



# TERRORISM

## FOR SELF-GLORIFICATION

### THE HEROSTRATOS SYNDROME

ALBERT BOROWITZ

## Terrorism for Self-Glorification

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*The Herostratos Syndrome*

ALBERT BOROWITZ

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In memory of Professor John Huston Finley, who,  
more than half a century ago,  
first told me about the crime of Herostratos.

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# Author's Note

IN SPELLING MY protagonist's name "Herostratos," I am transliterating the ancient Greek original. Variant spellings appear in other languages:

Latin	Herostratus
English	Herostratus (or sometimes Eratostratus)
French	Érostrate
German	Herostrat
Italian	Erostrato
Portuguese	Heróstrato
Spanish	Eróstrato

Spellings used in directly quoted passages have not been altered. In spelling other ancient names, I adopt the form most commonly encountered in my sources; e.g., Ephesus.

# Introduction

AN IMPORTANT STRAND in the history of terrorism is Herostratic crime. This phenomenon, consisting of a violent act or series of violent acts motivated in whole or in part by a craving for notoriety or self-glorification, can be traced from the destruction in 356 BC of one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, by the arsonist Herostratos. The man identified in ancient sources as Herostratos is a shadowy figure of whose life nothing is known before he was apprehended, tortured, and executed. The death penalty was accompanied by a postmortem sentence of the type that came to be known in Latin as *damnatio memoriae*, the damnation of the condemned man's memory through the imposition of a ban on the mention of his name. Soon after the death of the temple destroyer this prohibition was flouted by Classical authors; through the ages and around the world the terrible name of Herostratos became paradigmatic of the morbid quest for eternal fame through crimes of violence. New attacks made against lives and monuments seemed to be motivated by personal vanity, whatever high-sounding phrases the criminal might launch in justification. Writers who tried to understand these puzzling outbreaks of murder and destruction often invoked Herostratos as an archetype.

The recognizable features of these crimes for fame, and the commentaries that these acts have inspired, make it possible to attempt a definition of what can be called the "Herostratos syndrome":

1. Herostratos and his followers share a desire for fame or notoriety as long lasting and widespread as can be achieved. This desire may be appeased by

publicity for the criminal's name but often, preferring to elude detection by retaining anonymity, he is satisfied with the celebrity that arises from his act. These alternative or combined means of gratification, publicity for the name or for the crime, reflect the same underlying Herostratic impulse, that is, a drive to maximize a sense of power. The criminal feels an enhancement of power in the form of self-glorification (the achievement of name recognition) or self-aggrandizement (the demonstration of capacity for destruction through accomplishment of a flaunting act that will live in infamy). Herostratic violence may be perpetrated by a person acting alone or in conjunction with others who may or may not share his thirst for fame.

2. The aim of the crime is to cause the public to experience panic, distress, insecurity, or loss of confidence.
3. A famous person, property, or institution is often chosen as victim or target. As the Roman essayist Valerius Maximus observed in his discussion of searchers after negative fame, a killer may hope, by his attack, to absorb the celebrity of his prey—to be known, for example, as “the man who assassinated Philip of Macedon.” The same mechanism operates in arsonists and other destroyers of well-known monuments, such as the Temple of Artemis.
4. A feeling of loneliness, alienation, mediocrity, and failure may trigger an envy directed against those perceived to be more successful or prestigious. Envy is exacerbated by an ambitious, competitive spirit and the conviction that avenues to success are unfairly blocked.
5. The Herostratic criminal may be afflicted by self-destructive compulsions: to confess; to taunt or to more overtly aid the police who pursue him; and to commit suicide or suffer death either in the course of the crime or by execution. Since his ultimate goal is glory, the remnant of the criminal's life becomes contemptible as a value in itself; it is a pawn to be traded for accomplishment of his motive.
6. Herostratic violence may acquire a sacrilegious dimension when the criminal strikes a religious shrine or a secular target that has iconic significance.
7. The craving for fame may combine with other motives, personal and/or ideological, in inducing a criminal act.

In November 2001, *Ego-net*, a German Web site commenting on the “age-old phenomenon of terrorism,” referred to Herostratos as “the first terrorist who entered history.”<sup>1</sup> This claim appears to be justified because the nature of the

crime at Ephesus satisfies most of the criteria of the definition of terrorism espoused by a leading expert on modern terrorist activity, Walter Laqueur, who has written in the wake of the attack on the World Trade Center, “Over the centuries, terrorism has appeared in many guises. It is not an ideology or a political doctrine, but rather a method—the substate application of violence or the threat of violence to sow panic and bring about political change.”<sup>2</sup> Laqueur’s definition would fit perfectly the outrages of Herostratos and his followers, except that their need for self-glorification is satisfied by causing public panic or dismay, whether or not any of these criminals may also seek or avow a purpose to effect political change. In an earlier work, in fact, Laqueur referred to Herostratos’s motive as a common factor in the “new” terrorism: “Many terrorist acts are committed by individuals following in the footsteps of Herostrat [*sic*], the citizen of Ephesus in ancient times who burned the local temple simply so that his name would be remembered forever.”<sup>3</sup>

In *Terrorist Lives* (1994), Maxwell Taylor and Ethel Quayle express their belief that “a core element in any account of terrorism is that it involves the use of violence to achieve political ends.” Yet their analysis of terrorist groups in Ireland, Europe, and the Middle East, based on interviews with their members, reveals significant convergences of modern terrorists’ motivations with those of the politically unaligned Herostratic criminal. The ideologically committed terrorists whom Taylor and Quayle have studied appear to act under the influence of a commitment even more fundamental than political allegiance—belief in the “just-world phenomenon”:

This is a widely recognised feature of our interpretation of the world as it impinges on us. We like to think that virtue is rewarded, that a hard working life should result in a comfortable retirement, that those who cheat or steal to our disadvantage are ultimately caught. . . . In one way, many terrorists and their supporters would claim that what they do is a response to an *unjust* world. . . .

The sense of a “just world” seems to lie at the very heart of the social and psychological response to political violence of both terrorists and their victims.<sup>4</sup>

Taylor and Quayle theorize that “the individual terrorist’s justification for terrorism is . . . related at a fundamental psychological level to a sense of purpose and self-worth.” This association leads them to come to grips with the unjust world:

It [terrorism] is, at least initially, a means to achieve something which is intrinsically desirable and important to the person involved. That desirability may relate to nationalist or political aspirations, but as far as the person is concerned, its attainment will result in a better world, either for the individual or for his community. Seeking for “ . . . *a place in the sun* . . . ” or some similar phrase has occurred more than once in interviews about this subject.<sup>5</sup>

Although there is no evidence as to what impelled Herostratos to destroy the Temple of Artemis, speculation began even in ancient times that the instant fame that he sought through crime arose from a perceived injustice: he was deprived, through no fault of his own, of the talent and opportunity required to achieve a reputation for merit. The resentment of inadequacy or failure was increasingly emphasized as the tradition of Herostratos was elaborated over more than two millennia and his crime became regarded as setting the pattern for other attacks continually made against famous monuments and persons. Like many political terrorists, Herostratos and his successors appeared dedicated to the destruction of an unjust world.

