



A cybernetic hypothesis of periodontal disease

*'In conclusion, I want,' he said
 'ten thousand mixed chains of predation —
 none of your simple rabbit and coyote stuff!
 This ocean shall have many mouths, many palates.
 I want,
 say, a hundred ways of death, and three thousand
 of regeneration —
 all in technicolor naturally.'*

MARK O'CONNOR¹

In this final chapter I'd like to take you on a short journey into a realm of ideas that may seem strange or unfamiliar, and which may appear to have little or no connection with the rest of the book. But there is a connection — and there's an important difference.

Periodontal disease, as we shall see, has a place in the natural order of things: it is part of the cycle of life and death that ensures the balance of nature. Omnivores such as humans and herbivores such as sheep are affected by periodontal disease. In the 'wild' this can be expected to affect individual life expectancy and thus the composition of omnivore and herbivore populations. But it is the effect of periodontal disease on wild carnivores which will concern us here — how periodontal disease may influence carnivore numbers.

However, while nature is 'concerned' with balancing the needs of the majority, pet owners are concerned with the needs of their