epistyle and on the identity of the Parthian prince, but Mariette Horster – with Coarelli – assumes that it must be Darius, son of Arsabanus the third and a member of the Arsacides dynasty.³²⁰ He came to Rome under Tiberius and both Cassius Dio and Suetonius claim that Caligula liked to be accompanied by the young boy.³²¹ Allegedly, the *princeps* even let the boy sit next to him in his chariot when he drove his horses over the famous bridge at Baiae.³²² Fragments of *fistulae* that were found near the nymphaeum have the peculiar inscription *Darii Regis* and seem to refer to the same prince.³²³

If the reconstruction is right, it would be remarkable that the prince – who would of course never become king – named himself *rex*. Anna Leone, who has studied the presence of Darius at the sanctuary, thinks it plausible that Darius was inspired by the tradition of the *rex Nemorensis* that was

³¹⁹ CIL XIV 2216: [Imp(erator) Caesar divi Traiani Parthici filius divi] Nervae nepos Traianus / [Hadrianus Augustus pont(ifex) max(imus) trib]unic(ia) potest(ate) VI co(n)s(ul) III / [fanum(?) quod 3 Dareius regis regu]m Parthorum fil(ius) Arsacidis / [fecerat vetustate collapsu]m restituit.

³²⁰ The alternative reading of the inscription is: [Imp(erator) Caesar divi Traiani Parthici filius divi] Nervae nepos Traianus / [Hadrianus Augustus pont(ifex) max(imus) trib]unic(ia) potest(ate) VI co(n)s(ul) III / [fanum(?) quod 3 Phraatis(?) regis regu]m Parthorum fil(ius) Arsacides / [fecerat vetustate collapsu]m restituit. In this case, it would refer to the prince Phraates, a son of Phraates IV, hostage under Tiberius a few decades earlier. For the debate: Coarelli (1987) 82-83, Granino Cecere (2000) 39, Leone (2000) 29-30, Horster (2001) 258-259.

³²¹ Suet. Cal. 14.19; Cass. Dio 59.17.1-11.

³²² Suetonius has the boy even sitting in front of the emperor.

³²³ Morpurgo (1931) 280, who claims that five fragments of *fistulae* were found. There there is however no detailed transcription or drawing of the finds. Cf. Leone (2000) 32, note 3.

so closely connected to the sanctuary at Nemi.³²⁴ Caligula, in his turn, may have been amused by the boy claiming kingship in the domain of the *rex Nemorensis*, just as when he earlier had Darius share in his royal honour during his ride over the bridge at Baia. We have discussed Caligula's presence at the sanctuary before, and Suetonius confirms his connection to the tradition of the *rex Nemorensis*.³²⁵ While it remains uncertain whether the priest king held an actual office, was a staged character or was perhaps just a mythical figure, Leone's suggestion that Darius was in fact the reigning *rex Nemorensis* for a while cannot be proven. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the royal hostage engaged with the existing story of the king priest at Nemi to articulate and reinforce his position at the court of Caligula. Vice-versa, the tradition itself may have taken on a new dimension in the presence of Darius and his imperial patron.

As a final category in the discussion of the epigraphic material, the inscriptions of local magistrates and the community of Aricia must be mentioned. Apart from the dedications that came from distant communities and imperial elites, there are a number of epigraphic testimonies that can be connected directly to local concerns and developments. We already saw the local praetor Marcus Livios and the officer Voconius, who was a member from a Arician family as well. The people of Aricia acted as dedicators too, expressing gratitude to Diana but also honouring and thanking the emperors Hadrian and Vespasian, probably for restorations to the sanctuary.³²⁶ Most intriguing however, are the inscriptions in which a title appears that seems to be of a local high magistrate: the *dictator*. In the dedication of the baker Publius Cornelius Trophimus, the emperor Trajan is marked as a *dict[ator]* and this dedication is not unique: on a grave inscription that dates to the late first century BC or the early first century AD, a Cnaeus Dupilius, son of Cnaeus, is labelled as *dictat(or) Ariciae*.³²⁷

The appearance of this magistracy is especially remarkable, if we take into account the fragment of Cato discussed earlier.³²⁸ This piece of early Roman historiography mentions a ceremony at Nemi in which the presiding magistrate is described as a *dictator Latinus*. Could it be possible that the *dictator* of the Cato fragment, who was putatively dated to the pre-Roman history of the site, survived into imperial times and continued to perform some of his religious functions? In

³²⁴ Leone (2000) 29-34.

