

Artemisia, The Wonder Woman: The Gendered Nature of ἀνδρεῖα and ἄλκιμος
in Herodotus' *Histories*

Scholars have for quite some time considered the conception of identity in ancient Greece as being constructed by oppositional binaries. While it has received a lot of attention by scholars of Greek literature, the contrast between Greek and non-Greek identities is not the only type of identity conceived by the Greeks. The Greek/non-Greek binary is only one aspect of identity that Paul Cartledge discussed in his book, *The Greeks: A Portrait of Self and Others* (1993). In Herodotus specifically, scholars have identified θῶμα as a marker utilized by the ancient historian to denote peculiar stories, individuals, and locations (Hartog 1988, Munson 2001, Dillery 2008, Priestley 2014). In this paper, I will discuss one such character who is marked by θῶμα, namely Artemisia. Herodotus marks out Artemisia as peculiar in two regards. First, Artemisia possesses ἀνδρεῖα, “manliness,” and a competency in martial affairs (*Hdt.* 7.99.1). Second, she is described as having the natural ability to hand out wise advice (*Hdt.* 7.99.3). As a Greek and female commander in Xerxes' army in the Second Persian War, Artemisia's characterization is ripe for scholarly research and discussion.

In this paper, I will be exploring Artemisia's first unusual attribute, her ἀνδρεῖα. While some scholars have already begun the discussion on this Halicarnassian commander's unusual manliness (Bassi 2003, Harrel 2003), I intend to frame this discussion in a slightly different way. Earlier in his *Histories*, Herodotus introduced a character who has a similar characterization as Artemisia. However, while Phanes is described as an excellent advisor and military man, Herodotus does not mark him with θῶμα like he does with Artemisia, since these descriptors are normal for a male character. Furthermore, the near identical characterization of both Artemisia and Phanes, along with other narratives in Herodotus' *Histories*, draws a connection between

ἀνδρεία and ἄλκιμος, “courage.” Other situations where Herodotus links these two terms include the Lydians, who were considered the bravest and manliest nation in Asia prior to being subjugated by the Persians, the nations who gave resistance to Sesostris’ conquest of their lands, and finally Cyrus himself, who is also described with these two terms in the superlative.

Finally, if Herodotus marks Artemisia with θῶμα because she transgresses Greek gender barriers as a woman, he also presents the opposite in Telines, a man who seems to not conform to the standard norms of being a Greek male. However, despite his characterization as being *θηλυδρίης τε καὶ μαλακώτερος*, “like a woman and rather soft” (*Hdt.* 7.153.4.), Telines is still capable of performing actions that require ἀνδρεία, just like Artemisia. Therefore, while Herodotus establishes a correlation between ἀνδρεία and ἄλκιμος, he does not shy away from pointing out situations where characters do not conform to the Greek standards of sexuality.

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