

What Lies Ahead?

by David P. Gontar (November 2016)



“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” – Matthew 7:20

As we take stock of darkening days in the 21st century anxious eyes scan the horizon. To whom may we turn? Besides history, philosophy and theology, we have also the deliverances of poetry. Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), who calls for “‘man’ to live poetically on the earth,” advances the view that it is in poetry that we align ourselves with the very nature of things. (See, e.g., “Der Ister,” 1942, 1996) Heidegger’s Greco-Teutonic thought attunes itself to the mystical verses of Freidrich Hölderlin (1770-1843), an opaque oeuvre almost beyond the ken of the Anglophone world. More accessible for those of us in the Shakespearean ethos is the gifted Irish bard W.B. Yeats (1865-1939). His classic

"The Second Coming" (1919) is arguably the single greatest utterance of the modern world. Only twenty-two lines in length, it contains some of the most iconic expressions in literature, still reverberating with unexampled power. Which of us has not nodded in rueful astonishment at the reflection that in our era "the best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity"? "The Second Coming" surpasses all conventional forecasts by casting its prophecy in the interrogative mode: "what rough beast, its hour come round at last, slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?" We know and know not.

It is a truism that over time meaning develops, unfolds. For Yeats the calamities of the first world war and Anglo-Irish conflicts evoked an outcry. But if his art endures it can only be because a deeper message transcends the incidents of the 20th century. Pregnant lines, now etched in our aging and careworn minds – and faces – as we struggle to make sense of a world impervious to reason, beckon to us, call for our most resolute response. In 1935 it was evident to Heidegger that Germany was caught in pincers manipulated by the opposing colossi of Russia and America. He called for *der Volk* to throw off Bolshevism and cheap commercialism and return to an authentic affirmation of blood and soil. Uncomprehending fascists spurned his ideal vision and, in a misconceived campaign of butchery and conquest, went down in *Götterdämmerung*. No one was listening to *der Dichter* at the Battle of the Bulge.

Returning to Yeats in the second decade of the 21st century we find his truth coming into focus. Though Russia and America still glower at one another across the abyss, the winds of war blow from a different direction. A new catalyst of catastrophe emerges. Who "lacks all conviction" today, if not the Europeans and their weak-kneed American cousins? The sustaining ideals and values of the Allies in the second world war and its immediate aftermath have evaporated, deserting us, ironically, at the moment of greatest need, as we find ourselves confronted by our most implacable and faithful foe, militant Islam. Checked and undermined by pathological doubt and the paralysis of self-loathing, let down by the failure of technology to furnish true security, the west has abandoned core values which once defined and supported civilization: a sense of right and wrong, work, marriage, family, pride of sexual difference, classical art and architecture, the ardor of national integrity and the willingness to fight to defend our lives. Life itself was our treasure. No more. Those affirmative tenets lie gutted and abandoned, replaced by corrosive conformism,

egalitarianism, guilt, shame, effeminacy and the corruption of language. Not life but death is the idol of our enemy. A virulent and aggressive *Jihad* spreads around the globe. Its shrill votaries seethe with "passionate intensity," as they hurl their bodies towards the next glorious caliphate. In the light of the explosion of Islamic barbarity Yeats' exclamations take on new significance.

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold:

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned.

The "centre," of course, is once more Europe, into which the very dregs of humanity continue to stream, a blood-dimmed tide surging across a fractured and bemused union. Mesmerized by their own nihilism and rhetoric of abject surrender, its leaders cannot recognize the implications of this invasion of misery, an irreversible flood which eats away at the substance of England, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy and other unwitting victim-hosts. Sweden, for example, is presently undergoing a wholesale social deconstruction in which the indigenous population rushes to embrace minority status while genuflecting before proliferating mosques, burqas and Sharia law. In an unprecedented embrace of genteel genocide, weary yet unwary Swedes forego reproduction while parasitic "refugees" revel in lush welfare and breed like mayflies.

In 1492 Spain finally succeeded in ejecting the Muslim hordes which had seized it and kept it in subjection for centuries. That sort of monumental act required confidence and a will strong enough to carry it out. So massive is the influx of Muslims into Europe today and so etiolated is the nerve of its floundering peoples that the process is well nigh irreversible. The situation is particularly bleak in England, whose urban areas are becoming unrecognizable as swarms of Islamic newcomers prowl its neighborhoods. It was an English poet, Shakespeare, who wrote to remind his countrymen that Henry V won kingdoms for the realm and that his son, the weakling Henry VI, lost them all. Will Brexit signal the possibility that the English people will rouse themselves and stem the blood-dimmed tide that threatens to engulf them? That would require Churchill-like statesmanship. As recently as 1683 a Muslim army which had been

decimating Europe was stopped at the gates of Vienna on September 11th of that year by the gallant King of Poland, Jan Sobieski. On that date in 2001 the United States of America was attacked by Muslim terrorists, a continuation of the same aggressive nisus.