³²⁵ Suet. *Cal.* 35.3. See page 41ff.

³²⁶ Aricians expressing gratitude to Diana: CIL XIV 4195; to Hadrian: Eph. Epigr. IX 651; to Vespasian: CIL XIV 4191. The dedication from the Aricians to Vespasian probably belonged to a larger group of statues, in which his sons were probably honoured as well. Granino Cecere (2000) 35-44.

³²⁷ CIL XIV 2169: *Cn(aeus) Dupilius Cn(aei) f(iilius) / Hor(atia) tr(ibunus) mil(itum) in leg(ione) / flam(en) Mart(ialis) q(uaestor) aed(ilis) / dictat(or) Ariciae [...]*. The inscription was transcribed by Jacques Sirmond: *CIL I*², 9; *Antiquae inscriptionis, qua L. Scipionis Barbati F. expressum est elogium* (Paris 1617). Unfortunately, it has since then disappeared.

³²⁸ *Cat. Or. Fr.* 58 (Peter). See page 50ff.

the epitaph of Cnaeus Dupilius, his function of dictator is mentioned in a list of other magistracies and priesthoods, amongst which the *flamen Martialis* (another ancient priesthood) stands out. Other Latin towns had local *dictatores* as well, and considering the epigraphic evidence it seems clear that the function was in some way part of the local *cursus honorum*.³²⁹ Although many of these leading magistrates probably had religious duties, as we will also see in the next chapters on Juno Sospita and Jupiter Latiaris, the magistracy was presumably not purely religious in nature.³³⁰

So, while there is an obvious parallel between the inscriptions and early literary evidence like the Cato fragment, it is difficult to determine the exact nature of the dictatorship and the changes it underwent. The *dictatores* may have originated as Latin leaders in military alliances, coordinating – anti-Roman? – war efforts, and it seems plausible that these contacts were established and reaffirmed during religious festivals.³³¹ In later times, the dictatorship may have developed into a more ceremonial position that retained its prestige: the magistrate that held the office would therefore be the appropriate person to carry out important religious duties throughout the year. The hypothetical nature of this reconstruction cannot be emphasized enough, and it is entirely possible that some of the inscriptions reflect a (re)invention of cultic practices rather than a direct continuity.

In any case, the comparison between the literary and epigraphic evidence demonstrates an antiquarian interest in the cult of Diana Nemorensis that, quite possibly, had an influence on the ritual practice on the site. While the dictatorship may have been perceived as a curious form of nostalgia by some, it also served as a reminder of the bond between Nemi and the bigger Latin world around it, most notably in relation to Rome.³³² That the emperor Trajan himself was awarded the title of *dictator*, demonstrates that the position – that may have had an anti-Roman connotation in earlier history – was in fact fully integrated in the Roman religious landscape. In another instance, Beard North and Price have considered the preservation and reinterpretation of these religious forms in Latium as a case of constructive archaism, and this label seems very suitable for the dictatorship at Nemi as well.³³³ Just like we observed earlier with the *rex Nemorensis*, the origins of

³²⁹ Evidence of *dictatores* in Latium: Lanuvium: Cic. *Pro Mur.* 90.2-4; Cic. *Pro Mil.* 17.45; CIL I 1428; XIV 2097, 2110, 2121. Fidenae: CIL I 1709; XIV 4058. Tusculum: Liv. 3.18.2; CIL XIV 212. Nomentum: CIL XIV 3941, 3955; AE 1975 145. See further, chapter III, pages 135ff and chapter IV, pages 185ff.