The modern terrorist is also closely akin to Herostratos in his passion for media attention. Taylor and Quayle have observed:

Whatever else terrorism might be, it is a highly effective means of gaining attention in the media; indeed, the amount of attention is positively correlated with the severity of a terrorist attack. . . .

The former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, referred to “the oxygen of publicity” as being a vital requirement for the sustenance of a terrorist organization, and there is a clear recognition on the part of all sides that terrorism is a war largely fought in the media.<sup>6</sup>

Media attention does not, however, merely serve the purpose of publicizing and advancing the goals of a political cause, but also may appease the desires of individuals at the summit or base of the terrorist organization for personal stardom. The terrorist’s achievement of fame carries with it an intoxicating sense of empowerment such as Herostratos felt when the temple’s fire leapt up to the night sky of Ephesus. Alberto Franceschini of the Italian Red Brigades avowed the thrill of media celebrity:

My distinct feeling was that I was really making a deep mark on the reality of the country, and this sensation was given to me by the newspapers

and magazines, through the mass media. When you do certain things, and these things turn into big paragraphs in the papers; and when you see that because of the things you explode, fights and chaos happens [*sic*] between the politicians; all this summed up gave me a sensation of great power. It gives you the feeling of being powerful.<sup>7</sup>

The videotape of Osama bin Laden that recorded for broadcast his rejoicing in the destruction of the World Trade Center seemed at least as much designed to satisfy the al-Qaeda leader's desire for self-aggrandizement as to spread terror or recruit killers. The elusive Osama does not seem bent on surrendering his life for the cause, but even suicide bombers may be moved, like Herostratos, by a wish to enhance and perpetuate their own sense of importance. Avishai Margalit, in her article "Suicide Bombers," argues that the Palestinian terrorists' self-sacrifice may now be encouraged less by the "idea of winning a place in paradise" than by the prospect of living on in human memory:

If it is easy to question whether being a *shahid* [martyr] secures an immediate entrance to paradise, no one can doubt that being a *shahid* secures instant fame, spread by television stations like the Qatar-based al-Jazeera and the Lebanon-based al-Manar, which are watched throughout the Arab world. Once a suicide bomber has completed his mission he at once becomes a phantom celebrity. Visitors to the occupied territories have been struck by how well the names of the suicide bombers are known, even to small children.<sup>8</sup>

Even when the international media may not give them their due, the suicide bombers can count on leaving a visual and documentary record in their own communities: "The aspiring martyr is told to write last letters to his family and friends. He is photographed in a heroic pose. He makes a video explaining why he is becoming a martyr."<sup>9</sup> The reinforcement of ideological goals by the personal wish for fame links these bombers with such Herostratic predecessors as Luigi Lucheni; when this self-professed "anarchist" assassinated Empress Elisabeth of Austria in 1898, he gloried in his front-page prominence.

Allied as they are by perception of injustice and attraction to publicity, it is by no means certain that the ideological terrorist and the Herostratic criminal can be distinguished by psychological profiling. While acknowledging that "the psychological forces that result in the development of the terrorist are complex and obscure," Taylor and Quayle conclude that "there seems to be



no discernible pathological qualities of terrorists that can identify them in any clinical sense as different from others in the community from which they come. . . . Violence and brutality may characterise the criminal, yet, as with the terrorist, we would be unlikely to place the criminal within the category of clinical abnormality.”<sup>10</sup>

Despite Walter Laqueur’s rather cursory suggestion that Herostratos and criminals in his mold belong among the “deranged,”<sup>11</sup> it is striking that, with the principal exception of German Expressionist Georg Heym, virtually none of the writers who have produced imagined portraits of Herostratos through the ages present him as insane. He is, instead, a man who has become a menace because he believes that life has cheated him.

It should be further noted that, under American criminal law, Herostratic criminals may be prosecuted as terrorists, for a political dimension is not a prerequisite to a finding of an act of terrorism. American criminal statutes recognize that terrorism may have the objective of intimidating the public rather than an aim to influence governmental policy. In the year following the September 11 attack, at least thirty-three states amended their criminal codes to address the enhanced threat of terrorism. Many of the legislative enactments followed federal law by defining “act of terrorism” as a violent felony intended *either* to intimidate or coerce a civilian population *or* to influence or affect governmental policy or conduct.<sup>12</sup>

*Terrorism for Self-Glorification: The Herostratos Syndrome* is the first detailed examination of the history and literature of Herostratos and his followers. This book has three principal purposes:

1. Description of the birth of the Herostratos tradition in the Hellenistic era and its spread throughout the world over more than two millennia.
2. Identification and analysis of criminal cases in which the desire for fame in the mode of Herostratos has been or can persuasively be suggested as a contributing motive. The wide-ranging cases of destruction and killing to be cited include the attempted explosion of England’s Greenwich Observatory in 1894; the 1950 burning of Kyoto’s Temple of the Golden Pavilion, which is the subject of Yukio Mishima’s novel of the same name; the Taliban’s destruction of the giant Buddhas in Afghanistan; the demolition of the Stari Most (Old Bridge) in Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina; the assassination of a royal, Empress Elisabeth of Austria; the celebrity killing of John Lennon; some American political assassinations; the Unabomber; and the Columbine High School Massacre. Many of these cases have inspired explicit comparisons with Herostratos, either in contemporaneous

reportage or subsequent literature. A separate chapter will be devoted to commentators who have recognized Herostratos's pertinence to the attack on the World Trade Center.

3. A critique of the principal works of literature that are either based on the life or tradition of Herostratos or contain illuminating references to his crime. Among the authors considered are Cicero, John of Salisbury, Chaucer, Montaigne, Cervantes, Sir Thomas Browne, Lord Byron, Victor Hugo, Gustave Flaubert, Jean-Paul Sartre, André Glucksmann, Alessandro Verri, Fernando Pessoa, Miguel de Unamuno, Sigmund Freud, and Mark Twain. Many genres, such as fiction, poetry, drama, philosophy, essays, and journalism, are discussed with particular emphasis on literature since the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the world's interest in Herostratos began to intensify, perhaps as a result of Romantic authors' interest in crime themes.

