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Howls in the Anthropocene Between Wildness and Captivity of Wolves in the Memoirs of Lois Crisler and Teresa Martino

Wilcze wołanie w antropocenie
Niewola i wolność wilków
we wspomnieniach
Lois Crisler i Teresy Martino

Abstrakt

W artykule ukazano zmianę postrzegania wilka, jaka nastąpiła w Ameryce Północnej w latach 1950–1990, poprzez historie Lois Crisler i Teresy Martino – dwóch kobiet, które nawiązały bliskie relacje ze swoimi wilkami. Choć wilki Lois Crisler – Lady, Trigger, Alatna, Arctic, Barrow, Killik i Tundra – urodziły się dzikie, ich życie było zależne od ludzi. Natomiast Mckenzie, wilczyca urodzona w niewoli i wychowana przez Teresę Martino, została wypuszczona na wolność. Historie Crisler i Martino ukazują czas, w którym w Stanach Zjednoczonych nienawiść do wilków ustępowała publicznej ich akceptacji oraz podjęto pierwsze próby reintrodukcji tego gatunku po uprzednim niemal doszczętnym wytępieniu wilków na terenie USA.

Słowa klucze: wilki, Lois Crisler, Teresa Martino, dzikość, antropocen

Волчий вой в антропоцене
Жизнь волков на свободе и в неволе
в воспоминаниях Лоис Крайслер
и Терезы Мартино

Абстракт

В статье, на примере историй Лоис Крайслер и Терезы Мартино – двух женщин, установивших близкие отношения со своими волками, – показан сдвиг в восприятии волков, произошедший в Северной Америке в период с 1950-х по 1990-е годы. Хотя волки Лоис Крайслер – Леди, Триггер, Алатна, Арктик, Барроу, Киллик и Тундра – родились дикими, они провели свою жизнь в неволе. В свою очередь, Маккензи, волчица, родившаяся в неволе и воспитанная Терезой Мартино, была выпущена обратно на волю. Их истории позволяют заглянуть в тот период времени, когда ненависть к волкам уступала место общественному признанию. Именно в это время реинтродукция волков стала рассматриваться как способ восстановления дикой природы после того, как эти хищники были почти полностью истреблены в США.

Ключевые слова: волки, Лоис Крайслер, Тереза Мартино, свобода, антропоцен

Paulina Szymonek

The Empty Wilderness

"Wilderness without animals is mere scenery."[1]

She moved through the undergrowth soundlessly, grey and black fur catching on shrubs and low-hanging branches. In her footsteps followed a woman, her hair not too different from the fur of her four-legged companion. The two were on alert, their senses heightened as they traversed the paths in a nameless forest. Its wilderness was complete for the moment, but as soon as the wolf stepped out of it and jumped into the car to be driven back home, the scenery was once again made empty. The she-wolf's tracks were not new to this land; in fact, many more could be found there decades before, but the wolves were exterminated since then.

In the 1970s, this wolf's grandparents were captured for a zoo in the Mackenzie Mountains in Yukon. The she-wolf herself was born in captivity, in a retiring rescue center, and spent the first months of her life on Vashon Island, just across from Puget Sound in the Pacific Northwest.[2] Between her captive home and her wild heritage stretched the shores of British Columbia, where she hunted with her human companion; and there, further north and bordering Yukon, was Alaska, where the story of captivity of another seven wolf pups began several decades before her own. When the she-wolf set her paws on the soft earth in the wilderness, a woman was by her side; not too long before, however, there were footsteps of another whose tracks mingled with those of the wolves caught between wildness and captivity.

The Land of Absence

"Life outdoors is not one of idleness,"[3] wrote Lois Crisler of her time in the Arctic, echoing the sentiment of women homesteaders of the early twentieth century. It was 1953, and Lois with her husband Herb were spending summer in Brooks Range, Alaska. Armed with cameras and an objective to film the migrating herds of caribou, the Crislers set out to the heart of the tundra. A decade before, Lois would not even dream of a life in the wilderness. Born in 1897 in Spokane, Lois Brown taught creative writing at the University of Washington and spent her time reading

[1] Lois Crisler, *Arctic Wild* (New York: Lyons Press, 1999), 38.

[2] Teresa Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness: A True Story of Returning Home* (Troutdale: NewSage Press, 1997), 20–61.

[3] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 8.

