

CALL OF THE WILD

by **Pontus Reimers** illustration **Moa Thelander**

Ever since systematic agriculture began in eastern Turkey around eleven thousand years ago, farmers and livestock keepers have had an antagonistic relationship to wild animals in general and predators in particular – a clash reflected in countless myths, legends, and fables, many of which survive in modern versions. Of northern hemisphere predators, the wolf has been ascribed a special position as a killer and the embodiment of evil. In our time, balanced wildlife conservation has helped secure the predator's population in the Baltic Sea region, but not without friction between town and country.

**They're hunting wolves! The hunt is on, pursuing
The wily predators, the she-wolf and her brood.
The beaters shout, the dogs bay, almost spewing.
The flags on the snow are red, as red as the blood.**

**We are swift and our jaws are rapacious.
Why then, chief, like a tribe that's oppressed,
Must we rush towards the weapons that face us
And that precept be never transgressed?**

From "Wolf Hunt", a song by Vladimir Vysotsky.
Translation by Kathryn and Bruce Hamilton, 1987.

We have become tame in Europe, and that is a good thing. Europeans are on the whole no longer wild or savage, as we certainly were a thousand, five hundred, or for that matter sixty-seven years ago. The potential for savagery and bloodthirstiness remains within us, as shown with such dreadful clarity during the war in the former Yugoslavia in 1991–1999. But we are for

the most part tame and prefer that state-sanctioned bloodletting on a large scale happen outside the borders of the European Union. And that is, all things considered, a good thing. No one in their right mind would want to go back to the fear and insecurity of anticipated attacks by Vikings, bigoted religious fanatics, or the soldiers of the Axis Powers. The same can be said about our relationship to animals. Most aspects of the living conditions of pets and farm animals are regulated by law in the EU. For wild animals, there are special habitat directives.

No one, at least not publicly, wants to see the return of stallion baiting, dog and bear-baiting, or the use of horses in war (still common in World War II). The consequences of the use of dolphins during the Cold War by the Eastern and Western powers are one exception. The Russian military is now rumored to have sold its dolphin program to Iran; the Americans have retained theirs, but deny anti-personnel use, that is, that dolphins are trained to attack people. Perhaps the "clash of civilizations" will be fought by dolphins standing in for people in the Persian Gulf – presuming this has not already occurred.

But something has been lost in the advance of civilization. In pace with the introduction of the refrigerator, hot running water, bathrooms with subfloor heating, and cable TV, our relationship to things wild has changed, especially our attitudes towards the predators among us. The bear, the wolf, the wolverine, the lynx: all have been transformed in our minds into symbolic, anthropomorphized abstractions. It is human nature to do so, and in a way, one could argue that this has been the case for much longer than since the end of World War II. Nevertheless, the already sim-

plified traits have become more starkly black and white in modern, highly urbanized societies. The bear +, the wolf -, the lynx +, the wolverine -. The bear is strong, the wolf vicious, the lynx beautiful, the wolverine ugly and cruel. And that is that.

OUT IN THE COUNTRY, that argument does not hold full sway, at least not in the areas where the predators are actually found. Country people's empirical knowledge runs deeper and is often – though not always – more complex and objective than city people's. The problem with European attitudes towards "our" predators, however, is that most Europeans live in cities and not in the countryside. In Scandinavia and other countries around the Baltic, the ratio of urban to rural populations is now two to one or more. This is no longer a strictly European, or even Western, state of affairs. According to the UN World Urbanization Prospects, which are revised every two years, a majority of the total population has been urban for several years now. According to UN estimates, the world population is expected to be 67 percent urban in 2050.

Yet another predator complication: wolverines and lynx do not attack adult humans (at least as long as you do not try to lift and carry them, and good luck with that!). Bears and wolves can indeed be lethal, but the way both animals are generally portrayed in the media does not align with how dangerous they really are. According to all available statistics from the last two hundred years, the bear poses far and away the greatest danger to humans of all wild animals in the northern hemisphere. Wolves, which ordinarily shy away from human contact, are most likely to attack during times of famine or war, or when they have become ac-



customed to the presence of humans, such as in zoos or other private settings. Children unaccompanied by adults, however, are not safe among wolves under any circumstances. According to the Swedish Wildlife Damage Center, there were 3,221 bears in Sweden in 2008, while the wolf population was estimated to be about one tenth of that.