Like the Cain and Abel myth, the Herostratos tradition is remarkable for “the extraordinary longevity and variousness of its appeal.”<sup>13</sup> The rich imaginative literature that has clustered around the sketchy early accounts of the Ephesian arson deepens our understanding of criminal instincts driven by a hunger for fame. New aspects of the strange compulsion are revealed as time passes and brilliant writers continue to turn to the Herostratic conundrum. The Roman essayist Valerius Maximus, for example, was the first to detect the link between the destruction of an iconic building and the assassination of a prominent leader, both crimes being intended to absorb instantly the fame of the target. The Greek satirist Lucian revealed a new facet of Herostratos's psychological malady when he emphasized its fundamentally suicidal character. It remained for Mark Twain to look beneath avowed political motivation for the assassination of an empress to discover the morbid passion for infamy. Further surprises date from our own time. A decade before the World Trade Center attack, Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman's musical *Assassins* (1991) reminded us, if we were listening, that a human mind obsessed with fame had, during President Nixon's administration, conceived the idea of hijacking a jetliner for the purpose of crashing into the White House.<sup>14</sup>

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# 1 The Birth of the Herostratos Tradition

AT FIRST GLANCE, the two antagonists appear to have been mismatched—Herostratos, an arsonist of obscure origins, and the goddess Artemis, one of the most powerful deities in ancient Greek worship. The man’s identity is shrouded in mystery except for the name that history attributes to him. It is a name drawn from Greek roots, and although Classicists debate its meaning, the elements of which it is formed seem to predict a nobler destiny than lay in wait for Artemis’s enemy. The word *stratós* means “army” in ancient Greek, and scholars have suggested that the male appellation “Herostratos” may be translatable as “army-hero” or, alternatively, as an “army devoted to Hera,” wife of Zeus.<sup>1</sup> The ancient Greeks customarily bestowed only one name on a child, often making a choice that was etymologically associated with a god; the firstborn son was generally named after his paternal grandfather.<sup>2</sup> History, unfortunately, tells us nothing about the arsonist’s family and it is by no means clear whether the name by which we know him was his at birth or later came to personify him in the course of the remarkable oral and written tradition that he inspired.

It is plain, at least, that the name Herostratos was not uncommon in the Greek world. An earlier man bearing this name established a shrine to Aphrodite in his home city of Naucratis, a treaty port in Egypt, after a narrow escape from disaster at sea. Despite the tarnish brought to the name by the arsonist, we find a Herostratos among the trusted lieutenants of Brutus, who sent him on a mission to Macedonia in 44 BC to win the support of the military commanders there, following the assassination of Julius Caesar.<sup>3</sup>

Because of the vastness of the Greek-speaking world, Herostratos's name provides no clue to his place of birth or residence. Writers have sometimes assumed that he must have been a citizen of the predominantly Greek-populated city of Ephesus (near the modern town of Selçuk inland from the western coast of Turkey) where he perpetrated his famous crime. This supposition, however, does not give adequate weight to the far range of Hellenistic seafaring or to the large numbers of noncitizens residing in Greek city-states in the fourth century BC;<sup>4</sup> it is with greater insight into the ease of Aegean travel and diversity of urban populations that Alessandro Verri, in writing the first Herostratos novel, makes his antihero a native of Corinth.<sup>5</sup> Another void left by the historical record is Herostratos's occupation and position in society. Imaginative literature has variously presented him as a poet, an artisan, or a jack-of-all-trades, but ancients and moderns alike are prone to visualize him as a failure—lonely, unrecognized, and bitter.

The object of Herostratos's malice, Artemis (worshiped in Rome as Diana) was the daughter of Zeus and the Titaness Leto; she was the elder twin sister of Apollo, whom she miraculously helped her mother deliver on the ninth day of labor. Among the Olympians, Artemis is particularly notable for her versatility and her ambivalent roles as a sustainer and destroyer of life. A virgin deity who hunted game, particularly deer, she tried her silver bow when still young, choosing as targets two trees, "a wild beast, and a city of unjust men."<sup>6</sup> Despite her love of the chase, she is often represented in images as a "mistress of the animals" whose young she protects. According to one of the two Homeric Hymns in her honor, Artemis, in the company of her brother Apollo, also took pleasure in the gentler arts of music and dance:

Yet when the archeress tracker of beasts has had pleasure enough  
From the hunt and has gladdened her mind, she unstrings her  
flexible bow

And goes to her brother's great home, to Phoibos Apollo's abode  
In Delphi's rich land, to prepare for the Muses' and Graces' fair  
dance.

She hangs up there with its arrows her bow that springs back from  
the pull,

And wearing graceful adornments takes the lead in the dance.

The goddesses, raising their heavenly voices, sing a hymn

Of fair-ankled Leto, and tell how she gave her children birth,

Who are in both counsel and deeds the best of immortals by far.<sup>7</sup>

Rites of passage are another of the goddess's special interests; she guides young girls to womanhood and is sometimes concerned with male rituals of transition to maturity. Despite her jealously guarded maiden state, Artemis has important maternal functions, easing the pains of childbirth as she had done for her own mother, and assuring human and animal fertility. As a goddess of the moon and its phases, she is intimately connected with women's monthly cycles. The moonlight was flattering to Artemis but from time to time she smelled the kill. Without warning she then turned fearsome as a dealer of sudden death to women in labor as well as to men who offended her, such as Actaeon, whom she turned into a stag and had torn apart by his own pack of fifty hounds after he had committed the impropriety of seeing her naked.<sup>8</sup>

In Ephesus, on the Ionian coast of western Asia Minor, Artemis assumed traits of the great mother goddess worshiped as Cybele in a temple at a site near modern Ankara. The cult statues in the Ephesus Museum emphasize the fecundity of the Ephesian Artemis: "Although the nodes on her chest were once thought to be breasts, it has become apparent that they represent the testes of bulls sacrificed for her."<sup>9</sup> This powerful divinity not only made the countryside flourish but also caused the important port and trading center of Ephesus to thrive under her patronage.

The origins of early settlements in western Asia Minor are hazy. Greek legend fancifully regarded the Amazons, redoubtable female warriors from far reaches of the ancient world, as the first inhabitants of Ephesus, and the claim of Athens to have colonized all the cities on the Ionian coast is also disputed. The Ephesians from their beginnings devoted themselves to the worship of Artemis. Successive versions of her temple (called the Artemision) were situated in a marshy plain about a mile to the northeast of the town, near the hill of Ayasoluk; as the shrine grew in magnificence it came to be ranked among the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Philo of Byzantium, a scholar and engineer who described the Seven Wonders in a text written in Alexandria, Egypt, in about 225 BC, ecstatically praises the Artemision: "The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus is the only house of the gods. Whoever looks will be convinced that a change of place has occurred: that the heavenly world of immortality has been placed on the earth."<sup>10</sup>

Selahattin Erdemgil, director of the Ephesus Museum, attributes the construction of the magnificent Archaic Artemision in the early sixth century BC to intercity rivalry. Just before 570 BC construction of a widely admired Temple of Hera was completed in Samos. The competitive Ephesians engaged the