Virginia Woolf, Aldous Huxley, and Bertrand Russell. It all changed in 1941, when Lois met an outdoorsman Herbert "Cris" Crisler, whom she married later that year. Before their expedition to the Arctic, the Crislers spent ten years in a remote cabin in the Olympic Mountains, Washington, where they filmed the documentary on the Olympic elk.[4] There was one missing link in this great wilderness, however: the elk's primary predator was gone. In fact, when the Crislers first arrived in the region, wolves had already been absent from the landscape for twenty years.

Lapped by the Pacific Ocean on its west coast and surrounded by the Rocky Mountains on the east, the Pacific Northwest spreads over the states of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, stretching over the border to British Columbia in Canada—although there is not a single conclusive definition of its boundaries, and none are officially set. Dominated by several mountain ranges—including the Cascades and the Olympics—the Pacific Northwest is a mostly-forested area teeming with wildlife.[5] Wolves were originally found there but, as elsewhere in the lower 48 states, they were almost completely wiped out.[6] In 1908, Vernon Bailey noted that "wolves were common in the mountains about Colville, in north-eastern Washington, in 1891, and were said to be occasionally found in the Cascades about Easton. In 1894, they were reported as common in the Olympic Mountains."[7] By the 1900s, they were becoming scarce. 1920 is believed to have been the year when the last wolf in the Olympic Mountains was killed, although several sightings were still reported throughout the 1930s.[8] The years that led to the downfall of wolves were marked with increased arrival of homesteaders by the end of the century. Livestock was grazed on lands that, up until that moment, belonged to wild animals. Just as it has occurred elsewhere, predators were targeted to protect livestock.[9] Dora Richmond, born and raised on a homestead in the Olympic Mountains in the 1900s, recalled in a 1975 interview:

> We would put out the strychnine at night and pick it up in the morning, so it wouldn't get so many daytime animals, birds especially. Anyway, my aunt and I went out in the morning and there on the sandbar was a big old wolf. He was dead but my aunt had to take a shot at it anyway. There was a dollar bounty on wolves then so we wanted to skin it out. But the poison ruined the skin so we just put it in a bucket,

[4] Irving Petite, "The Crislers, A Wilderness Legend in the Making," *Nature Magazine*, vol. 45, no. 4 (April, 1952): 207–209.

[5] David Moskowitz, *Wildlife of the Pacific Northwest* (Portland: Timber Press, 2010), 17–26.

[6] Bruce Hampton, *The Great American Wolf* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1997).

[7] Vernon Bailey, *Wolves in Relation to Stock, Game, and the National Forest Reserves* (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, 1907), 15.

[8] David Moskowitz, *Wolves in the Land of Salmon* (Portland: Timber Press, 2013), 11–12.

[9] Peter Dratch et al., *A Case Study for Species Reintroduction: The Wolf in Olympic National Park, Washington* (Olympia: Evergreen State College, 1975), 11.

> took it out and buried it […]. I was about twelve when the last wolf got died. My dad poisoned [them] cause they ate the sheep.[10]

By the time Franklin Roosevelt established the Olympic National Park in 1938, wolves were long gone. Interestingly, in an article published in 1950, Lois Crisler reminisced about "a rare experience" of observing "a wolf hunting marmots."[11] She also noted the abundance of coyotes in the area, and that they had come in the 1920s. Not native to the Olympics and without wolves to control the population, the coyotes have spread and decimated small prey, particularly marmots.[12] It is unclear when, exactly, Lois had spotted the wolf, and whether it really was a wolf and not a coyote. From a distance, and for an untrained eye—for Lois would not encounter wolves before 1953—a coyote can easily be mistaken for a wolf. After all, the wolf in the Olympics was believed extinct, with only occasional sightings reported since the 1920s. In 1968, Robert L. Wood wrote that "if, indeed, wolves were present in the Olympic Mountains today, most likely they have migrated from the Cascades and are not survivors of the original Olympic strain."[13] While wolves do hunt marmot, they prey primarily on elk and deer,[14] and the Crislers—having spent a whole decade following and filming the elk—did not report any wolves in the area during their stay, save for Lois's dubious observation. Had the wolves been present, surely the predators would follow their prey.

Lois died in 1971, six years before her former husband suggested that wolves should be reintroduced to the Olympic Mountains.[15] Adolph Murie, a naturalist and wildlife biologist among the first to study wolves in the wild, suggested the same as far back as 1935,[16] when wolves were already believed extinct in the area. The idea, however, proved controversial for many. In 1976, when the reintroduction proposal was revisited, Lena Fletcher—Dora Richmond's sister—wrote in a column for *The Daily News*:

> Anybody who knows wolves or knew them as our pioneers did cannot conceive how anybody could be so dumb as to conceive reintroducing an animal with such

[10] Peter Dratch, Interview transcriptions with Olympic Peninsula Old-Timers. Unpublished. Archive, Department of Cultural Resources, Olympic National Park, Port Angeles, Washington, 1978, quoted in: Moskowitz, *Wolves in the Land of Salmon*, 221.

