The Power of Nightmares: Waking up to early morning bad news on BBC Scotland and fearing the unknown

‘The ‘baleful habitual practices of the miserable mind’ are strongest in the early morning’

Dr R Fletcher, ‘Surgeon to the Lunatic Asylum near Gloucester’ 1833 (p.206) wrote this in 1883. I know it’s not a recent and reliable source, as we used to say in Higher Education, but I think it shows that we’ve known about this effect for some time. Anyway, didn’t Dr Foster go to Gloucester? Never mind. It was no accident that medieval monks and more recently, private school boarders, got started with their religious indoctrination before dawn so as to catch them anxious, fearful and absorbent of the required sense of superiority and deep racial prejudices necessary for the conquest of lesser peoples.

Making these early hours particularly effective for indoctrination, they often follow on from nightmares:

‘Nightmares tend to occur during the early morning, as opposed to late evening with night terrors, and patients usually have good recall of the events of the dream.’ (Science-based Medicine, 2014)
Moving forward to Scotland in the years after Referendum 2014, as we watch the early news from ‘where you [people] are now’, on BBC Breakfast, does the above matter? Well....

‘I would like to re-emphasise the importance of “bad news” in the genesis of psychopathology, as this does not seem to be generally recognised. Bad news, of deaths and other disasters, is not available to our primate cousins who are not equipped to exchange gossip, but has been available to our ancestors over the last few million years since language evolved. Since these ancestors lived in groups of about 150 individuals, the amount of bad news they could generate was limited, even if we add in bad news from neighbouring groups. Now, we have available the bad news of many billions of people. Since news of death or other disaster may presage the nearby existence of a predator or of raiding parties from neighbouring tribes, or of disease, it must have been adaptive for bad news to increase anxiety and promote activities to ward off occurrence, such as increased washing, checking of security arrangements, and the advantageous territorial constriction of agoraphobia.’

See that last phrase there? Is that a way of saying ‘Better Together?’ Is Unionism a kind of agoraphobia, a fear of autonomy and wide-open EU spaces?

Previously, I’ve tended to use news data from the 6-7pm period to reflect on BBC bias. I think the above evidence suggests I might be better looking at those short reports from the BBC Scotland team which are broadcast from very early in the morning (6.30 am) then repeated until around 9.00 am.

Yesterday, 21st September 2016, I noted three relevant reports. Two were about NHS worries and one was an allegedly positive story for Labour supporters. The first two were classic ‘Project Fear’ pieces you might call ‘Blairism 2’, after Better Together supremo, Blair McDougall. To be accurate it was McDougall’s ‘number two’, Rob Shorthouse, known affectionately as ‘Shortarse’, who had scatted the term at a Tory conference. Did I make a good jobbie of vocabularising that last sentence or was it crap? Yesterday’s (21st September) report is at:

This morning at 06:28 am, 22\textsuperscript{nd} September 2016, we got five stories. Headlining was the deeply worrying, in the wake of recent toddler murder cases:

‘The current system of social work in Scotland is unsustainable!’

Adding to the anxiety of the elderly viewer worrying perhaps about a grandchild in the care of an unsuitable step-parent, they were to hear, also:

‘Elderly people consume more and more of social work budgets.’

OMG they might have said if they were younger.

Second, we heard that the parties are to meet to discuss the pressure on local services budgets with the suggestion of an end to the council tax freeze. Listening grandad? Will you be able to hang on to the house if they bump the council tax? It’ll be even worse if the SNP get their way.

Third it was the announcement of the publication of an ‘end-of-life facilities’ guide. That’s it! I’ve had enough! I’m off to walk the dog if he can still walk as his age. Right at the end, we heard it was actually a good news story. Really it was. Scotland’s guide will be the first in the World! Hooray!

Fourth we had good news about five of Scotland elite universities making a World top 200. I suppose that’s good news for them but more bad news for most of us who’d like to see the gap between them and their impoverished neighbours, the ‘New’ universities who take nearly all the students from disadvantaged areas, narrowed. Either way, I’m sure the SG will get no credit for any of this. Finally there was wee report on the Crofting Commission needing to apologise to crofters. I can’t remember why nor can I guess why it had taken up space that could have been used for:

‘Scottish teachers consider suspending industrial action after workload breakthrough’

Now that is good news; thousands of weanbairns not shouting at us old folk for dithering in our part of the day.

OK, so two bad news reports for the SG, one grudging good news report for the SG and one good news story for better-off Scots and their bairnweans going ‘up’ to an Ancient university.
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Sources:

https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=BZSGPCrP3I0C&pg=PA206&lpg=PA206&dq=early+morning+influence+on+mind&source=bl&ots=QfO_qa5dQz&sig=HgzaKh-QngrVirRpXFR4M-ds3WQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjqgl-kkqLPAhVoBMAKHTfBBQQG6AEIKjAC#v=onepage&q=early%20morning%20influence%20on%20mind&f=false

https://www.sciencebasedmedicine.org/nightmares-night-terrors-and-potential-implications-for-pediatric-mental-health/