Cretan architect Chersiphron and his son Metagenes to design a great shrine to Artemis that would outshine the Samians' achievement. The construction of the new Artemision (which, according to Pliny the Elder, "occupied all Asia Minor for 120 years") was in progress when King Midas of Lydia occupied Ephesus in about 561 BC and placated its citizens by contributing generously to the project. Midas's beneficence may also have had the political objective of establishing worship of Artemis as a state religion to replace cults supported by powerful local clans. The temple, built almost entirely of marble and in accordance with the Ionic order, was of unusually large dimensions (380 by 180 feet, according to Director Erdemgil) that dwarfed those of the Parthenon. Two rows of columns surrounded the temple on its four sides. Pliny, who visited the later Hellenistic temple built at a higher elevation on the same design, counted 127 columns in all; thirty-six of the columns were carved with reliefs. The eight-column western facade of the building afforded a fine prospect of the city and harbor. Museum director Erdemgil refers to a calculation that "the architraves supported by the columns weighed twenty-four tons," and adds: "Considering the equipment available then, it is difficult to comprehend how such heavy pieces could be lifted twenty metres and placed on the columns. The people believed that Artemis herself came and placed the architrave on the columns."<sup>11</sup> In fact, Pliny informs us, the architect Chersiphron achieved this marvel "by filling bags of plaited reed with sand and constructing a gently graded ramp which reached the upper surfaces of the capitals of the columns." Lying under some fifteen feet of alluvial deposit, the site of the Archaic Temple and its successor (the Hellenistic Temple) was identified in 1870 as a result of excavations conducted by architect John Turtle Wood on behalf of the British Museum.<sup>12</sup> In ancient times the site had been on the seaboard but the land has moved a few miles westward as a result of silt accumulation in the Caystros River.

In 356 BC the Temple of Artemis that King Croesus had sponsored was burnt to the ground. The story of the catastrophe, as pieced together from the surviving ancient sources, can be quickly retold: The temple is said to have been destroyed on the same night (most likely July 20 or 26)<sup>13</sup> on which Alexander the Great was born. The fire, which caused widespread shock and lamentation in Ephesus, was attributed to arson committed by Herostratos, who was promptly arrested. Placed upon the rack, he confessed that he had conceived the crime to satisfy his appetite for fame. With the purpose of foiling his objective, the Ephesians, in addition to ordering the execution of Herostratos, adopted a decree banning the mention of his name.

Although in most respects the traditional narrative of Herostratos's crime cannot be confirmed from nonliterary sources, archeological finds have uncovered physical proof that the Archaic Artemision was, indeed, destroyed by fire. Anton Bammer and Ulrike Muss, successive directors of the ongoing Austrian excavations of the site, report their evidence with jubilation: "This is one of those rare cases in which the historical report is archeologically verifiable, since many of the sculptured column drums and pedestals as well as the *simā* frieze [under the temple's eaves] show traces of a fire."<sup>14</sup> John and Elizabeth Romer have surmised that Herostratos may have succeeded in setting the temple ablaze by torching its "enormous timber roof."<sup>15</sup>

The surviving literary works from which the crime and its aftermath have been reconstructed were produced over a period of more than 250 years; the first of them appeared three centuries after Herostratos's death, and thus it hardly furnishes fresh historical evidence. With only one exception, the authors treated their subject anecdotally or by way of illustration of a religious or moral precept and therefore seized only on isolated details that suited their narrative or stylistic purposes. The earliest source to come down to us can be found in a passage on the manifold activities of the goddess Diana (Artemis) in Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods* (*De Natura Deorum*), a philosophical work that he composed in 45 and 44 BC, the last years of his life. Noting the identification of the goddess with the light-bringing and wide-wandering moon, he explains that she was called Diana "because she made a sort of *day* in the night-time." The invocation of her assistance at the birth of children was due to the equivalence of "occasionally seven, or more usually nine, lunar revolutions" to the period of gestation. This consideration led Cicero to pass along a clever observation made, as he recalled, by Greek historian Timaeus (ca. 356–260 BC), about Diana/Artemis's conflicting duties on the night of her Ephesus temple's destruction: "Timaeus in his history with his usual aptness adds to his account of the burning of the temple of Diana of Ephesus on the night on which Alexander was born the remark that this need cause no surprise, since Diana was away from home, wishing to be present when Olympias [Alexander's mother] was brought to bed."<sup>16</sup>

In his supplementary treatise, *On Divination*, Cicero mentioned again the simultaneity of Herostratos's fire and Alexander's birth. Relating these twinned events to his subject of divination, he also referred to the delirium of Asian magi over the portents to be read into the Ephesian calamity: "Everybody knows that on the same night in which Olympias was delivered of Alexander the temple of Diana at Ephesus was burned, and that the magi began to cry



out as the day was breaking: ‘Asia’s deadly curse was born last night.’”<sup>17</sup> The curse would be fulfilled, of course, when the newborn Alexander became Asia’s conqueror.

Plutarch (ca. 46–after 120 AD), in his life of Alexander, also adopted the tradition that stated Herostratos’s arson and Alexander’s birth both occurred on the same date. He retold the joke about Artemis’s preference of midwifery to fire fighting but cited Hegesias of Magnesia as the author of “the conceit, frigid enough to have stopped the conflagration.” He sounds a more somber note, however, in recalling the despair of visiting Asian magi over the loss of the holy sanctuary: “And all the Eastern soothsayers who happened to be then at Ephesus, looking upon the ruin of this temple to be the forerunner of some other calamity, ran about the town, beating their faces, and crying that this day had brought forth something that would prove fatal and destructive to all Asia.”<sup>18</sup>

Both Cicero and Plutarch, in the passages cited, continued to honor the decree suppressing mention of the arsonist’s name; their texts, in fact, do not disclose that the fire was willfully set. Some earlier writers, however, had already ignored the ancient prohibition against mentioning the name of the arsonist. Transgressors against the Ephesian ban on memory followed the lead of Theopompus of Chios, a Greek historian (born ca. 378 BC) who was living at the time of the fire but has left posterity only fragments of his works, an account of the last years of the Peloponnesian War (*Hellenica*) and a world history beginning with the accession of Philip of Macedon (*Philippica*). The first extant work to name Herostratos as the arsonist is the *Geography* of Strabo (64/63 BC–21 AD at least), who in the course of describing the history of the Artemision, noted: “But when it [the temple] was set on fire by a certain Herostratus, the citizens erected another and better one, having collected the ornaments of the women and their individual belongings, and having sold also the pillars of the former temple. Testimony is borne to these facts by the decrees that were made at that time.”<sup>19</sup>

A Roman historian during Emperor Tiberius’s reign, Valerius Maximus, published around 31 AD his *Memorable Doings and Sayings* (*Factorum ac dictorum memorabilium libri*), a collection of illustrative examples for citation by rhetoricians. One of his entries, entitled “Of Appetite for Glory,” may be the first self-standing essay to cite Herostratos’s case as an example of the pursuit of negative fame through a criminal act. After beginning his discourse with references to the laudable (though self-seeking) inclination of military commanders to immortalize authors who have celebrated their victories, Valerius progressively veers toward repellent examples of quests for glory:

Alexander's "insatiable" appetite for fame, and Aristotle's small-minded insistence on literary credit. As the pitch of his sermon rises in intensity, Valerius refers to "the design of those who in their desire to be remembered forever did not scruple to gain notoriety even by crimes." He refers first to the assassination of Philip of Macedon by Pausanias, who, having asked Hermocles "how he could suddenly become famous," was advised that "if he killed an illustrious man that man's glory would redound to himself." To crown his admonitions, Valerius turns from the celebrity killing of Philip to the sacrilegious violence of Herostratos against a famous shrine. Perhaps sardonically, he credits Theopompus's "eloquent genius" as prompting the earlier historian to overlook the Ephesian decree (although Valerius purported to approve the ban as "wisely" imposed). For the only time in known ancient sources, Valerius also refers to Herostratos's confession under torture:

Here is appetite for glory involving sacrilege. A man was found to plan the burning of the temple of Ephesian Diana so that through the destruction of this most beautiful building his name might be spread through the whole world. This madness he unveiled when put upon the rack. The Ephesians had wisely abolished the memory of the villain by decree, but Theopompus' eloquent genius included him in his history.<sup>20</sup>

Two other Roman authors mention Herostratos by name. One of the moralizing animal fantasies of Aelian (Claudius Aelianus), a *pontifex* assisting in public rites at Praeneste near Rome (170–235 AD), suggests that Herostratos should be classed with enemies of the gods. In his *On the Characteristics of Animals*, the author praises Black Sea mice that pay reverence to Hercules on an island named for the god: at the maturity of the grapes preserved for sacrifices, the rodents prefer to quit the island rather than touch the sacred fruit even involuntarily. Aelian contrasts the reverent mice with two atheists, Hippon and Diagoras, "and Herostratus, and all the rest in the tale of heaven's enemies, how would they have kept their hands off the grapes or other offerings—men who preferred by one means or another to rob the gods of their names and functions."<sup>21</sup>

A longer historical perspective of the Artemision's destruction is established in the geographical summary, *The Excellent and Pleasant Work (Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium)*, written by Gaius Julius Solinus after 200 AD. Solinus notes the paradox that the temple was earlier spared by ravages of Xerxes's wars only to fall victim to the lone arsonist:

The beauty of Ephesus is the Temple of Diana, built by the Amazons, such a royal piece of work, that when Xerxes set fire on all the temples of Asia, this one alone he spared.

But this gentleness of Xerxes exempted not this holy church utterly from that misfortune, for one Herostratus to the intent (to purchase himself an everlasting fame by his mischievous deed) did set this noble piece of work on fire with his own hands, and when he had done it, confessed it to win himself a continual name.<sup>22</sup>

The geographer, after noting that the temple was burned on the day that Alexander the Great was born in the Macedonian capital of Pella, ended his account of the temple on the happy note that “the Ephesians afterward repaired it, more beautiful and stately than it was before.”

The earliest surviving text to cite Herostratos’s example as illuminating a later act of violence is *The Passing of Peregrinus*, a mocking reportage by the Greek satirist Lucian (ca. 120–after 180 AD). This work, in the form of a letter to a friend, Cronius, invokes the precedent of Herostratos’s impious arson to elucidate the self-immolation of Peregrinus shortly after the close of the Olympic Games of 165 AD. At the previous Olympiad four years before, Peregrinus had cannily whetted his public’s anticipation by preannouncing his intentions. In his narrative of the suicide, which he witnessed, Lucian depicts Peregrinus as a parricide, adulterer, pederast, and sham preacher, actuated throughout his life by a love of notoriety. After a short-lived conversion to Christianity, Peregrinus returned to his earlier profession as a Cynic philosopher. Taking his cue from Brahman suicides, Peregrinus, before Lucian’s eyes, threw himself onto a pyre he had built in a pit about six feet deep, at Harpina, twenty furlongs from the sacred precincts of Olympia. Intended to be awe-inspiring, the end of the sixty-year-old Peregrinus filled Lucian with contempt. In a speech delivered by an unnamed speaker (probably Lucian himself) prior to the Cynic’s fatal leap, the fire at Ephesus is recalled: “But you have heard, no doubt, that long ago a man who wished to become famous burned the temple of Ephesian Artemis, not being able to attain that end in any other way. He himself [Peregrinus] has something similar in mind, so great is the craving for fame that has penetrated him to the core.”

Lucian was not swayed by Peregrinus’s asserted humanitarian motive and feared the baleful influence that his act would have on those inclined to criminal conduct: “He alleges, however, that he is doing it for the sake of his fellow men, that he may teach them to despise death and endure what is fearsome. For my part, I should like to ask, not him but you, whether you would wish malefac-

tors to become his disciples in this fortitude of his, and to despise death and burning and similar terrors.”<sup>23</sup> In these exhortations, Lucian seems prescient of realities we face again: that desire for personal glory cannot be disguised by ideological catchwords or ennobled by suicide; and that it is dangerous to inspire the ill-intentioned to regard death and burning as trifles.

After these Classical literary sources for Herostratos’s biography have been arrayed and summarized, several key questions require further reflections:

#### FIRST

*What was the motive or combination of motives that led Herostratos to burn the Artemision?* The ancients concurred that Herostratos was moved by a craving for a fame that would be infinite in time (“everlasting fame,” in Solinus’s words) and/or in space (“spread through the whole world,” according to Valerius Maximus). His plan to achieve such glory through crime is a distortion of what C. M. Bowra has termed the “heroic outlook” of the ancient Greeks. Bowra defines the essence of the heroic outlook as the “pursuit of honour through action.”<sup>24</sup> The heroic ideal highly valued military valor in service of the city-state, and the deeds of the brave were celebrated as enduring beyond the tomb. Bowra argues that the Greeks’ “vague and uncertain” thoughts about physical survival in the afterworld made the notion of perennial glory “a consolation for the shadowy doom which awaited them in the grave.”<sup>25</sup> Similar comfort was drawn by great poets from the prospects of lasting fame for “work that sheds a special radiance on the subjects which it celebrates,” and “in [poetry’s] ability to outlive themselves they saw something akin to the unageing security of the gods.”<sup>26</sup> For bravery or literary radiance Herostratos had substituted an act of devastation that was rendered memorable by its unprecedented and heinous character. As Valerius Maximus observed, Herostratos had expanded the range of violent crime by adding the element of sacrilege. To Valerius, however, another factor was at play that singularizes crimes against a famous person or institution—a process through which the attacker absorbs and wears as his new identity the celebrity of his target.

Although the desire for lasting fame is the mainspring that tradition attaches to Herostratos’s arson, other contributing motives have also been hinted or postulated. Lucian may have been the first to suggest that Herostratos was actuated by envy and a sense of mediocrity or failure, when the author commented in passing that the arsonist had burnt the Artemision to

obtain fame, “not being able to attain that end in any other way.” Lucian’s supposition that Herostratos lacked the talent or resolve to attain fame by constructive endeavors finds confirmation in the fact that to all the ancient historians who mention the fire, the arsonist is a nobody. Apart from his name, all the historical sources, considered together, tell us nothing of the man he was when he turned to crime; after he was arrested, horrified Ephesians probably wondered who he was and what he had done in life.

