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Why we should keep quiet at the zoo

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ABSTRACT: Zoos are typically public attractions that do not explicitly, or through a more implicit culture, expect quietness from their guests. This paper will explore whether quietness is something we should aim for when we are visiting zoos. Primarily through analogy with other public spaces which share some of the key characteristics of zoos (libraries and schools, cinemas, theatres and galleries, war memorials, and hospitals and gardens), we suggest that quiet is indeed appropriate in zoos (more appropriate than being noisy). A major component of this argument will be the exploration of what is meant by quiet (and noise), and outlining a concept of quietness based on an idea of attention. The central premise here, drawing upon theories of attention and love, is that noise involves a certain kind of outward expression, which leaves less room for the appreciation of, and attention to, the animals and information that the zoo provides. The article will reflect on how a call for quiet may create scope for enhancing the educational possibilities of zoos, and how zoos might profit by taking the acoustic dimension of visitor behaviour into account when considering their values.

KEY WORDS: Quietness · Silence · Noise · Attention · Love · Zoo · Ethics · Education

1. WHAT'S A ZOO FOR?

Zoos and the organisations that manage and govern them are broadly in agreement as to what a zoo should do. The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), for instance, states that their mission is to provide services advancing animal welfare, public engagement and the conservation of wildlife, based on a vision whereby they hope for a world where all people respect, value and conserve wildlife and wild places (AZA 2022). Similarly, the British and Irish Associations of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) wishes to be a powerful force in the care and conservation of the natural world, to inspire people to help conserve the natural world and to deliver the highest quality environmental education (BIAZA 2022a). Fernandez et al. (2009, p. 2) suggest that zoos have 5 categories of purpose — 'animal welfare, conservation, education of the public, research, and entertainment' — and that, at times, the entertainment purpose of zoos can conflict with its other aims.

The stated aims of zoos are unabashedly ethical in nature and little or no normative or metaethical justification is offered by zoos or collaborative zoo organisations for adopting these aims. We do not, of course, mean that empirical evidence is not given for the kind of impact that zoo activities are likely to have — zoo organisations invest in a great deal of research to justify their activities in that sense; we mean that argumentative justification for the ethical convictions that precede these activities are not themselves something that zoo organisations typically engage with. Here, we mean questions about the kinds of things that are valuable and why they are valuable. Are the

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lives of individual non-human animals valuable? How do we measure their value? What about collections of animals or ecosystems more broadly? What value does a species have that a member of that species does not have? Is the value intrinsic or instrumental (do these other living things have value only because they are valued by humans?)? Typically, the value of wildlife, of knowledge about wildlife, and the welfare of non-human animals is taken as self-evident, and this paper will not deviate from those assumptions, nor will it attempt to provide any detailed justification for these tenets of conservation. The question asked here is: Given the value of 'animal welfare, conservation, education of the public, research, and entertainment' (Fernandez et al. 2009, p. 2), how should we conceive of our presence, as zoo visitors, in the zoo setting, particularly in regards to our being quiet?

Conservation and education are often emphasised as primary aims of zoos, and Fernandez et al. (2009) suggest (though largely implicitly) that entertainment is, for zoos, mostly a means to an end as opposed to an end in itself: visitors provide the money that allows zoos to achieve their conservation goals (see also Kleiman 1985 for a seminal articulation of these core aims of zoos). BIAZA, however, is explicit in its goal of inspiring people to help conserve the natural world and of providing the highest quality environmental education, and it seems plausible that a similarly high quality of entertainment might be synonymous with such inspiration and education (BIAZA 2022a).

Many other public institutions have goals analogous to those of zoos, particularly in regards to a conjunction of education and entertainment, and it is primarily by drawing analogies with these institutions that this paper hopes to make a case for quietness in zoos. Libraries, art galleries, war memorials and monuments, schools, cinemas, hospitals and gardens are all public institutions or attractions that are associated with cultures of quietness; by describing aims associated with quietness common to both these institutions and zoos, and justifying that association, this paper will seek to make a case for recommending quietness in zoos.

