

Paths

“Europe” began with war or with a poem
remembering that war — the thirteenth-century-B-C.
conflict in Anatolia and the Eastern Mediterranean —
the Hittite Empire falling,
Mycenean civilization destroyed,
Egypt attacked by the Sea Peoples.

After another hundred years a tribe
of warriors called the Dorians “took power” in Greece.
Many Hellenes fled.
“Europe” began with “ethnic cleansing.”

The Greeks — the Hellenes — fled across the immense sea to islands
and Asia Minor,
the Achaians leaving Thessary, Phocis, Locris and Boetia around
1100 B.C.

They went to Lesbos, Tenedos, the Anatolian coast, the Troad.
They formed the Aeolian League of twelve cities.

(“Soon afterward” — “soon” meaning perhaps half a century? —
the Dorians, following the paths of
the refugees they themselves had driven out,
sent a new expedition from Greece to colonize
Rhodes, Cos, and the Anatolian coast south of the Ionians.)

In Anatolia the Greeks — the Hellenes — encountered, settled or
traded with, intermarried with,
or murdered and were murdered by, etc.,
many peoples who had already been
“displaced,” there in Anatolia, by the same
widespread conflicts that had allowed
the Dorians to “come to power,” back in Greece, in the first place —
the Mysians, Phrygians, Carians, Lycians,
Pamphylians, Pisidians and Cilicians.

A mutual Hellenizing and orientalizing, during those many lifetimes,
during those several centuries.

But the Greek-speaking movement into Anatolia eventually
“brought Greeks into conflict with” powers farther east
The Persian wars began around six-sixty-five B.C.

These wars continued until four-eighty-one bee cee.
So much had been destroyed (especially of Athens)
that a great period of culture (one hundred and fifty years) —
of rebuilding and building, of recreating and creating
new material splendor and a new splendor of ideas and practices,
in the midst of and despite or even in some ways dependent on
what was inevitably “unpleasant,” which is to say that
at the level of individual lives it was horrifying,
unendurable, forever destroying —
was made possible.

Then came the Peloponnesian Wars.
But war is culture, too.