Miguel de Unamuno has asserted that envy lies at the base of the Herostratic impulse (see chapter 6). Professor Gregory L. Ulmer, in his monograph *The Legend of Herostratus: Existential Envy in Rousseau and Unamuno*, theorizes that Herostratos envied the newborn Alexander and, to support this hypothesis, recreates the scene when the arson was instantaneously conceived:

We may imagine, then, that on that evening in 356 BC, as Herostratus passed by the familiar temple, runners from the court of Philip of Macedon were announcing the birth of the prince for whom great things were prophesied. The thought of this child, born into all the advantages of life and predestined for glory, made Herostratus reflect despairingly on his own frustrated ambitions, made him rage against his anonymity, mortality, mediocrity. So, after sharing in the many jugs of wine passed about amongst the revelers toasting the King’s good fortune, Herostratus took a torch from a passing procession and went into the temple, there to light a fire which is the image of the passion of envy, as well as of fame.<sup>27</sup>

This scenario presents us with obvious difficulties of time and place. How could Philip’s runners have traveled so quickly from Pella, the Macedonian capital, to Ephesus to announce a birth that was reportedly simultaneous with the arson? And why would Ephesians revel because a foreign prince had been born? More likely, Herostratos’s envy would have been aroused by men with whom he had vied or who were better placed than he in Ephesian society.

Several other hypotheses might contribute to an understanding of the extraordinary crime. Herostratos’s resentment against the prosperous city of Ephesus as a whole may have turned vengeful. In attacking the city’s most beautiful and famous monument, he surely dealt a blow to the Ephesians’ urban pride and their sense of security. Alternatively, the arsonist’s wrath may have been directed against the temple itself rather than targeting the entire Ephesian community. The mysterious incendiary’s attraction to sacrilege and his enmity to the gods were underlined by both Valerius Maximus and Aelian; perhaps

prayers that he had made to Artemis or other deities had gone unheeded or he had other reasons to have lost faith in divine providence.

Finally, the operation of self-destructive drives cannot be ruled out. The crime of nocturnal arson, such as Herostratos had perpetrated, is not easy to solve, and none of the ancient sources suggests that Herostratos made any attempt to escape or to elude arrest. Indeed, the very satisfaction of his hunger for fame required that he be apprehended and proclaim his responsibility.

## SECOND

*What meaning should be attached to the supposed occurrence of the fire on the same night as the birth of Alexander the Great?* A thread of the Herostratos tradition is that the arson occurred on the same date (or night, as Cicero specifies) as the birth of Alexander the Great. It is difficult to know whether either Cicero or Plutarch took this legendary detail seriously; they both mentioned the remarkable coincidence only as an excuse for citing a Greek historian's skeptical joke that a goddess much in demand cannot be in two places at the same time. Another possibility is that the suggested concurrence of the two events is only a reflection of the inclination of Classical writers to arrange history in geometric patterns, the same cast of mind that led Plutarch himself to couple his biographies as parallel lives even if the similarities that he identified were sometimes far-fetched. Hermann Bengtson refers to the dating of Herostratos's crime as "probably only a 'fable of simultaneity,' of which there are many examples in ancient and modern times."<sup>28</sup>

Another conceivable foundation for the link of arson with a hero's birth was the ancients' perception of history's irony: the date of a crime undertaken by a mediocrity to achieve fame was rendered memorable instead as the birthday of a great conqueror and empire builder. This hypothesis would, however, be easier to accept if the name and deeds of Herostratos had fallen into oblivion as his judges intended, and if his successors in crime had not remained active to the present day.

For Sigmund Freud, the link between the fire and Alexander, far from serving a literary function, provided a mythic confirmation of his theories of pregenital phases of the libido and their effect on the formation of character. As he stated in his lecture "Anxiety and Instinctual Life," he had previously found that a "triad of characteristics which are always to be found together: orderliness, parsimoniousness, and obstinacy . . . proceed from the dissipation of . . . anal-erotism and its employment in other ways." His reflections on Herostratos led him to add a further theory:

A similar and perhaps even firmer connection is to be found between ambition and urethral erotism. We have found a remarkable reference to this correlation in the legend that a certain Herostratus, from a craving for notoriety, set fire to the famous temple of Artemis at Ephesus. It seems that the ancients were well aware of the connection involved. You already know how close a connection there is between urination and fire and the putting out of fire.<sup>29</sup>

Freud's earlier hypothesis, to which he refers in the quoted passage, had been summarized in his article interpreting the Prometheus myth, "The Acquisition and Control of Fire": that fire (associated with sexual passion) is primitively related to urination and that "in order to gain control of fire, men had to renounce the [infantile] homosexually-tinged desire to put it out with a stream of urine."<sup>30</sup> When these two speculations of Freud are cumulated, the Herostratos tradition, construed as myth, may be taken to suggest that both a predisposition to arson, as well as the strong ambition that Herostratos shared with Alexander, may be character formations arising from infantile preoccupation with urethral function.

Professor Norman N. Holland, in *The I*, an exploration of the self, has defined adult personality traits that are associated with a child's urethral preoccupation:

Clinically, a child's fixation at the urethral phase provides the basis for an adult's "antisocial personality." The character type corresponds to the all-too-familiar stereotype of the juvenile delinquent or the psychopath or sociopath: antisocial, truant, aggressive, impulsive, often in particularly violent or sadistic ways. Antisocial personalities show a marked indifference to ordinary social or moral values, do not learn from punishment, and often offer grandiose but obviously specious rationalizations for behavior. . . . Often they are charmers and manipulators, indifferent to the consequences for either the charmer or the charmed.

Holland also finds surprising confirmation for Freud's correlation of bed-wetting with arson and ambition:

Freud linked urethral erotism specifically to fire. Fire, he said, was "discovered" when some Paleolithic man found a naturally occurring blaze, say, from lightning and overcame the impulse to urinate on it and put it out. Surprisingly, statistical studies tend to justify Freud's rather odd

idea. Setting fires (or pyromania) correlates positively with persistent bed-wetting in youth among delinquents—and among arsonists and volunteer firemen. . . . Other writers have suggested that the special shame of uncontrolled wetting provides a basis for ambition: if I achieve greatly, I do not need to be ashamed. (Any ambition, of course, rests on an ability—or perhaps an inability—to think of consequences.) Still others see urination as gratifying sadistic or self-assertive needs or, alternatively, as a passive giving oneself up and foregoing control.<sup>31</sup>

Cleveland psychoanalyst Scott Dowling confirms, similarly, that long-term bed-wetting patients that he has known in therapy or analysis have exhibited “a bitter, pressing, persistent kind of ambition, not usually very successful.”<sup>32</sup>

A Jungian analyst (analytical psychologist) in Brazil, Victor-Pierre Stirnimann, has noted another linkage between the ambitious drives of Alexander the Great and Herostratos. Even though Alexander’s victories left him weeping that there were no more worlds to conquer, he still aspired, as Herostratos had done, to the assurance of immortality that could be provided by association of his name with the temple of the deathless Artemis. By an irony of Greek tradition recorded by Strabo, the goddess granted recognition to her destroyer but not to the hero who offered to cause the Artemision to rise again from its ashes. Stirnimann comments on the incident:

In 333 BC, the Macedonian emperor was in Ephesus, and there he saw the Artemision still being rebuilt. It is said that he offered to finance the completion of the works, *provided that he received all the credit for it and his name were carved on the temple*. The city administrators, however, managed to avoid his ambiguous generosity with a reply full of psychological subtlety: *it is not fitting that one god should build a temple for another god*.