STOCKHOLM IS A GREEN CITY and its proximity to nature is still extraordinary, as exemplified by its national urban park. Even though I live in the heart of the city center, I regularly see wild mammals: hares are common and I once met a roe deer on the morning walk to the daycare center; a year ago, a moose was swimming in the lake just outside my neighborhood. Wolves have lived in the area for centuries. In 1689, the seven-year-old Crown Prince Charles (the future Charles XII, the victor at Narva and the loser at Poltava) participated in a successful wolf hunt at Lappkärrsberget in the northern part of Djurgården, an event he immortalized in a drawing preserved to this day. The wolf population declined drastically in the 18th and 19th centuries, and by the dawn of the 20th century, Stockholmers hardly had to spare them a thought. It thus caused an uproar in 2001 when a wolf took his evening constitutional right through the center of town. In 2008, another wolf was seen roaming the eastern suburbs. The wild had made its presence felt once more.

BALTIC OVERVIEW

The wolf had been exterminated in Denmark since 1813, but sightings of a single individual were reported in 2009 and 2010 in Sønderjylland, probably after it had crossed the border with Germany, where the last wolf was shot in 1904 in Lausitz. Wolves were rediscovered in the same area, which borders on Poland, in 1998. The German population currently stands at

about 35 individuals, divided among four packs. Cubs were discovered in Niedersachsen in July of this year. Wolves are a protected species in Germany.

So are to the 700–800 wolves in Poland, excepting those that live in Bieczszady in the southeast. The majority of the 2,000 wolves in Ukraine seem to have concentrated themselves in the exclusion zone north of Chernobyl. Nearly as many wolves, somewhere between 1,500 and 2,000, are found in Belarus. An estimated 300–400 wolves are found in Lithuania, about 600 in Latvia, and about 200 in Estonia (a steep decline from the wolf population of about 500 in the 1990s). Estonia is the only country east of the Baltic Sea other than Finland that pays compensation to livestock owners victimized by ravaging wolves.

Even though the “domestic” wolves in Finland have never been eradicated and despite the proximity to the Russian wolf population – about 30,000 strong – Finland has experienced some problems with the estimated 116 to 123 wolves found in its territory in 2007/2008. As in Sweden, the wolf presence causes controversy between “wolf haters” and “wolf huggers”. In addition, there is an ongoing “hopelessness debate” concerning EU regulations, which many affected people in wolf habitat areas feel is insensitive and high-handed.

An estimated 230–300 wolves live in Sweden and Norway (the countries “share” part of the population and so are counted together) although the Wildlife Damage Center’s preliminary report for 2011/2012 may indicate that the number is closer to 400.

The wolf is not an endangered species (an estimated 60,000–70,000 are found in Canada and Alaska alone). But in several countries, its right to exist is a highly controversial issue, especially in Fennoscandia, it seems. Linda Laikre, a professor at the Population Genetics division of the Department of Zoology at Stockholm University, is a member of the Swedish gov-

ernment’s Scientific Council on Biodiversity. In a radio interview in March 2012, Professor Laikre said that the wolf populations not only in Norway and Sweden but also in Finland need to be connected and should number between 3,000 and 5,000 individuals – far more than the current populations.

HUNTERS AND FARMERS

The facts of the case are relatively well-known, based on research findings. Long ago, when we all lived in the woods, or on the plains, we cooperated with wolves in the hunt for life-sustaining proteins. This proved advantageous to both species. Over the centuries and the millennia, this symbiotic existence came to shape not only the relationship between humans and wolves, but also the physical form of the latter: the wolves who maintained close interaction with humans became semi-tame and were ultimately bred under controlled conditions in order to accentuate certain genetic traits and suppress others. And so arose our endless variety of tame dog breeds. Or at least we believe it went something like that. The close cooperation between nomads and wolves was reflected in relatively recent human history by the Greek historian Herodotus in the 5th century BCE. Although he himself puts no faith in the rumor, Herodotus mentions that the Neuri people, who lived beyond the Scythian area near the Hypanis River (identified as the Southern Bug in present-day Ukraine), were transformed into wolves for a period every year.