[11] Lois Crisler, "The True Mountaineer," *Natural History Magazine*, vol. 59, no. 9 (November, 1950): 422–428.

[12] Moskowitz, *Wolves in the Land of Salmon*, 221–234.

[13] Robert L. Wood, *Trail Country: Olympic National Park* (Seattle: The Mountaineers, 1968), 51.

[14] Adolph Murie, *The Wolves of Mount McKinley* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985).

[15] Seabury Blair Jr., "The Return of the Wolf: Herb Crisler: Olympic Filmmaker Was First to Propose Reintroduction," *Kitsap Sun* (October 7, 1997), https://products.kitsapsun.com/archive/1997/10-07/0035_the_return_of_the_wolf__herb_cris.html.

[16] Moskowitz, *Wolves in the Land of Salmon*, 223.

> potential for harm that, thank goodness, we are by now well rid of […]. Yes, when my parents and other homesteaders first entered the forests of the west Olympics there were wolves here; not the puny Rocky Mountain and plains kind known as the Buffalo wolves, Ontario wolves or brush wolves [coyotes], but the huge Olympic timber wolves even larger than the arctic wolves. […] One comfort, no matter what nutty ideas they get they won't be able to find any Olympic timber wolves to introduce. The coyotes have […] replaced those. […] It was because of fear of wolves that my parents, when they sent me to gather in livestock, had me carry a gun when I was only nine years old. In Europe, wolves ate kids![17]

The issue returned time and again. In the 1980s, a rapid expansion of another invasive species—the mountain goats—served as a reminder of the wolf's absence. The goats were introduced to the Olympic Peninsula by hunters in the 1920s, around the same time the last wolves were killed. No major predator was left to hunt down the ungulates that were damaging the endemic flora,[18] and it took almost a century to remove the goats.[19] The late 1990s saw yet another unsuccessful campaign to reintroduce wolves to the Olympic National Park[20]; this time, the local residents opposed the idea for fear the predators would attack their pets and livestock.[21]

In 2013, David Moskowitz, an environmentalist and wildlife photographer, wrote that "large sections of the Olympic Peninsula remain similar to when wolves were last present there in the dense forests of the Olympic Mountains." Although these areas offer "some of the best habitat for wolves," it is unlikely that they will disperse there on their own,[22] making the reintroduction perhaps the only way to return wolves to this environment. As of 2022, the wolf is still absent from the Olympic Mountains and unlikely to be reintroduced, despite the study commissioned in the 1990s and again in 2004 that proclaimed the Olympics a suitable habitat for wolf recovery.[23] "Who knows better the effect of wolves," asked George McCormick, who opposed the reintroduction, "those here who have lived with them or some city folks with letters behind their names whose only experience with wolves is in

[17] Lena Fletcher, "Let's Put Wolves in Their Place—Out of the Park," *The Daily News* (January 11, 1976), 9.

[18] Larry Pynn, "Park Officials Grapple with Growing Goat Woes," *The Vancouver Sun* (March 21, 1986), 24.

[19] Brandon Block, "Mountain Goat Removal from Olympic National Park More Than Halfway Complete," *The Olympian* (November 12, 2020), accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.theolympian.com/news/state/article247150061.html.

[20] Seattle Times, "Endangered Wolves Find a Friend in Congress," *The Spokesman-Review* (July 15, 1997), 22, https://www.newspapers.com/image/574896017/.

[21] Danny Westneat, "Wolves May Return to Olympic Park," *Tallahassee Democrat* (March 14, 1999), 10, https://www.newspapers.com/image/247713199/.

[22] Moskowitz, *Wolves in the Land of Salmon*, 157.

[23] Moskowitz, *Wolves in the Land of Salmon*, 223–241.

a zoo?"[24] Moskowitz expressed a different sentiment, stating that "restoration of extirpated native species is part of the national park mandate, and wolves are the only native mammal species currently missing."[25] Lois Crisler did not have a chance to observe or interact with wolves during the time spent in the Olympic National Park, and it was not until reaching the Arctic that she has decided to devote her life to these animals.