Despite the generosity of Alexander’s rejected gift, Stirnimann sees his offer as an aggressive, self-aggrandizing action that resembles Herostratos’s arson:

Herostratus burned the temple while driven by a quest for immortality, and Alexander tried to finance its reconstruction exactly for the same motive. The same need to leave behind a mark, creating or destroying; perhaps Herostratus and Alexander should be understood as two faces of a single theme, with their aggressive response to the state of things, their cult to their own personality, their potential for violence. A centrifugal



face and another centripetal: the one seeks to expand the world while the other tries to get hold of its symbolical center.<sup>33</sup>

The ambitions for either conquest or destruction, in Stirnimann's view, compensate for a lack of perceived individuality:

This alternative is always there, especially during adolescence, when we need to metabolize the pressure to enter the adults' game, the violence of the norms over the still untamed parts of our nature. The response can be Alexandrian and self-confident, the "get out there and conquer it"; or it can be the reflux of depredation and delinquency, the transgressor Herostratus smashing shop windows during the early hours of the morning. In both movements, however, something always ends up being sacrificed: there is neither recognition nor assimilation of that inarticulate kernel of sense which is felt to pertain to each individuality. That is the reason behind the identical thirst for notoriety—it can offer some relief for what is lacking.<sup>34</sup>

The kinship identified in these psychological studies between the aggressive personalities of Herostratos and Alexander has also been discerned intuitively by many authors who have re-created the Herostratos story in fiction and drama.

### THIRD

*Since Herostratos needed to proclaim his guilt to achieve his objective of everlasting fame, why was his confession obtained under torture?* A puzzling feature of Valerius Maximus's account of Herostratos's case is his assertion that the arsonist's confession was obtained after he was tortured on the rack. Since ancient writers agree that the purpose of the crime was to satisfy a desire for eternal fame, an essential ingredient in Herostratos's premeditated design must have been to assure that all Ephesus would give him credit for the inferno. He must have been prepared to cry his name and even his motive to all who would listen. Still, we are told, his confession was coerced by torture. Why?

The ancient Greeks generally abstained from the use of torture to compel testimony. One exception that they made to this rule, as did the Romans as late as Cicero's day, was that slaves, even if they were willing to testify, were regularly subjected to torture before their evidence was heard. In *Torture and Truth*, Professor Page duBois argues that the testing of slaves' evidence through the "process of torture" rested on the assumption that "the slave, because of

his or her servile status, will not spontaneously produce a pure statement, cannot be trusted to do so.”<sup>35</sup> Despite the prevalence of this cruel practice and its frequent reflections in Greek literature, attacks on the reliability of torture as a truth-seeking device can be found in forensic speeches. A notable example is the argument that Antiphon around 415 BC wrote for his client, Euxitheus, who was tried, partly on the basis of a slave’s testimony, for the alleged shipboard murder of a fellow traveler, Herodes:

The slave was doubtless promised his freedom: it was certainly to the prosecution alone that he could look for release from his sufferings. Probably both of these considerations induced him to make the false charges against me which he did; he hoped to gain his freedom, and his one immediate wish was to end the torture. I need not remind you, I think, that witnesses under torture are biased in favour of those who do most of the torturing; they will say anything likely to gratify them. It is their one chance of salvation, especially when the victims of their lies happen not to be present. Had I myself proceeded to give orders that the slave should be racked for not telling the truth, that step in itself would doubtless have been enough to make him stop incriminating me falsely. As it was, the examination was conducted by men who also knew what their own interests required.<sup>36</sup>

It appears in the course of Antiphon’s argument that a member of the crew who was a free man also underwent torture. K. J. Maidment, the translator of Antiphon, notes that since the sailor was tortured, “he cannot have been born a Greek.”<sup>37</sup> Professor duBois suggests that not only barbarians but also Greek noncitizens could become victims of torture: “In the work of the wheel, the rack, and the whip, the torturer carries out the work of the *polis* [city-state]; citizen is made distinct from noncitizen, Greek from barbarian, slave from free.”<sup>38</sup> It is possible, therefore, that Herostratos was tortured because he was presently or formerly a slave, or a non-Ephesian by birth.<sup>39</sup>

An alternative explanation may rest on the extraordinary nature of the crime, the shattering impact that it had on the prestige and confidence of Ephesus. Professor duBois cites a stormy passage of Athenian history in which politicians responded to a sacrilegious outrage by urging, to great acclaim, a suspension of a decree banning the torture of citizens. In 415 BC, during the Peloponnesian War, the sacred herms (marble or stone pillars often surmounted by a bust of the god Hermes and bearing male genitals) that stood in the streets of Athens had been mutilated; two council members, accused of

participating in the desecration, fled rather than face the prospects of torture and criminal proceedings.<sup>40</sup>

The burning of Ephesus's beloved temple could have induced a similar willingness to suspend the legal guaranties of citizens' immunity from torture. The leaders of the city must have marveled that a man of whom nobody had heard could have planned an attack of such breathtaking sacrilege. Even if he had already announced his name and motive to all within earshot, could he be believed? There was no precedent in Greek history for destroying a great temple to win personal notoriety. The Ephesians could therefore understandably have suspected that an even more sinister explanation remained unconfessed, for example, that Herostratos might have been in the employ of foreign enemies of the city. Ephesus may have been in the grip of a panic, as reflected by Plutarch's account of the soothsayers who ran through the streets predicting other disasters to follow. It may have been to still such disquiet and to sound Herostratos's criminal plan to its very depth that he was led to the rack.

#### FOURTH

*What was the effect of the Ephesian ban on mentioning the name of Herostratos?* The outraged Ephesians believed that capital punishment was inadequate retribution for Herostratos's act of sacrilegious destruction and therefore also decreed that his name should never again be pronounced. This remedy, applied only to the most grievous offenses, came to be known in Roman law as *damnatio memoriae*, damnation of the criminal's memory, that is, consignment of his name to oblivion.<sup>41</sup> Once the desire of Herostratos for eternal fame was confirmed under torture, the obliteration of his memory must have seemed particularly appropriate as a means not only of shaming him but of taking away the fruits of his crime.