Instead of launching a crusade to destroy these marauders once and for all, our politicians in their cowardice and bad faith would teach us that the terror unleashed by Islam in Europe and America is not *Islamic* terror. That is the sophisticated dogma of our day. For consider: Does the existence of a complacent Muslim bourgeoisie not directly participating in terrorism mean that such acts carried out exclusively by Muslims are not Muslim in nature? Even to pose the question is to answer it. Grant that the Germans committed genocide in the 1940's. Was it really not *German* genocide because it was not conducted by the totality of the German people? On the contrary, it is elementary that the seeming innocence of some members of a group does not remove the taint and responsibility from that group when other members revel in atrocities. As the misbehavior of the child is a reflection on the family, so the misdeeds of a society are an indictment of it. In the history of canines, suppose some rabid dogs never bite and infect anyone. Does that mean we shouldn't avoid one when we see it, or fail to identify its breed when we report the event to authorities? Citing the bourgeois complacency of some Muslims, our leaders would silence those of us with sufficient common sense to perceive the source of danger and depredation. Such leaders are thus complicit in those crimes they insist are not the product of any identifiable group. Everyone can see the source is Islam, the policy is clear in Islamic texts and Islamists gleefully take credit for these outrages. Shall we not take them at their word? They seek to establish the next caliphate on the graves of western peoples too ridden with guilt and self-hate to utter a cry. Shall we not acknowledge Islamic ambitions? We are dealing with a unique mindset. Recently an Islamic terrorist was captured. He begged the police to kill him because he had an appointment in paradise at 4 p.m. and didn't want to be late. That says it all.

What, then, is that rough beast slouching towards Bethlehem to be born? Back in the 1960's famed novelist and social critic Norman Mailer diagnosed it as "totalitarianism." He wasn't far from the mark. For the spirit of Islam is that of absolute despotism and correlative submission. That is the pith and kernel of the enterprise. But Mailer missed the significance of the poem's Arabic

ambience.

A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Wind shadows of the indignant desert birds.

Here is familiar topography indeed, the land of the "Arab Spring." There, under the basilisk eye of the Sphinx, something long dormant has been awakened.

The darkness drops again but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

"Though we seemed dead, we did but sleep," says the French King in *King Henry V* (III, vi, 91-91). King Harry's intrusion sounds an alarm waking the forces of France who will swoop down on Harry's rag tag battalion. In like manner, Yeats' "rocking cradle" of Christianity finally drives the middle eastern mind crazy, as one might strike a wasps' nest and send thousands of lethal insects into madness and retaliation. The rough beast, its hour come round at last, is neither Christ nor Christianity, but Islam. What Yeats' poem prophesies is the ultimate recrudescence of Islamic savagery in humanity's final days.

It may be objected that the reading of "rough beast" could be a mere subjective imposition of someone with an axe to grind. It might reflect mere feelings, or the vagaries of fancy. But Yeats would agree that the beast is an Idea, for it is an image drawn out of "Spiritus Mundi," or what Carl Jung calls the "collective unconscious." Islam is indeed an idea, an archetype, or what the metaphysicians refer to as a "permanent possibility of being." That can hardly rule out instantiations of that Idea. The question is, what is the meaning of that Idea, and how should we stand in relation thereto?

Return to the text. Things are falling apart. The world is descending into chaos. Everything is tainted and corrupted. The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity. As I look about I am troubled. A horrible monster like the Sphinx is coming alive in the desert, frightening the birds. Something awful is opening its eyes, a creature spawned by nightmare, and that thing is "slouching" to the birthplace of Christ to be born. What could it be but evil, the hideous resurrection of pure evil?

The objection therefore collapses in light of the conjunction of metaphor and history. The Idea becomes our dread Reality. The consensus on this point includes the Voice of Islam itself, which admits its own moral depravity and loathsomeness. We find *the Beast* enshrined in the *Qur'an* as the force of universal terror and destruction, as Islam morphs into slaughter and annihilation.

"And when the word is fulfilled against them (the unjust)

we shall produce from the earth A BEAST to face them."

(Qur'an, sura 27, An-Naml)

Any lingering doubts about this are dispelled with finality by Islamic scholarship itself. The esoteric identity of Yeats' 'rough beast' as Islam is familiar to Muslims and a commonplace in their literature. Thus, in an October 31, 2009 review of Salim Mansur's *Islam's Predicament: Perspectives of a Dissident Muslim*, Rory Leishman writes: "Paraphrasing William Butler Yeats, Mansur contends that Islam is in the grips of a "rough beast" that has let loose anarchy upon the world." Further, "Mansur charges that while Osama bin Laden and the Al-Qaeda network [now Isis] are 'the modern faces of the beast' set loose in Islam, Muslim intellectuals and religious leaders such as Tariq Ramadan and Sheikh Al Qaradawi serve the beast as apologists and propagandists." (Rory Leishman, London Free Press, 10/31/09)

In its more lucid intervals, then, the beast of Islam can actually squint in the mirror and breathe a sigh of recognition before the spell beclouds its jaundiced cognitive apparatus.

There are amongst us well-meaning conservatives such as the impossibly erudite and prolific Roger Scruton, who argues that the best of us can recover our

erstwhile convictions and in some undisclosed way give resistance to those miniature beasts whose passionate intensity threatens general conflagration. Decrying the liberal canards and shibboleths of our day, Scruton hopes that these might be overturned in favor of the robust common sense on which our culture and civilization were founded. Doing so might conceivably swell our sails and embolden our hearts. Our European comrades might, for example, find a way to dispose of the European Parliament's Fundamental Rights Agency which treats the liberal agenda as though it were tablets brought down from Mount Sinai. If only we could revive the spirit of western art and architecture, if only we could make Christianity meaningful to secularists (and ourselves), if only we could come together with a sense of true belonging, we might have the strength to fight back. If only. Alas, Dr. Scruton's prescription is more nostalgia than battle plan; he seems congenitally incapable of taking the measure of our Adversary. He has not seen the beast. Tragically there is no King Jan Sobieski to ride his white charger to our rescue. Teddy Roosevelt has left and gone his way. We have renounced miracles and placed ourselves at the mercy of brutes. As Macbeth says, "we are in blood stepp'd so far that, should we wade no more, returning were as tedious as go o'er."

What lies ahead, then, but a world of lies?

David P. Gontar's latest book is [*Hamlet Made Simple and Other Essays*](#), New English Review Press, 2013.

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