The world’s oldest known monumental construction is a complex of stone structures in concentric rings raised at a site called Göbekli Tepe in southeastern Anatolia. The age of the complex, dated at about 9000 BCE, is not the only amazing thing: the stone slabs, which weigh many tons, are not crude and unworked; on the contrary, they are evenly quarried. As if that were not enough, reliefs are carved into the slabs of the predatory animals that existed in the area when the complex came about. Not only that: in addition to the reliefs, certain depictions of animals are sculpted three-dimensionally in high relief. And all of this was done without metal tools. Excavator Klaus Schmidt has identified one of the most prominent predators as a fox, but he notes that it might just as easily be a wolf (or a jackal) – or a dog. One of the most interesting things about the site is that it is the first time we see a differentiation between the wild and the tame, between culture and nature, between hunters and farmers; by extension, we also see the division between town and country, for at the same time, it seems that the cultivation of wild wheat began on the nearby Mount Karaca Dağ, which has been genetically indicated as the origin of all domesticated wheat. We do not know why the people who erected the complex chose to depict their wild surroundings, only that they were forced to relate to it. And so are we, eleven thousand years later. Modern Turkey, by the way, is home to an estimated 7,000 wolves. There were surely more back then.

A typical, or perhaps more accurately archetypal, modern dog breed is the German Shepherd, which is to many a symbol of faithfulness and security in relation to humans, but also of threat and danger to life and limb by reason of the widespread use of German



Shepherds as police and military dogs in the 20th century. Despite its wolf-like appearance, the German Shepherd is not an ancient breed; it was first introduced in 1899 by the German breeder Max von Stephanitz. There is some information to indicate that wolves contributed to the first generations of German Shepherds. Partly as a consequence of its colossal popularity, the breed has developed a number of problems, ranging from hip dysplasia to increased tendencies towards bite aggression. And they are very good at biting, indeed. In at least one “bite test”, the German Shepherd was one of the three breeds that bit the hardest (the others were a Rottweiler and a Pit Bull Terrier). Although it is difficult to measure the real bite strength of wild animals, some scientific studies have been undertaken and the wolf, on the other hand, is said to bite twice as hard as the German Shepherd, hard enough to break bone. The wolf can easily kill a human. But how often does it do so in reality?

THE NORWEGIAN WILDLIFE ecologist John Linnell has been able to document 94 deaths caused by wolves in Fennoscandia, all of them before 1882. Since many of the attacks happened in backward rural areas, and since the majority of the victims were children, women, or elderly people, one conclusion of the documentation might be that wolves, or for that matter any predatory animals, should not be habituated to living near people. In the interests of public safety, wolves must thus be taught that people should be avoided in general, because they may be armed. In addition: 19 deaths caused by wolves have been reported from North America, Central Asia, and Russia during the 21st century alone. Naturally, you cannot stop people who are passionately interested in wolves, such as the French concert pianist Hélène Grimaud, from approaching the animals. But it should reasonably occur, as in her case, in a private context.

For many Westerners, the wolf is the most polarizing of animals, a confrontation before which the rational tradition of Enlightenment must give way. To this day, the wolf is often either called upon to symbolize pure evil and the deadly sins of gluttony, greed, and wrath, or else its rights are asserted so emphatically that innocent people suffer. Since 2012, there has been what is described as a “single-issue party” in Sweden known as the Nature Democrats. The party’s slogan is “for a living countryside”, which should be equated with zero tolerance for wolves in Sweden. The party justifies its position on the grounds that the wolf is not found in its natural distribution area (because it is inbred), which is why the party also rejects the EU Habitat Directive. There are thus many parameters to manage here: hunters’ eagerness to bring down an animal seen as both a pest and an alluring quarry; hunters’ fully understandable anger and grief over dogs killed by wolves (19 in 2010, 24 in 2011, and 8 so far in 2012; statistics provided on the Swedish Hunting Association’s website, often accompanied by heart-rending “crime scene” pictures); the local population’s more



Relief of the twins Romulus and Remus with the Capitoline Wolf, dated to the reign of Emperor Trajan (97–117 AD).



Monolith with relief of canines in Göbekli Tepe from about 9000 BC.

Photos: Wikimedia Commons

or less well-founded fear of predators, and an irrational hatred that contains elements of both superstition and resistance to the governing powers in Stockholm or Brussels.