Between Wildness and Captivity

For Lois Crisler, the Alaskan Arctic was "the first 'great' wilderness" where she experienced true freedom, despite the years spent in the Olympic Mountains and the Colorado Rockies, which she called "captive wilderness." Perhaps for Crisler, the wilderness of Washington and Colorado was "mere scenery" without wolves.[26] Yet the Arctic tundra, this great wilderness supposedly free of human interference, was home to thousands of these predators. Because they were too elusive to observe, film, and approach,[27] however, the Crislers decided to acquire two wolf pups captured by the Eskimo hunters.[28] This pair of wolves would never again be anonymous. Their names were first scribbled on "a piece of torn cardboard" tied to the cage in which they were kept, and then immortalized in print as Lois Crisler's memoirs were published. The grey male was named Trigger, and his chocolate-black sister—Lady. Their parents were killed during the capture, and their three siblings did not survive in captivity.[29] The Crislers obtained the pups in order to film them for a Walt Disney documentary; Lois was convinced that wilderness was fast disappearing, hence the desire to photograph the animals in their natural environment.[30] It soon turned out to be much more than a project, however, for Lois grew more attached to the pups by the day.

Although the Crislers wanted to give the wolves a life that was as close to freedom as possible, they would still keep them penned and chain them at night. They were walked on leashes every day, until Herb decided to take their harnesses off for good. Lois was terrified they would simply run away;[31] even then, she had felt that what

[24] Moskowitz, *Wolves in the Land of Salmon*, 204.
[25] Moskowitz, *Wolves in the Land of Salmon*, 220.
[26] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 38.
[27] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 14–51.
[28] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 74–75.
[29] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 79.
[30] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 92.
[31] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 89.

kept wilderness tied to them was artificial. Convinced that Lady and Trigger would never come back if turned loose, she begged Herb to keep them in.[32] Despite her great love for wildness, she wished to control the wolves and keep them tethered; still, they turned out to be "so elusive they frustrated all attempts at cuddling them."[33] Lois often remarked that the wolves were not pets, and yet, she admitted:

> I was more possessive with the pups than [Herb] was. Naturally he got along with them, at least at first, better than I did. Every morning as I prepared breakfast I glanced enviously at him sitting on a low rock in the pen, waiting for the wolves to play with him.[34]

Although Lois worried the wolves could turn on them one day,[35] she nevertheless tried to be as close to Lady and Tigger as possible. Whenever Lady growled at her, Lois "hugged her."[36] She would also "[lie] down facing [Trigger's] head," her fingers deep in his fur. Lois wrote of being "intimidated" when the wolf growled at her, but at the same time so full of love for him that she did not back out; she described the feeling as "a tuning of love with [the wolf] as strong and definite as a harp chord strummed."[37]

Inevitably, Lady and Trigger resisted captivity. When on a leash, "Lady strained against [it] to escape," digging "her paws into the snow, striving with all her power to escape," leaping "despairingly at [Lois's] face;" Trigger would simply bite.[38] The end to the relative freedom they enjoyed on the tundra came when the Crislers packed the anxious animals into a plane and flew them to Point Barrow for the winter, where they would spend their days chained outside or shut inside their wanigan before returning to the tundra in spring. While wintering at Point Barrow, the wolves preferred to stay outside no matter the weather instead of inside the wanigan with the Crislers, which "broke [Lois's] heart." Nevertheless, she noted that the wolves had found safety and peace outside that they could not find in the wanigan with them[39]; once inside, the wolves kept seeking an escape route.[40] Lois would soon strive to keep them "from being too unhappy in their captivity"[41]; Lady "took captivity harder" than Trigger—having spent over four months in a collar, she "sat leaning against the fence half fainting" when it was finally

[32] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 110.
[33] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 91.
[34] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 97.
[35] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 141.
[36] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 203.
[37] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 157.
[38] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 146.
[39] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 167.
[40] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 177.
[41] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 164.

removed.[42] The Crislers thought the last act of compassion toward the wolves would be to return with them to the Arctic and let them taste freedom once more before their deaths.[43] Still, Lois wanted to keep them confined and safe: "I wish we could have taken [the wolves] home to the States," she confessed. "We have room, we could have built them a two-acre pen."[44] Lois's wish would soon be fulfilled, at least partially.