³³⁰ In many of the aforementioned inscriptions, the dictatorship is part of a list of civil magistracies, which were part of the local *cursus honorum*. Distinguishing one of these functions as a purely religious affair, would be suggesting that there were strictly separated tasks for priests and magistrates. Such a dichotomy between the secular and the sacred cannot be maintained. Purcell (1983) 168.

³³¹ Smith (1996a) 216.

³³² Purcell (1983) 167-169.

³³³ Beard, North and Price (1998) 324. In this case, the rituals were centered around the cult of the Penates at Lavinium. Although there was no settlement there in the middle and late Republic, the renewed civic life from

the office of dictator at Aricia are hard – if not impossible – to trace, but we can see the memory of the function being accentuated and re-emphasized in different circumstances and through different media.

2.11 Conclusions

What kind of deity was Diana Nemorensis? As we have seen throughout this chapter, modern attempts to produce a definitive answer to this question and assign the deity with one dominant sphere of action, have failed in light of the ancient evidence. Diana Nemorensis' identity was, certainly from the perspective of the literary sources, essentially multidimensional. As a hunting goddess in the lush surroundings of the shores of lake Nemi, she could exhibit a traditional role and appearance that was perhaps comparable to other Diana cults, but it is the epithet Trivia that most distinguishes the cult in Nemi. The threefold nature of Diana Trivia offered a host of possibilities for poetical exploration, and as early imperial writers like Ovid and Statius did not fail to exploit them, Diana became associated with the crossroads between day and night, the cultivated and the wild, and even life and the afterlife. In this chapter, I have not made another attempt to describe the original character of the goddess, but have instead looked at the cult practice of the site, its long history of worship and the ways in which the site's history was perceived by the visiting worshippers.

An important factor in understanding the cult of Diana Nemorensis is the connection to Aricia, its administrating community. We can identify the involvement of local elites especially from the late Republic onwards, when for example the local officer Voconius used the wealth he had gathered in the Mithridatic wars to contribute to his hometown sanctuary. From the donations found in the votive rooms of the sanctuary, we can deduce that the adornment of the temple and the worship of its principal deity often went hand in hand with the public advertisement of the position of the donor. This was the case for Servilius Quartus, who donated a mosaic floor and all that was on it to Diana in the late Republic, as well as for Fundilius Doctus, the rich freedman who in the Claudian period adorned the same room with the honorary sculptures that became known as the Fundilia group. That the sanctuary functioned as a place for public representation testifies to the involvement of the local community in the rites, which is also indicated by several inscriptions donated by the Senate and people of Aricia as a whole. For earlier periods written evidence is unfortunately lacking, but we may assume that the various temple renovations and the series of rich

the first century AD onwards, included also a priesthood for the Penates that was taken up by Roman and local elites.

terracotta decorations identified in the archaeological record are an expression of the religious commitment of local elites as well. An interesting case of local involvement with and promotion of the cult of Diana is presented by the Arician moneyer Accoleius Lariscolus, who issued a coin in 43 BC, showing – as we follow Alföldi’s complex but plausible reconstruction – an archaic cult image of Diana Nemorensis as Diana Trivia. While we may express our doubts about Alföldi’s further argument that this image in itself proves that the Diana cult at Nemi was older than that in Rome, the identification of the statue as that of Diana Trivia is generally acknowledged – and supported by local sculptural finds presenting a similar image of a female deity. It is not clear if the archaic features displayed by the Republican coin represent an ancient cult image or a later archaistic invention. Nonetheless, the image suggests that the goddess was not only perceived and presented as threefold, but that she was also ascribed with archaic characteristics that suited the supposed long continuity of worship at the cult site on the shores of lake Nemi.

