

In the air

The hour of the wolf

Ariel Wagner Parker

It is the early hours of the morning, when the world turns wolf and encircles you howling. You begin to ponder on how things stand with us humans. The question is not „what sort of world are we leaving to our children“ but „what sort of world are we living in now.“

And from beyond the firelit circle of „humane“ life it rises up before you, this wolf-world ...

... A world of millionaire multinational puppet-masters who buy politicians into power, then call in their debts in the shape of favourable laws, juicy contracts and blind eyes turned to their dubious practices; who smile and smile while others suffer and starve in the name of profit.

A world where governments knowingly lead their countries into war, the gravest act of state, on the basis of lies and deceit; lure young people out of poverty to fight in them, drilling them into killing-machines, expressly licensed to torture, rape and murder; can stand by, apparently unperturbed, while thousands lose their lives; ride roughshod over human rights and the rule of law; promote rivalry, conflict and terror, foment tribal and religious hatred, anything to remain in power and secure their global influence.

Where superpowers corrupt, exploit and sacrifice other humans in the playing-out of a geopolitical endgame, the frantic last-minute scramble for control of the planet's dwindling resources.

Where power spins truth to its own advantage and news is just more entertainment to be packaged and marketed.

Where secular citizens feed on opiate fairytales of the rich and famous to help them forget their own poverty and powerlessness.

Where employers have abandoned all pretence of social progress in favour of contempt and exploitation, laying off workers rather than forgoing fat profits; where religious leaders, stranded on the shores of secularism, are beating up a fundamentalist tidal wave to refloat their ships of souls.

Where time seems to have gone into reverse, beaming humans back to the Middle Ages - struggle for life, insecurity and absolute hierarchical power ...

And the world of the wolves is dangerous: you stray too close at your peril and may pay with your freedom, like Aung San Suu Kyi - still under „house arrest“ in Burma after 16 years - or your



Photo: Internet

The wolves will be back ...

life, like Anna Politkovskaya ... The wolves snarl and slaver as you toss and turn ...

Yet what, you think, if the notion of a parallel wolf-world is merely a flattering mirror held up to humanity. What if there is no real divide between the so-called normal humans and the monsters. Perhaps all human activity is a continuum, the monstrous being merely a malignant, even logical, development of the normal.

Perhaps we're all really wolves, *homo homini lupus*, as the expression goes. Yet how did some wolves become predators and others prey?

To understand the present, look to the past.

We know that human civilisation has always been a brittle crust over a boiling magma of aggression. But even so, humans have generally managed to live together - as long as there was more or less enough food to go round and living space for all ...

... And as long as no one was stomping around, shrieking that one group of humans was inferior or dangerous and must be despised or exterminated.

Did we humans create predatory wolf-dom when we were first persuaded to allow management of our affairs to pass out of the hands of our own benign and revered elders into those of unknown others - whether feared conquerors, hereditary monarchs, or democratically elected representatives?

Did we create the power that sharpens fangs?

Today our affairs are managed by others whom we never revere, sometimes dread and who are seldom benign.

We let predator-wolves govern while we go about our daily business. In return, we are allowed certain fangless freedoms: we can demonstrate, for instance - but a million on the streets against the war in Iraq made no difference. And we can go to the polls every few years - but those who wield the real

power do not stand for election.

You toss and turn ...

... Then lo, the morn approacheth: „the wolves have preyed; and look, the gentle day, / Before the wheels of Phoebus, round about / Dapples the drowsy east with spots of grey.“

The wolves back off as darkness fades and daylight fills your mind with brighter thoughts.

What's all this about wolves? Everything is going to be all right!

US and UK leaders have promised enquiries into instances of „inappropriate treatment“ at Abu Ghraib, Guantánamo is to be dismantled and an exit strategy sought for Iraq; and courts in the UK, Ireland and Germany seem to be coming round to the idea that the attack on Iraq was a crime!

Tony Judt's New York lecture on the influence of the pro-Israeli lobby on American foreign policy was certainly cancelled by the owners of the venue, as was the New York launch party for Carmen Callil's new book, with its postscript critical of Israeli treatment of the Palestinians. But these unfortunate episodes have sparked off a real row about free speech!

Nearer home, the case of the 120 anti-war protesters prevented by police from demonstrating against the launching of B52s from the Fairford air base has gone up to the Lords; and Rebecca Johnson, of Greenham Common fame, is helping coordinate a long-term protest by the Women in Black against the nuclear submarine base at Faslane!

... Madonna has generously adopted a one-year-old Malawian child and Bill Gates is generously giving millions to Aids research! And so on and so forth. Hope is everywhere. All is well ...

But beyond the firelit circle, where the humane writ does not run, it's business as usual.

And in the early hours of the morning, the wolves will be back, fangs bared and yellow eyes indifferent.