

Bears Chasing Sheep

by Robert Gear (September 2017)



The Wait, Kendra Mallock, 2013

The following headline in *The Daily Telegraph* (July, 22nd, 2017) caught my eye: [Hundreds of sheep killed after bear chases them over cliff.](#)

Was the headline writer trying to tell us something beyond the surface meaning? That was my first reaction. But then sobriety settled in, and I realized that the words were merely literal. The tragedy (at least for the owner of the sheep) took place on the French-Spanish border in the Pyrenees Mountains. A spokesperson for the French Farmers Federation declared, "The state, which is responsible for the reintroduction of the bears, should remove the ones that are causing problems and should not reintroduce any more bears." The article goes on, "The verbal protest was the latest battle in the long-running war between livestock farmers and animal conservationists who believe bears have their rightful place in the mountain range."

Did anyone hear the sheep bell or a single bleat? I think we can all spot an echo of current (ahem) 'events' taking place throughout much of Europe and elsewhere. So, bears have been reintroduced by nature-loving environmentalists over the protestations of local shepherds. The unintended consequence for pastoralists in the region has been an erosion of their livelihood and potential destruction of their traditional way of life. Further, we are told in the article that the growing presence of wolves in France has led to similar *colère grandissante* among French farmers; over 8000 farm animals have been killed in the last year by these predators.

There are literary and biblical parallels involving wild or untrained animals. In Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd*, for instance, an untrained dog belonging to Gabriel Oak, a Wessex shepherd, drives the entire flock over a chalk pit, leaving him with nothing except the clothes on his back. For Oak (and the name 'Oak' gives a clue to his steadfast character), this tragedy eventually leads through a series of incidents to eventual good fortune. But, of course, that is novelistic

license.

And in the synoptic gospels, Jesus confronts an unclean spirit whose name is Legion—*for we are many*. Jesus permits the demonic spirits to enter a herd of swine which forthwith “ran violently down a steep place into the sea . . . and were choked in the sea,” a graphic illustration, if any were needed, of mass suicide caused by madness. Likewise a peculiar madness has entered a large segment of the European population who appear to be moving lemming-like towards an invisible cliff. Or perhaps they are like the sheep confronted by bears. The sheep are like . . . well, sheep. Orwell, in *Animal Farm*, his satire against Stalinist Russia, understood this perfectly, which is why the sheep in the fable rhythmically chant “Four legs good, two legs bad! Four legs good, two legs bad!” and keep it up for hours on end. How redolent this is of the neurotic slogans of the radical left or of the insinuations of media pundits—*Other cultures good, our culture bad! Other cultures good, our culture bad!* This too is kept up ad infinitum.

I don't want to draw too exact a comparison between wild animals and certain elements of a large and growing politico-religious cult. Clearly, animals act out of instinct; humans have reasoning powers and a conscience. But there comes a point when ideology completely trumps reason and so individuals may begin to act like wild animals in the promotion of their convictions: convictions like Jihad, or civilizational warfare, which allow the ideologue to act monstrously. Such sentiments have been found in Europe before, of course. For example, György Lukács, intellectual mentor of the Frankfurt School, said about a now-largely discarded secular ‘jihad’ for which he was a propagandist, “Communist ethics makes it the highest duty to accept the necessity to act *wickedly*” (italics added). Around the same time, the third

member of the totalitarian triad, Nazism, fervently promoted 'wickedness' in pursuit of its *Judenrein* aspiration. At great cost, the latter two enemies of civilization were beaten back; in the long spectacle of human folly a mere moment in historical time. The much longer-drawn-out fatal impact of shariah-creep continues with few setbacks.

So we have literary, biblical and now seemingly innocent reportage that clearly provides analogs of pressing contemporary events. It is not just other people's sheep that are being pushed over the cliff; Shakespeare's most famous stage direction, "*Exit, pursued by a bear,*" may yet prove unintentionally prophetic.

Robert Gear now lives in the American Southwest. He is a retired English teacher and has co-authored with his wife several texts in the field of ESL.

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