Between Captivity and Death

Because the Crislers still needed footage of wolf pups that they did not manage to take with Lady and Trigger, Herb went looking for a wolf den. The initial plan to film the wolves from afar was replaced by the desire to make it easier as soon as he had reached the den. "On the spur of the moment [Herb] decided to bring the pups home"; one of the men "crawled into the den and brought them out one at a time. Two wolves, the parents no doubt, bounded around crying."[45] The pups were then named Alatna, Arctic, Barrow, Killik, and Tundra. Experimentally, the Crislers let Trigger and Lady in with the pups to see how the wolves would react. Although they did not know this at the time, wolves often adopt pups that are unrelated to them. Trigger and Lady were no different, and soon were found tending to the pups. In fact, they have taken their responsibility so seriously that they tried leading Alatna, Arctic, Barrow, Killik, and Tundra out of the pen, which made Lois fear "about [their] future with the pups."[46] When the time came to open the pen, to Lois's "utter dismay," she thought she had seen the last of them once the wolves ran out and away. The fear of losing the wolves, however, must have followed Lois since the beginning of the project: the Crislers "had never discussed [the wolves'] fate because [they] knew it must be death."[47]

The passage of the last of the migrating caribou through the tundra marked the end of the filming, and Herb "was impatient to get on to other projects."[48] When it was finally time to leave the Arctic, the wolves' fate was decided on the spur of the moment again. Although Lois remarked that they "could not abandon them on the tundra to starve; [they] could not afford to fly them out and somehow support them

[42] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 172.
[43] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 168–169.
[44] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 200.
[45] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 224.
[46] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 234.
[47] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 264.
[48] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 293.

[either]," the Crislers would, nevertheless, bring the wolves home to Colorado and put them in a pen. "But could we condition these free creatures for captivity?" Lois wondered.[49] She considered their options: "Should we take the wolves home with us […] or kill them?" She had felt that no other way was possible. Yet she was aware that their captivity was wrong to begin with: "What was right to do in a situation unright from its beginning—the hour the pups were stolen from their den?" Still, Crisler remained undecided, feeling that they should be shot instead of being penned for years. These conflicting feelings must have been a constant companion to Lois, and eventually, one would have to prevail.

In the end, she chose captivity, "knowing […] what it might cost [her] emotionally."[50] By that time, however, Lady was already dead—killed by a wild wolf—and Trigger, having found a mate and joined a pack, had left with the wild wolves, never to return[51]; he was killed by a hunter not long after, for a bounty of $50. The five pups did not fare any better, as they were loaded into the boxes that Lady and Trigger had been brought in and transported to Colorado, where, having escaped from their pen, they were poisoned and shot within four months—all but one, whom Lois would kill herself after seven years of captivity.[52] The great wilderness that Lois was captivated with was gone—or, perhaps, it was not pristine to begin with, as there is hardly a place where human influence could not reach. "Back of us we left destruction," Crisler wrote, noting that one of the structures they had built in the Arctic was used later by wolf hunters[53]; she thought that civilization would be the ultimate downfall of wilderness.[54]

Rewilding

> "What do people want in the future? […] Will the world consist only of vast cities and factory farms? Will there only be pockets of wild animals preserved in parks and zoos? And if that happens, what will we become?"[55]

Similar to Lois Crisler, Teresa "tsimmu" Martino lived at a time when wolves were scarce in the Pacific Northwest. She was aware of the predator control program in Alaska; it was the early 1990s, over thirty years after the Crislers' project in the

[49] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 264.
[50] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 294–295.
[51] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 266.
[52] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 299–300.
[53] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 300.
[54] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 37.
[55] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 23.

Brooks Range ended, and wolves there were still being killed.[56] Although Martino read Lois Crisler's memoirs and found them insightful,[57] she would have her own wolf story to tell. "[The she-wolf] was born captive in the northern mountains, but her grandparents were free,"[58] Martino wrote in her memoir *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness* (1997). She named the wolf Mckenzie, after the place where her grandparents were captured for a zoo in the 1970s: McKenzie Mountains in Yukon.[59] As a wolf born in a retiring rescue center—"second generation removed from the wild"—she had no future in either captivity or wilderness. "Everyone deals with captivity differently," Martino thought before she decided to take this gray wolf pup home with her. Only ten days old, the pup was taken from her mother and packed into a crate. Martino referred to these animals as "orphans caught between the cage and the wilderness."[60] She had felt guilty about taking the pup from her mother, but she also recognized the hopelessness of Mckenzie's condition: a future in a cage or death. Although she did not know it at the time, Martino would find a way to rewild Mckenzie.

"I am a wolf when I sleep," Martino wrote, describing the dreams in which she was running and hunting with the she-wolf. This was only a fantasy, at least for several months to come, but the idea of rewilding was already taking shape: "[Mckenzie] paces in the car as we drive and I fancy she sometimes imagines she is migrating across the tundra following the great columns of caribou in the bright days of an arctic summer."[61] Freedom was important to Teresa Martino. Once she had felt her own freedom being threatened, she moved to a cabin on an island in the Pacific Northwest. If she could think "of the open plains,"[62] then a wolf had the same right.