In addition to this primary argument through analogy, this paper will also draw on empirical work completed as part of a project entitled *Listening to the Zoo*, which was carried out by the authors in partnership with two zoos in the southwest of the UK, Paignton and Bristol, both belonging to BIAZA. This project explored the relationship between zoo visitors, zoo animals and zoo staff with sound in the zoo environment. By organising experimental zoo visits (involving volunteer members of the public visiting the zoo either silently or while making an effort to keep quiet), engaging in conversation with zoo staff, and conducting systematic observations of zoo animals, all whilst querying the place of sound, we have been able to offer new insight into this previously under-explored dimension of zoo spaces (see Rice et al. 2021a,b, 2023).

2. QUIETNESS AND LOVE

Covid-19 hit zoos badly. Loeb (2021) gives some detail on how zoos in England were impacted by the lockdowns and a lack of clear access to government help. For many zoos, both in the UK and elsewhere, tickets sales are the single biggest source of income, and whilst lockdown measures prevented zoos from gaining income by this means, many of their costs did not cease. The Birmingham Zoo in Alabama, for instance, gets 80–90% of its income from ticket sales, and still had $30,000 of costs each day to keep the zoo ticking over (Peeples 2020). Feeding and caring for zoo animals continued and without the support of visitor income. Zoos became quiet. For the animals in zoos, this quietness was in some cases a positive thing (Boultwood et al. 2021), whereas for others it did not seem to make much difference (Kidd et al. 2022).

There are many senses in which one might use 'quiet' here. 'Quiet' might figuratively refer to a lack of trade or a lack of tourist activity, and it might carry a barely implicit suggestion of fiscal despair: 'things have been very quiet'. But, of course, this almost literal quietness is often accompanied by an entirely literal quietness; no visitors in zoos meant a huge reduction of anthropogenic noise within zoos, and this need not necessarily be thought about in negative terms. This paper will explore the possibility that there is at least one kind of quiet, partly literal and partly figurative, that might be worth keeping in zoos.

There is a sense in which the meaning of the word 'quietness' is so well established in ordinary usage that rehearsing it here flirts with superfluity. However, there are some qualities to the quietness being discussed which should be considered up front. As a concept, 'quietness' or 'quietude' is not widely discussed amongst scholars of sound. We should clarify that this lack of specific attention to quietness is in regards to quietness in a relatively abstract sense: trying to understand what it really is or what it means. There is fairly extensive research, particularly in health, wellbeing and public space scholarship, which takes the meaning of quietness to be relatively unprob-

lematic (see Herranz-Pascual et al. 2019 for a good example of how quietness is utilised in these kinds of studies). However, some attention has been given to explorations of both 'silence' and 'noise', and an analysis of these related concepts will be a useful means of clarifying what is meant here by 'quietness'.

Silence, in a basic sense, suggests a total lack of sound, and yet, as Gautier (2015) suggests, such complete soundlessness is never ultimately possible. Even if all external ambient sounds are extinguished, the small ever-present functioning of our internal biological processes creates some sound: heartbeats, breath, bones and muscles shifting. So, perhaps silence is indistinguishable from quietness. But this focus on the minutiae of internal and external sound shows how the distinction between internal (autogenic) and external sound is vital to outlining a useful concept of quietness. Whenever any acoustic terms are being considered, it is worth making a clear distinction between their environmental and personal senses; this is to say, the sense in which one might be said to be somewhere that is silent or to be silent oneself. As Gautier (2015, p. 185) explains:

> '...how silence is understood depends in good measure on how the relationship between the listener and his or her surroundings are conceptualized...',

and it is the sense of personally being silent that is central to this current exploration of our behaviour in zoos.

