

Baptiste Morizot, *Les Diplomates: Cohabiter avec les loups sur une autre carte du vivant* (Marseille: Wildproject, 2016), 320 pp.

In 1992, after almost a century of the species' absence from France, two wolves from Italy entered French territory. Since then, the population has multiplied: in 2015, France had more or less five hundred wolves. These animals pose a social problem not only because of their bad reputation (which is not totally baseless) for devouring humans, but also because they decimate flocks of sheep. One lupine behavior in particular perplexes the herders: these predators kill more sheep than they can eat ("*those animals are really barbaric!*"). Scientists call this phenomenon "surplus killing." There are two main techniques for managing wild animals, neither of which is useful in the case of wolves. The first is to hunt, but present regulations in France protect wild species, and moreover there are not enough hunters to implement such a program. Delineating sanctuaries is the other technique, but wolves do not stay within given territories; they tend to disperse and disseminate.

Baptiste Morizot, a professor at the University of Aix-Marseille, proposes a third way of managing wolves, which he calls "diplomatic." Diplomacy as a technique is grounded on the idea that neither wolves nor humans are essentially good or bad. Hence the first diplomatic step is to ask how the historical routes taken by humans and wolves have made the latter "barbaric" in Europe. (To stress that this outcome is peculiar to Europe, Morizot invokes ethnographic works on Amerindians who believe that wolves are not harmful to humans. The Tanaina of Alaska, at least in one of their tales, advise people lost in the forest to ask for help from wolves.) The author explains that wolves adapt the way they run to the capabilities of their intended prey. In general, animals are afraid when they see a wolf and swiftly begin to run, allowing the predator to learn how best to pursue them. But some animals, such as the mouflon (a wild sheep), have learned to be courageous and immobile. The wolf is less likely to attack when it cannot observe how its prey will run. When mouflons do run, moreover, they split up, and so, to deal with them, the wolves have acquired the habit of killing as many as they can

(though the numbers have never been large). As breeders select sheep for docility and gregariousness, domesticated breeds have lost the courage of their wild ancestors and are unable to remain immobile when facing predators. Domesticated sheep also tend to run in groups, which enables the wolf to kill many at the same time. Wolves are not, by nature, surplus killers; they have become so in the course of their relations with mouflons and their domesticated counterparts.

Diplomacy seeks neither to demonize and justify the hunting of wolves nor to sanctify and protect them. Diplomacy seeks to work on relationships, and so it is important to invent means of communicating with the wolf. Morizot does not suggest negotiating and then signing a contract with French wolves. His idea is modest and practical. He makes a case, for instance, for the “biofences” tested by the American scientist David Ausband, who, in order to indicate to wolves that a certain territory belongs to humans, replicates the markers that wolves use to delineate the territory of their own packs. “Biofences” are only one example of communicative forms that use ethological patterns in order to construct new relations with animal species. Diplomats must take into account the perspective of the wolf; they must learn “to think like a wolf”: how does a wolf know, for instance, where its territory ends? The author argues that by implementing communicative devices instead of using violence, compromises can be found to enable herders and wolves to live with one another. In any case, scientific research by John Shivik and others shows that nonlethal techniques are more efficient than lethal ones in managing wolves.

Morizot’s style of writing is sometimes awkward due to an excessive use of neologistic jargon (*lupology*, *metaphorology*, *informational obstacle* . . .), though it may be that the originality and audacity of his work made this difficulty inevitable. *Les Diplomates*, after all, combines the interests and methods of three disciplines: anthropology (which exposes the variety of human-animal relations), evolutionary science (which redraws the trajectories of encounters between species, allowing for a better understanding of their different behaviors), and ethology (which permits us to improve our knowledge of animal perspectives and opens the possibility of a biosemiotics). The result is that Morizot can speak not only expertly but also respectfully of wolves, and that achievement should not be underestimated. It would have been interesting, however, to know as well what French herders think of his diplomatic proposition. And he fails, moreover, to take into account the perspective of the sheep.

—*Thibault De Meyer*

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