The cult practice for Diana Nemorensis was, however, not only connected with the local Arician community, but also encompassed the larger Latin world around it. Although the excavation campaigns in the temple area have so far not revealed if the first temple building was built before or after the Romans took over control of the region or after that moment, we can deduce from the large amount of votive material found on the site that the cult was a religious meeting place for large groups of Latins from at least the sixth century BC onwards. That this gathering of Latins was not only religious but also political in nature, is suggested by a fragment of Cato’s *Origines*, in which a dictator dedicates the *lucus* in the presence of a number of Latin communities, in what seems to be an episode in one of the wars between Latins and Romans. The episode gains significance if we compare it with the cult of Diana on the Aventine in Rome, which according to Roman tradition was instituted by Servius Tullius to celebrate the bonds between Rome and its Latin neighbours. As we have seen, this tradition was remembered in the form of several *leges sacrae* (cult regulations), which present the temple of Diana Aventinensis as a model for negotiating religious bonds in new colonies. So, leaving aside the discussion on the question as to which of the two Diana cults was the oldest, we can observe an active syncretism that connected the worship in Nemi to the cult on the Aventine and to the early affairs of the Latins and Romans. I have argued that this religio-political narrative surrounding Diana’s grove is significant in the context of the broader literary traditions on the early history of Latium, where other religious *luci* are also reported as meeting places for Latin tribes in preparation of war. This is the case not only because the narrative was preserved in the literary record, but also because Latin *dictatores* were still performing (religious) duties on the site in the first and second centuries AD, as we have seen in our discussion of the epigraphic evidence. It is hard to determine whether this was an antiquarian reinvention of a half-forgotten office or a direct

remnant of the earlier dictatorship (we shall return to this magistracy in later chapters), but the appearance of the office in the epigraphic record is relevant in either case. It gives us an idea as to how worshippers and cult officials memorialized the religious heritage of Diana Nemorensis' worship and how these perceptions of a real or imagined past penetrated everyday cult practice.

Finally, apart from a local Arician and broader Latin association, the cult practice for Diana Nemorensis could also be described and perceived as something foreign that was far removed from the ritual world of the Roman state religion. This was most clearly expressed by the discourse surrounding the *rex Nemorensis*, the priest king of Nemi, who – as both the murderer of his predecessor and the victim of his successor – formed a violent and ostensibly alien element in the story world around the cult of Diana Nemorensis. According to an aetiology fully developed by Servius, the cult in Nemi would have received its bloody character from Artemis Tauropolis, the bloodthirsty goddess in Euripedes' *Iphigenia in Tauris*. As we have seen, in the Roman poetical sources, the goddess of Nemi was herself presented as a somewhat ominous figure, who from the lush surroundings of her wild grove – as Diana Trivia – watched over the boundaries between night and day, life and afterlife. These were the ideal surroundings for mythographers to project an invented priesthood in, and yet I have argued that the story of the priest king of Nemi resonated further than the pages of individual authors. Casual references in Ovid and Suetonius show how the priest king was connected with the sanctuary and the landscape from at least the early first century AD onwards, and several inscriptions suggest that the tradition gained new significance – or may have even originated after – Roman encounters with Artemis sanctuaries in the Mithridatic wars, since they were profoundly influenced by the myth of the Tauric goddess that required blood offers.

Suggesting that the sanctuary displayed an actual sacred tree under which an actual priest king sat – as recent excavators have proposed – to me seems to take the available evidence a step too far. But, nevertheless, it is not unreasonable to assume that the story about the priest king was repeatedly evoked on the sanctuary grounds, perhaps even staged in the theater found on the site. A final example of how the evocation of this bloodthirsty element in the myths could appear, can be detected in the involvement of the emperor Caligula, whose presence in the Alban hills around lake Nemi is well attested. That his royal hostage the Partian prince Darius claimed kingship on a building inscription (even though he was not, and would never be, a king), may well have been a deliberate reference to the existing tradition of the *rex Nemorensis* – especially considering Caligula's own alleged involvement with the rites. Vice-versa, the tradition could have taken on a new meaning because of the involvement of the imperial house. So, without claiming that there was a murderous priest active on the site, we may still argue that his story was interwoven with the cult

practice for Diana Nemorensis and, and as such, the discourse was part of the ritual landscape of lake Nemi.