These circumstances most certainly contributed to the Swedish government’s announcement in 2010 that it would allow licensed “preventive hunting” of its dwindling wolf population the following year, a measure that led to the following statement from European Commissioner for the Environment Janez Potočnik on January 7, 2011:

Several aspects of the Swedish wolf policy raise serious questions, for example: the unfavorable conservation status of the Swedish wolf population; the set ceiling for the number of wolves in Sweden; the licensed hunting of a strictly protected species without fulfilling the specific conditions for derogations set out by EU law; the reduced distribution area for wolves; the fact that the licensed hunting occurs before the announced introduction of wolves to improve the genetic status has taken place; the erroneous multi-annual practice that repeated licensed hunting may lead to.

THE PREVENTIVE HUNT was cancelled in 2012 in response to the threat of being hauled up before the European Court of Justice, but the word is that it may be resumed in 2013 (though this has recently been contested by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency). If the situation was not embarrassing as well as distasteful, one might say that the Swedish government is “caught in a wolf trap”. Attitudes, as we all know, are hard to decree from above. In a paper on the fear of predatory animals published by the SOM Institute (Society, Opinion, Media) at the Department of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg, the authors write:

[T]he tendency is that the proportion of people who live in purely rural areas and who think the wolf population is too large has in-

creased rather than decreased (from 44 to 48 percent, not significant). 2. The corresponding figure for people who live in one of our three large cities is 16 percent (15 percent in 2009). Nor is the increase in the proportion of urban-dwellers who think the wolf population is at the right level (from 28 to 37 percent) significant. These attitudinal differences between urban and rural populations are also confirmed by other studies, where the results over time indicate stable or increasing differences in urban and rural attitudes towards predatory animals.

Even though wolves are said to be among the most thoroughly studied of all mammals, there is still new knowledge about them to be gained. To take but one example: the American wildlife researcher David Mech was involved in introducing the term “alpha male” in the 1970s. These days, he and most others along with him have abandoned the concept because the division of the wolf pack is no longer considered as strictly hierarchical as it once was. The preferred term is now “breeding male”. The term “alpha” is reserved for very large packs with several pregnant females.

To digress only slightly: if there are no longer alpha males in the wild, should we not perhaps also abolish the term in business and sports contexts?

THE PROUD PARTISANS OF THE WOLVES

The constant companions of the chief Old Norse god Odin may have been a wolf pair, Gere (“greedy”) and Freke (“aggressive”), but there is no exaggerated love for wolves to be found in Old Norse mythology, based as it is on the presence of settled farmers. The “wolf-time” in *Völuspá* refers to misfortune, war, and destruction when the wolf Fenrir and the giant wolfhound Garm burst their fetters in preparation for Ragnarök. Nay, over the ages, wolves have been appreciated and respected by nomads and mountain people, by

the ancient Italic Sabines, by some Native American peoples, by prehistoric Mongolians and Turkish-speaking peoples, and by the Chechens: in Chechen mythology, the founder of the nation Turpalo-Noxchuo was, like Mowgli, raised by a she-wolf. The best known Western wolf myth is naturally the story of the founding of Rome, in which the abandoned twins Romulus and Remus were raised by a she-wolf until a human took them in hand. In sculptural form, this she-wolf was for centuries one of the most important field signs of the Roman Army and is still today a symbol of the city itself.

Wolf legends have not infrequently given rise to ultra-nationalist reflections of a predatory nature in our own time – in Turkey, for example, in the form of the Gray Wolves, a right-wing extremist youth organization and the much-debated underground power network *Ergenekon* (the name refers to a legendary valley from which a wolf helped the first Turks to escape). Another manifestation has its origins in Lithuania. Sometime in the summer of 1320, the Grand Duke Gediminas was out hunting in the woods near the confluence of the Vilnia and Neris rivers. As he slept under the stars that night, he had a peculiar dream: a wolf in armor, or perhaps a wolf made of iron, stood on a hill and howled. When the next morning he asked a high priest who lived nearby to interpret the dream, the priest answered that the wolf symbolized a fortress that would protect the country from foreign invasion and exhorted the Grand Duke to build such a fortress on that very place. And so, according to legend, the city of Vilnius came to be. Whatever the truth of that might be, the legend of the iron wolf survived. The Lithuanian fascist movement founded in 1927 was named The Iron Wolf (*Geležinis Vilkas*). The organization was officially banned in 1930 but survived for the rest of the decade. Today, people have managed to defuse the name of its extremist past in favor of its nationalist connotations. The motorized brigade that is the most important unit of the Lithuanian armed forces is now called The Iron Wolves.