Some light may be shed on the legal doctrine supporting the ban on Herostratos's name by considering punishments imposed in ancient Athens to control public memory of disruptive crime. In *The World of Prometheus: The Politics of Punishing in Ancient Athens*, Professor Danielle S. Allen points out that Athens applied related penal strategies of remembering and forgetting. To preserve communal recollection of a crime, official memorials of punishment were inscribed on pillars or slabs, places of execution became landmarks, or the convict was condemned to wear a binding that disgraced him forever in the eyes of his fellow citizens. Alternatively, the city could impose a penalty of forgetting, which dishonored the convicted man by requiring that "[he] disappear from the sight of the citizenry, and . . . that the city forget about a

wrongdoer.” Allen associates with penalties of forgetting the imposition of sentences separating the criminal physically from the body of the city, such as exile, ritual expulsion of scapegoats, and “the precipitation of wrongdoers off cliffs and onto rocks” beyond the city’s borders. These punishments of exclusion served the purpose of purifying the community after it had suffered pollution by criminal offenses; the sanctions “not only admitted to the permanence of social disruption [caused by the crime] but also simultaneously required that citizens forget this fact.”<sup>42</sup>

Finnish scholar Katariina Mustakallio, reviewing ancient histories by Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, has identified four capital cases in which postmortem shaming remedies were imposed in the early years of the Roman Republic.<sup>43</sup> The prosecutions that she cites all addressed challenges to public order, such as treasonous association with an enemy of Rome and power grabs that the Romans termed more elegantly “aspiring to kingship.” The postmortem sanctions, in addition to the obliteration of names, included the confiscation of the criminal’s property by the government or its contribution to religious shrines and the demolition of the criminal’s residence, a distressing remedy that broke ties with the past as well as the future since it ended the family’s ability to continue ancestral household rites.

Among the examples to which Mustakallio refers, the trial of Marcus Manlius, dating from the early fourth century BC, provides the clearest historiographical evidence for recourse to damnation of memory. Unlike Herostratos, Manlius had a heroic past, since it was he whom tradition credits for saving Rome from a surprise attack by the Gauls around 390 BC; he is said to have been alerted to the incursion by the monitory cackling of sacred geese on the Capitoline Hill. In later years, however, Manlius came into conflict with the patrician faction in Rome by urging that gold recovered from a ransom collection for the Gallic invader should have been used to pay debts owed by the city’s plebeians. Like Herostratos’s arson, Manlius’s proposal was regarded as sacrilegious, because the patrician leader Camillus had already consecrated the gold to Jupiter and ordered it stored in the god’s temple. Convicted of treason in 384 BC, Manlius was, according to the Roman historian Livy, thrown to his death from the Tarpeian Rocks. The Manlian clan also imposed its private penal sanction to blot out his memory, a proscription that Mustakallio finds to have been effective: “According to Livy, the family itself proscribed members from using the name of Marcus. As far as we know, no later members of the Manlii carried the name of Marcus.”<sup>44</sup>

Similar instances of condemned memory in the reign of Emperor Tiberius are related by Tacitus in his *Annals*. After Libo Drusus of the Scribonius

family, charged with hatching revolutionary schemes, forced one of his slaves to kill him, his property was divided among his accusers; it was also proposed “that Libo’s bust should not be carried in the funeral procession of any of his descendants; . . . and that no Scribonius should assume the surname of Drusus.” Cneius (or Gnaeus) Piso later committed suicide or was secretly murdered while facing charges in the Senate for encouraging sedition among the military. Consul Aurelius Cotta voted “that Piso’s name ought to be erased from the public register, half of his property confiscated, half given up to his son, Cneius Piso, who was to change his first name.” However, “much of the sentence was mitigated by the emperor.”<sup>45</sup> Roman emperors (such as Nero) who were regarded as notably cruel also fell victim to posthumous damnation of memory: the official acts of these rulers were nullified and their sculptural portraits were destroyed or reworked.<sup>46</sup>

As the Roman Empire expanded, decrees banning the memory of criminals had the practical effect of international law enforceable wherever the emperor had the desire and military force to impose the will of central government on his subjects. However, until 334 BC, when it welcomed the entry of Alexander the Great, fourth-century Ephesus was only one of the many politically weak cities of Asia Minor under Persian domination, and thus it lacked the power to project the force of its local decrees extraterritorially, except perhaps to the extent that its wishes would have been persuasive with other Greek population centers in Ionia. Although the statement of Aulus Gellius, Roman miscellanist of the second century AD, that the ban on Herostratos’s name was decreed by the “common council” of Asia Minor should be discounted,<sup>47</sup> there was precedent for religiously centered cooperation among the Greek city-states of Ionia. Herodotus notes that in the dawn of their history the twelve Ionian cities, including Ephesus, established the Panionion (All-Ionia League) on Mount Mycale, dedicated to the god Poseidon; this sacred meeting place was the site of the Panionia festival.<sup>48</sup>

Wholly apart from the possible effect of pan-Ionian sympathies, the power of the offended goddess stood behind the damnation of the arsonist’s name. Since Herostratos’s crime was also a sin against Artemis/Diana, whose cult drew widespread allegiance in Europe as well as Asia, religious unity could have provided a basis for an observance of the memory ban that transcended political boundaries. In fact, Professor A. M. Harmon, translator of Lucian, has suggested that the prohibition against Herostratos’s memory “very likely was accompanied by a curse.”<sup>49</sup>

Such curses were far from unknown. There is evidence that around 590 BC, a sweeping and bloodcurdling curse was formulated in response to a sacrilege

against a major shrine in mainland Greece. According to the orator Aeschines, the inhabitants of Cirra on the Corinthian Gulf “behaved impiously toward the temple of Delphi and its dedicated offerings.” After a punitive war against the offenders, the plain of Cirra and its harbor were given as consecrated property to Delphi’s presiding god, Apollo, his sister and mother, Artemis and Leto, as well as Athena Pronaia (the name under which the patroness of Athens was worshiped in Delphi). The territory of the offenders was laid waste and the oracle ordered it not to be reworked. The victorious forces swore to abide by the oracle and fortified its terms by adding a divine curse: “If anyone, city or individual or people contravenes this, let them be cursed by Apollo, Artemis, Leto, and Athena Pronaia.” The specifications of the curse warned would-be violators of dire consequences: “Their land should not produce crops nor their women bear children that resemble their parents but monsters, . . . they should be defeated in war, lawsuits and debates, and both they themselves and their households and their race should perish utterly . . . and may the gods not accept their offerings.”<sup>50</sup> The text of the ancient curse was still on file in the Athenian public record office in 330 BC, when Aeschines had occasion to cite its fulminations in his prosecution of Ctesiphon, an ally of Demosthenes.

Even a horrific curse cannot be regarded as wielding the powerful deterrent effect of the modern Iranian *fatwa* that for many years caused an English resident, Salman Rushdie, to hide in fear of international assassins. Yet many commentators have seemed to reflect the belief that the memory ban continued to influence the literature of Greece and Rome for centuries after the temple fire. The acceptance of this dubious proposition is based on the fact that some ancient writers, among them Cicero and Plutarch, refer to the destruction of the Artemision but do not name the arsonist. In no event, however, was the suppression of the name universally observed even in the early years, for Theopompus, the first historian said to have violated the decree, was a contemporary of the criminal.

In any case, the Ephesians’ attempt to impose oblivion on the arsonist was destined to fail. Even if the incendiary had remained anonymous to this day, he would have achieved a sinister fame as the man who burned a Wonder of the World. Whether the ancients chose to flout the letter of the Ephesian ban by naming the hated arsonist or defined him by association with his unprecedented crime, they kept alive the memory of an emblematic act of terror.

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