

## Herodotus in the Anthropocene



*Herodotus in  
the Anthropocene*

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*To J. Peter Euben*

History, in contradistinction to nature, is full of events; here the miracle of accident and infinite improbability occurs so frequently that it seems strange to speak of miracles at all. But the reason for this frequency is merely that historical processes are created and constantly interrupted by human initiative, by the *initium* man is insofar as he is an acting being. Hence it is not in the least superstitious, it is even a counsel of realism, to look for the unforeseeable and unpredictable, to be prepared for and to expect “miracles” in the political realm. And the more heavily the scales are weighted in favor of disaster, the more miraculous will the deed done in freedom appear; for it is disaster, not salvation, which always happens automatically and therefore must always appear to be irresistible.

HANNAH ARENDT, “What Is Freedom?”

Perhaps . . . the solution to the crisis of reason, as Montesquieu suggested, is not in simplification but in complexity. But how does complexity itself avoid appearing as a simple solution? Perhaps it has to do with treating complexity as signifying diverse claims and life forms so that marks of a solution are not simplicity or elegance or reduction, as we have been taught, but the creation of conditions which encourage complexities that live by different laws and defy Cartesian solutions.

SHELDON WOLIN, “Montesquieu and *Publius*”