THE WOLF YOU FEED

An oft-told Cherokee legend is the story of an old man and a boy. The man explains that human nature is like a fight between two wolves: one is honorable and just, the other hateful and violent. The boy asks which wolf will win, and the old man answers: “The one you feed.”

The film industry loves good animal stories because they are big box office. Since animals are our anthropomorphic representatives, these “animal movies” can be categorized into genres in the same way as ordinary feature films: drama (*Lassie*), family comedy (*Beethoven*), horror (*Jaws*), etc. Bears were depicted brutally and semi-realistically in the 1988 French film *Lours* and as inordinately monstrous in *The Edge* (1997). Both of these wilderness dramas featured the trained Kodiak, Bart the Bear, in a leading role.

Wolves in film have appeared mainly in the supernatural genre, that is, in the guise of werewolves.



Boar hunting in the 14th century.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

One exception is the French *Le pacte des loups*, which in a ludicrous yet entertaining way tells the story of a true historical episode involving wolves – that of the ravages of the Beast of Gévaudan in southern France in the 1760s, in which more than a hundred people are said to have been killed. An attempt to depict wolves in the modern wild was made in the existential wilderness drama *The Grey* in 2011. The wolves in the film, which are presumed to be “normal” and not rabid, immediately and mercilessly hunt the survivors of a plane crash, a plot that triggered protests by nature conservation organizations. Matters were not helped when it was revealed that the director had purchased four wolf cadavers from a trapper, two to use as props and two for the cast to eat (to get into survival mode, I suppose). The pattern repeats itself in the action flick *The Bourne Legacy* (2012), in which a wolf pack about to gorge itself on lamb catches sight of the movie’s secret agent hero, whereupon, of course, the pack instantly and relentlessly begins to hunt him.

One of the few examples of films, other than *The Jungle Book*, in which wolves are portrayed in a favorable light is *Game of Thrones*, HBO’s successful television series based on George R. R. Martin’s massive fantasy book series. In *Game of Thrones*, “direwolves” – based on a real wolf species that died out in North and South America ten thousand years ago, by the way – feature as companions and protectors of several children of the House Stark, the closest the story comes to a conventional “good” side. (As a matter of curiosity, there are attempts under way to “recreate” the prehistoric dire wolves. The breed is currently called the American Alsatian.) In the novels and the television series, one of the “bad guys” is a wild boar, which kills King Robert in the drama and thus triggers an immediate and ruthless struggle for the throne.

Game of Thrones aside, the dangerousness of the wild boar is not a literary invention.

THE PACT OF THE WILD BOARS

In the Middle Ages, the wild boar was considered one of the riskiest game animals, reflected in chroniclers’ stories of hunting accidents with lethal outcomes. In addition to their sharp tusks, wild boars use their extremely thick skull as a weapon and when they run, they can quickly reach a speed of 45 km an hour. Rather than the spears of the past, modern boar hunters use single-bore shotguns loaded with slugs and Brenneke cartridges – some of the heaviest ammunition permitted for hunting weapons. The biggest problem with wild boar is the destruction they cause, which is not particularly selective: like us and tame swine, they are omnivores. During the postwar era, the wild boar’s lack of natural enemies led to problematically strong growth of the population in Germany. They

are now an established element of the urban fauna in Berlin and the surrounding suburbs. A climax was reached in October 2008 when one man was killed and another injured in a hunt that went terribly wrong in the southern suburbs. Thereafter, the city appointed licensed hunters to reduce the population, which proved easier said than done. In an interview with the Wall Street Journal, *Stadttjäger* Matthias Eggert said: “There is no way that hunting can get rid of them all. Ultimately we must learn to share the city with the swine.”

In Great Britain, where the wild boar has been scarce as hen’s teeth since the days of the Civil War, there are now between 500 and 1,000 animals. They are hard to count but quick to reproduce, and opinions that they should be contained are already being voiced. They were also exterminated in Sweden by the end of the 17th century, but escapees from enclosures in 1942 and afterwards resulted in the emergence of a vigorous population and their “domiciliary rights” were established by parliamentary decision in 1987. The Swedish Board of Agriculture reported that wild boars caused more than 17 million Swedish kronor in damage in 2009 – in the province of Södermanland alone. A pilot project in which wild boars were trapped was begun in 2011, run by the Swedish National Veterinary Institute, but the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency has not yet completed its report of the outcome and any follow-up measures. One estimate of the Swedish wild boar population in 2010 arrived at a figure of about 150,000 animals. There is no reversal of the trend in sight: the population is growing steadily. Other sources cite twice that number, or about 300,000 animals.