"Domestication," wrote Martino, "frightens me."[63] Being wild meant living "outside the cage, […] pure like wolves."[64] She voiced something that Crisler dared not: the way she identified with her she-wolf, how it connected her to wildness and set her free. It was freedom, too, that Crisler had wanted. Lois recognized a quality in the wolves, especially in Lady, that was unlike that of a dog or any other domesticated animal, even when they were penned—and the word for it was wildness. She wrote:

> Wildness is a quality gone from human environment. Tameness is the air one breathes in civilization. People suppose wildness is ferocity. It is something far

[56] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 40.
[57] Personal communication with Teresa Martino, January 30, 2021.
[58] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 9.
[59] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 20–61.
[60] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 14–18.
[61] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 34–36.
[62] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 43.
[63] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 28.
[64] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 58.

> more serious than that. It is independence—a life commitment to shouldering up one's own self. For his safety and survival a wolf depends on himself only.[65]

The interconnectedness of wildness and independence resonated with Crisler. She was, after all, dependent on her husband, and often left at the camp to do chores and "dutifully" cook meals rather than enjoy an adventurous life; she envied Herb, who was free to explore and pursue different projects.[66] Lois admitted to feeling lonely, and sought solace in the presence of animals. The wolves, however—just like her husband—have often been away, traveling over the vast tundra, hunting and socializing with their wild brethren. Perhaps she saw herself in the she-wolves: at first in Lady, and then in Alatna, both of whom she refused to call "pets." While in the Tarryall Mountains, Colorado, Lois felt imprisoned by the responsibility to the wolves. She was bound by the promise she had made to Alatna—that she would devote her life to care for her.[67] At the same time, it was an experience that would, in a way, set Lois free. Just like Crisler, Martino was firm in stating that her she-wolf was not a pet: "We are becoming more like sisters as she gets older."[68] Lois had found a sister in her wolf, too: "I realized that I trusted [Alatna] as much as a sister."[69] The women thought the wolves must have seen them as pack mates,[70] and neither could stand seeing them chained or behind a fence.[71]

Because Teresa Martino had previous experience with wolves and wolfdogs, she was aware that they were not suited to be family pets.[72] And yet, it is estimated that 250,000 pet wolfdogs are kept in the United States alone.[73] While no such estimates are available for pet wolves, there are only about 6,000 of them in the wild in the lower 48 states; even in Alaska, where the population is stable, the number oscillates between 7,000 and 11,000.[74] Back in the 1980s, there were more unwanted pet wolves and wolfdogs than Martino could possibly take in while she was running a wildlife sanctuary; but take them she did, for the alternative was death. Martino

[65] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 96.

[66] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 44.

[67] Lois Crisler, *Captive Wild* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 65.

[68] Crisler, *Captive Wild* 50.

[69] Crisler, *Captive Wild*, 193.

[70] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 74.

[71] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 59.

[72] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 19.

[73] Jared Kain-Woods, "Wolf-Dog Ownership: U.S. Regulations and Laws," *Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary*, July 31, 2020, https://wildspiritwolfsanctuary.org/peek-into-the-pack/wolf-dog-ownership-u-s-regulations-and-laws/.

[74] Andy Corbley, "Having Recovered to 6,000 Individuals, DOI Removes Gray Wolves From Endangered Species List," *World at Large*, October 30, 2020, https://www.worldatlarge.news/environment-policy/gray-wolves-removed-from-the-endangered-species-list.

thought that the reason why wolves are kept as pets is "the loss of our own wildness." People reenact "the capture" of living in civilization—of being "trapped" in it—by "taking a wild animal as a prisoner." [75] Perhaps the reason for wanting to own a tame wolf lies somewhere else entirely. Both Martino and Crisler saw themselves mirrored in the golden hues of their wolves' eyes and recognized intelligent and independent beings looking back. Through their wolves, they could experience wildness more deeply and more profoundly than ever before or after.