In a post on the Swedish Hunting Association’s blog about the incident at Kolmården Zoo on June 17, 2012 when a zookeeper was killed by “her” wolves, Gunnar Glöerson, the association’s officer

in charge of predator issues, wrote that “this is going to happen with our wild wolves, too. The only question is when and whether we can reduce the risk. The solution is simple. Hunt them!” The likelihood that people may also be injured or killed in encounters with wild boar cannot be ignored, however, and is not necessarily lower, considering the explosive growth of the population. The primary killer of wild boars in the natural food chain is actually the wolf, except in East Asia, where boars are the prey of tigers and leopards.

We do not have to have wolves in Sweden. We do not have to have predatory animals at all. We can exterminate them again; in the wolves’ case, it would probably be relatively easy. If nothing else, they will die out within the foreseeable future due to inbreeding. In the majority of the countries around the Baltic, maintaining a functioning wolf population seems to be accepted. In some cases, the reading of population reports gives one a distinct impression that the wolf is actually a welcome part of the fauna; that while it is not always easy to defend the introduction of predators in livestock farming areas, it can be done.

AND SUCH IS the case in other parts of the world. When Vilhelm Moberg’s fictional characters Karl-Oskar and Kristina emigrated from Sweden, they left a country where there were no wolves for a country where the creatures still roamed. In Minnesota, the most markedly Swedish settlement in the United States (with an area of 225,365 sq km compared to Sweden’s 528,446 sq km), there were 300 wolves in the 1970s. Today, there are about 3,000, more than in any other state except Alaska. In January 2012, the state government approved the start of a protective wolf hunting season, with a goal of shooting 400 wolves in 2012 and a long-term reduction of the population to 1,500 animals. If the 5.5 million inhabitants of Minnesota, a state containing a great deal of agricultural and industrial land, can accept so many wolves in their territory, why should a country like Sweden not have room for the estimated one thousand or so wolves that it would have had if illegal hunting were not so zealous? Compared to 150,000 to 300,000 wild boars and 300,000 to 400,000 moose?

It seems hardly possible to reestablish the Stone Age “contract” between humankind and wolves, nor would it be desirable in our increasingly urbanized world. But could allowing the wolves to help manage the moose and the wild boars, to a greater extent than now occurs, perhaps be seen as a move towards reestablishing the balance of nature?

CODA

I am in Belgrade over the Christmas and New Year season of 2002/2003. In the zoological gardens in the middle of the city, the weak winter sun is beginning to set and a strange half-light spreads out among the cages. Zoos are not my cup of tea, but the children like it. The situation in the city is still tense after the NATO bombings of 1999 and there are occasional rapid deployments to search for Milosević and Mladić. The Zemun district is under mafia control and the portraits of the wanted men are hung on pub walls like pictures of movie stars, to which the recalcitrant patrons raise their glasses of rakia while gleaming BMWs wait out-

side. In less than three months, the pro-Western Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić, an old student of Jürgen Habermas, would be shot to death in the street. But the five wolves in front of me care nothing for politics. They huddle together before my feet and they sing. Only a thin fence separates us. The moon glows. The wolves howl melodically. Why? Are they trying to communicate with other wolves, perhaps on the outskirts of the city? I do not, cannot know. But the sound is ineffably melancholic and I am overcome with reverence for this wild and dignified concert. The wolves do not care. They are not interested in me, but only in freedom. Being an old gray wolf myself, I do not find it hard to sympathize.

There is a wolf in me ... fangs for tearing gashes ... a red tongue for raw meat ... and the hot lapping of blood – I keep the wolf because the wilderness gave it to me and the wilderness will not let it go.

Oh, I got a zoo, I got a menagerie inside my ribs, under my bony skull, under my red-valved heart – and I got something else: it is a man-child heart, a woman-child heart: it is a father and a mother and a lover: it came from God knows where; it is going to God knows where – For I am the keeper of the zoo: I say yes and no: I sing and kill and work: I am a pal of the world: I came from the wilderness.

From “Wilderness”, by Carl Sandburg.

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