"Why do we fear wildness?" Martino wondered, echoing Lois Crisler's own thoughts. "If there is no wildness, what will be the nature of the land?"[76] Alone in her cabin, Martino had once contemplated the animals she saw outside her window, the "small wilderness that [comforted] the tameness of [her] walls."[77] Crisler, on the other hand, had tried to imitate freedom through creating her own contained wilderness, with the wolf pen next to her remote cabin. The loneliness both women had felt seems to haunt those who belong neither in civilization nor wilderness. Their cabins were equivalent to the pens in which their wolves were kept. "I have been a jailer of those I love," confessed Crisler;[78] "The island is my home but my prison as well," wrote Martino.[79] "What would I do now that I have been free?" she asked herself before freeing Mckenzie.[80]

> The wolves are my relatives but not my tribe. When I leave Mckenzie in the wild, I will return […] to my cabin, and live with humanity. I think of Mckenzie's mother pacing in the small circular prison at the rescue center. I am still struggling against my own chain-link fences, but Mckenzie is wild now.[81]

Martino admitted she did not know when or how she had first thought about setting Mckenzie free. All she knew was that it had to be done, for her sake and the wolf's:

> Mckenzie must go back. This I know. She must be taught to hunt, to find other wolves. She must be able to walk the forest path and go where she wishes, to birth cubs in the den she digs. If Mckenzie goes back, there is some part of me that will remain wild too. […] Perhaps by saving the wilderness we are saving that part of the body that needs the lion's claws and the wolf's howl.[82]

[75] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 41.
[76] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*.
[77] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 82.
[78] Crisler, *Captive Wild*, 40.
[79] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 93.
[80] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 129.
[81] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 127.
[82] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 60.

It was, of course, illegal to simply release a wolf to the wild; in fact, it was illegal to even own one, as wolves were listed as endangered species in the lower 48 states in 1973.[83] This, however, could not dissuade Martino. Mckenzie was to be secretly released in the northern forests, where the Cascade Mountains border with Canada and where wild wolves lived. To prepare the she-wolf for life in the wilderness, Martino walked with her deep in national parks in British Columbia, the walks with the wolf making her feel "part of the land."[84]

"Careful not to let her eat tame food,"[85] she taught Mckenzie how to hunt; Martino would catch rabbits and mice for her[86] as if she were a mother wolf. Perhaps she saw herself as one, as she referred to herself as a "parent"[87] and to Mckenzie as her "little daughter."[88] Through hunting with Mckenzie in the wild, Martino was gaining a name—*tsimmu*, or "dreams of a wolf"—while Mckenzie was "giving up the name [she] gave her," as "wild animals need no names."[89]

> Mckenzie needs to know that the real world for her is the place that is called "wilderness." I wonder often about the word and what it means. […] Wilderness equals dangerous and unpredictable in a world suffocated by illusions of safety. There is risk, there is death. […] The one good word derived from wilderness is 'free.' On a long rope or in a pen Mckenzie is the opposite of free.[90]

Martino knew the wolf could not stay with her "in the domestic setting," for she had already experienced freedom and longed for it. Mckenzie was seven months old when Martino had first left her alone in the wild before going back to bring her home again.[91]

> She has killed and she has been free. Will she go back to live wild, or will she die in the attempt? Or will she choose to stay with me? […] I promise her that she will choose. Mckenzie is a person deserving respect, she has that right. Sighing to myself, missing her already, I know what she will decide as all people do. But she is with me now, her graceful, grey body and amber eyes.[92]

After nearly a year of living with Mackenzie, Martino decided to release her in the mountains for the final time, in a national park where she would have been safe from

[83] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 63.
[84] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 64–65.
[85] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 85.
[86] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 73.
[87] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 100.
[88] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 108, 127.
[89] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 83–84.
[90] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 85.
[91] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 94–96.
[92] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 115.

hunters.[93] When the time came, Martino let the wolf decide whether to return to the wilderness or go back with her to captivity. "Mckenzie, whose name [was already] fading from her," chose freedom. In unnaming the wolf, Martino had renounced her ownership. "Mckenzie does not fear death, but captivity. And so do I," she wrote. "What is Freedom? What is Wilderness? What is Captivity? What is Domestication? The answer is the singing of wolves who call to the pack, who live for each other. […] And they do not build walls."[94] Martino would then dedicate her memoir "to the wolf who has no name."

Decades later, Martino is ranching alongside wolves. Range riding in the Selkirk Mountains, she keeps the predators from eating livestock. Some of these wolves, she claims, are descendants of Mckenzie. "The grey one," as she calls her, had found a mate and produced pups. It was the she-wolf's predatory nature, Martino believes, that allowed her to return to the wilderness. Not many captive animals can be rewilded in the same way.[95] She does not speak of wolves openly, aware of the sentiment shared among most ranchers—that there is not enough space for livestock, its owners, and unrestrained wilderness, and yet Martino finds solace in the wolves' presence, despite the public controversy surrounding them. Their tracks in soft earth can once again be found in Washington state, and the wolves have come on their own this time: not through reintroduction, but through natural recolonization.

Wolves in the Anthropocene

> "In a reasonable world these peaceful predators would be the most cherished object of study by our race, trying to unlearn war. Why then do people hate wolves and seek to exterminate them?"[96]

The 1950s was a time when the term "Anthropocene" was yet to be coined and wolves were yet to be protected. Because their role in the ecosystem and their behavior were still to be studied and understood, their deaths were still largely disregarded, and their killing encouraged. But they were already living in the Anthropocene, along with their human contemporaries: those who hunted and hated them, and those who did not care about their existence altogether. It was also a time when wolves were almost exterminated from the lower 48 states, surviving mostly in Alaska and across the border in the Canadian wilderness. It was not until the

[93] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 124–130.

[94] Martino, *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness*, 142.

[95] Personal communication with Teresa Martino, January 30, 2021.

[96] Crisler, *Arctic Wild*, 290.

mid-1990s that wolves were reintroduced to Yellowstone National Park, in an attempt to rewild the landscape that, empty of its apex predators, was impoverished and out of balance. The wolf's return proved instrumental in reverting the wild places to their state from before the destructive human interference. Wolf reintroduction in Yellowstone was only the beginning, and soon, more such projects would follow, including Mexican grey wolf reintroduction in 1998. Red wolf reintroduction actually preceded both, albeit silently in comparison to the arrival of wolves in Yellowstone—an event which sparked both fury and joy in the public. In late 2018, wolves were relocated to Isle Royale, and by the end of 2023, wolves are supposed to be reintroduced to Colorado, with proposals to return them to the Olympic National Park as well. As these projects are gaining momentum, wolves in the Pacific Northwest are still being killed. It appears that wildlife control in the Anthropocene is inevitable, and whether wolves and other wild animals survive or die in wilderness or captivity, or whether they are reintroduced and rewilded, depends on whether their right to roam these lands and to do so in unimpeded freedom is recognized and respected.

To recognize an animal as an individual, it is necessary to know their story. Some have been written down, and as their popularity spread, these accounts have served as manifestos not only for these individual animals, but also for the species and wildlife as a whole. Lois Crisler's *Arctic Wild* (1958) was one of such influential works that, through portraying wolves as intelligent and complex beings, and above all, as individuals with their own thoughts and agency, inspired future wolf biologists and conservationists. The public, too, seemed enamored with the wolves tamed by humans, and their sympathy for the predators grew. At the same time, however, Crisler worked counter to what she had initially believed in—that wilderness should remain truly wild, and free of human interference—by taking wolf pups born in the wild from their dens and making them captives.

Over thirty years after Lois Crisler's wolves were taken from the wilds of Alaska, another wolf was born, this time in captivity. Her story, however, was one of rewilding. Described in Teresa Martino's *The Wolf, the Woman, the Wilderness* (1997), the wolf's return to the wild was concurrent with the first reintroductions of the 1990s. Both Crisler's and Martino's memoirs reveal, albeit on a smaller scale, the future that wolves would face in the Anthropocene, throughout the places where they live or have once lived. While one population is reintroduced, rewilded, and protected, another one is hunted, trapped, and killed. The same wolves who live in protected areas can be legally "harvested" as soon as they step outside the invisible boundary that designates where they are allowed to live; others still are killed illegally, despite remaining inside the shrinking wilderness set out for them. "The wilderness," says Martino, is "becoming islands with civilization caging it in." To her, "returning [the wolf] to the wilderness meant returning her to the natural environment of a wolf.

To a place fairly untouched by the modern world where wolves can live as they were meant to."[97]

Whether such untouched wilderness truly exists or existed in the past, however, is a moot point. Rolf O. Peterson, a wildlife biologist who has led the wolf-moose study at Isle Royale for decades, argues that "leaving humanity out of nature is simply naïve. Absolute wilderness (where the effects of humans are absent) is a myth; human influence pervades every corner of the earth."[98] Sometimes, reintroduction, or rewilding, may be the only way to maintain wilderness in this world—not the mythic pristine wilderness, but one that exists today. It is impossible to judge whether the removal of seven wolf pups from the wilds of Alaska by the Crislers had made a lasting effect on its landscape, just as it is impossible to tell whether releasing a single wolf back to the wild by Martino has made a difference. Their stories, however, reveal our turbulent relationship with the wild, and our conflicting feelings about the wolf. Above all, they prompt us to rethink our understanding of the concepts of wilderness, wildness, and captivity.

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[97] Teresa Martino, "Interview," *NewSage Press* (February 27, 1998), accessed March 25, 2019, http://www.newsagepress.com/wolfwomanwilderness.html.

[98] Rolf O. Peterson, *The Wolves of Isle Royale: A Broken Balance* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2007), 171.

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