The natural scarcity of total or absolute silence does suggest some ways in which silence evokes ideas quite distinct from being quiet. Describing a place as silent can suggest that something is amiss, that the absence of sound is brought about by some external and disruptive means: an eerie silence. And, due to the inevitability of sound when there is life, silence can also suggest death (Gautier 2015). Indeed, one need not have total silence to achieve this eerie quality. The coronavirus pandemic and its resultant lockdowns are an apt example of a quietness that was, despite its persistent sounds, by its stark contrast to previous busy and full anthropogenic soundscapes, redolent of dramatic and unwelcome change. The totality, purity and artificiality of silence, then, can carry a sense of sinister imposition. Most of this negative content to silence is anathema to the quietness being recommended in this paper, but this negative silence represents an interruption, and it is artificial. It is artificial in the sense of being imposed, it is foreign to that context and comes as a change. Such artificiality may not, however, be altogether negative. When applied to personal silence, i.e. someone being silent, artificiality might suggest something ascetic, an air of laudable self-discipline; '...silence invokes a type of plenitude most commonly associated with contemplative techniques of quietness as a means to bring about a transformation of the self...' (Gautier 2015, p. 185). Again, it is this sense of being silent, when it is imposed by individuals upon themselves as opposed to it being imposed on environments or unwilling victims, and this positive association with a contemplative attitude and self-discipline which most closely approximates that which is being discussed here. The suggestion of discipline, though, of transforming oneself, has a close and important relationship with ideas of similarly transformative education. This transformative aspect of quietness will be important when reflecting upon the educational aims of zoos. What is the highest quality environmental education if it is not transformative of the self?

There may also be a sense in which the kind of sound that is absent is also important. Noise might usefully be described as the kind of sound which quietness lacks. 'Being quiet' might usefully be contrasted with 'being noisy'. Of course, noise is an even more expansive and nebulous term than silence or even quietness and, as Novak (2015, p. 126) notes, 'noise is an essentially relational concept. It can only take on meaning by signifying something else, but it must remain incommensurably different from that thing that we do know and understand.' Being quiet is similarly relative and there may be some danger, if defining being quiet in terms of not being noisy and being noisy in terms of not being quiet, that the concepts remain relatively empty (like 2 mirrors facing each other). But noise offers us a bit more than that, and it is in the absence of the often forceful and dissonant qualities of noise that we might find this present sense of being quiet. Novak (2015, p. 128) suggests that there is a particular sense in which 'noise is a subject of excess and disruption', and that sense will help us formulate a notion of quietness for the purposes of this article. Being quiet is meant here to refer to a state of not being excessive or disruptive, to make only sound that is commensurate with one's environment and with those with whom one shares that environment. Quietness, this quietness, is a matter of consideration, of being considerate.

The quiet being discussed here is more than acoustic, it is also psychological and moral. Our mouths and bodies might be still, our breath might be calm, and yet all the while our minds might be racing; such a quietness would make a mockery of the quietness that would make sense in zoo education and entertainment. The quietness imposed by Covid-19 was a quietness of being absent, the quietness we might

keep is a quietness of being more present. The ascetic air of being silent, that quality of self-discipline and mindfulness, is probably too strong and cerebral to be worth applying to the practical exercise of visiting a zoo (transforming zoos into places of monkish asceticism is an exercise in surreal science fiction), but it might be mollified into something far more reasonable. We might suggest that being quiet is beneficial to paying attention, particularly in the way it has been used by Murdoch (1970) in her discussions of love.

Murdoch (1970), in *The sovereignty of good*, explores a Neoplatonic model of morality whereby an encounter with a phenomenon and its inherent value can itself be sufficiently compelling as to dictate the form of the moral reaction: 'that true vision occasions right conduct' (Murdoch 1970, p. 66). This is a kind of moral theory which Plato himself, or we might say Socrates, set forth in one form in the *Protagoras* (Protagoras 345 d–e, see Lombardo & Bell 1997):

> '...as if there were anyone who willingly did bad things. I am pretty sure that none of the wise men thinks that any human being willingly makes a mistake or willingly does anything wrong or bad. They know very well that anyone who does anything wrong or bad does so involuntarily.'

One way that this Socratic intellectualism might be articulated is to say that if anyone truly apprehends value, if someone is in full possession of the moral facts of a situation, then they necessarily will act in a moral way (so the only time that anyone ever does anything bad is out of ignorance). Our intention here is not to offer a crude caricature of Socratic intellectualism for the sake of setting it up as a straw man; there is plenty of room for nuances within the position as it is set out by Plato and those who have followed him. For such nuances, Hedga Segvic's *No one errs willingly: the meaning of socratic intellectualism* offers a good overview of Plato's stance (Segvic 2000). This kind of moral theory has had a hard time in the history of philosophy. It must contend with some fairly compelling evidence to its contrary — that people often do things which they think are bad (for instance, Aristotle offers some criticism in the *Nichomachean ethics*; Aristotle 1995, $1110^{b}25–1111^{a}2$). This kind of Socratic intellectualism is particularly important in the context of zoo education due to the role it has played in shaping educational theory more generally, and the way it is implemented in zoos specifically. Moss & Esson (2013) have found good reason to believe that zoos frequently understand their own educational role as partly guaranteed by a similarly inevitable causal educational and moral chain of events: if children (or adults) are exposed to the information zoos provide, and the inspirational qualities of their animal exhibits, then these visitors are simply bound to learn how valuable these animals and habitats are, and to reform their behaviour to better protect these valuable things. Moss & Esson (2013, p. 15) suggest that:

> '...there is some blurring of the distinction between educational aspiration and out-puts, the resources designed to deliver that aspiration and measurable educational outcomes (that result in conservation impact). It appears that there is, in some cases, a false perception; that by simply 'aspiring to' or 'providing' somehow leads directly and linearly to 'achieving' the aspired-to outcomes...'

Of course, in the Socratic case, the theory applies to ethical psychology; in the case of zoo education, the theory applies to pedagogical causality, but the latter follows from the former (that knowledge is the inevitable product of exposure to a certain stimulus, and is at the same time inherently transformative). Moss & Esson (2013) are subjecting zoos to a criticism similar to that which Socratic intellectualism has been subjected: Where is the evidence? Other researchers have similarly scrutinised zoo educational claims. AZA undertook a 3 yr study and concluded that zoos do have appreciable impacts on conservation views of adult visitors (Falk et al. 2007); this study, however, has been met with criticism for its poor methodology and ultimate lack of justification in making any claims about the efficacy of zoo education (Marino et al. 2010). However, Murdoch's injunction (Murdoch 1970) gives us some room for modifying this model of pedagogical and moral inevitability and reclaiming something fruitful. In part, Murdoch is simply reforming Plato's existing theory, but, in addition, Murdoch's formulation inverts this idea so that it no longer acts merely as a theory as to how moral actions (or learning) do take place; instead, it becomes a normative moral injunction as to how we can and should learn, and how we can and should act. The upshot of Murdoch's idea is this: learn to love things by paying attention to them, and pay attention to them by making things more about them and less about you. Murdoch (1970, p. 66) states:

> 'The direction of attention is contrary to nature, outward, away from self which reduces all to a false unity, towards the great surprising variety of the world, and the ability so to direct attention is love.'

Although 'love' might, at first glance, seem like an unsuitably emotional term to introduce into the theory of zoo management and visitor behaviour, existing zoo language finds an easy place for it. BIAZA's 'Love Your Zoo' initiative might invoke a fairly light

and informal use of this term, but it bears an explicit and direct relationship with the educational, conservation, animal welfare and entertainment aims of the member zoos (BIAZA 2022b). The initiative marketed a UK nationwide half-term event whereby the member zoos explicitly showcased aspects of their zoos and their work that embody and demonstrate those core principles which they take as their existential rationale (BIAZA 2022b). However, Murdoch (1970) argues that love is not something which is taught through appealing to a list of good reasons; one does not explain one's love for one's own spouse or children by listing their many virtues and excusing their vices: love is inspired through a more direct connection and, crucially, by the payment of attention. We directly perceive the value of things by allowing those things to be foremost in our minds, by ensuring that the thing which we are doing is attending to those things.

This is the most crucial aspect of the kind of quietness being discussed here: being noisy is a matter of expressing oneself, of projecting oneself, one's thoughts, one's feelings, one's whims into the world; being quiet (the kind being recommended here) is its opposite, being quiet is about turning one's activity into a receptivity to another, stilling what you are in order that you might discover and attend to that which you are not.

Nor does this attention need to be specifically directed. If being quiet, or not being noisy, is a matter of projecting less of oneself and allowing more of the external world to impress itself upon oneself, then the potential experiences which quietness might allow for are far broader than attending to an already identified individual or situation. In one sense, this kind of attentiveness is necessarily open to the unknown (as opposed to being in prior possession of its object); since its very character is receptive (rather than imposing), expectations and prior conceptions should be kept to a minimum. Noise is a matter of personal freedom, whilst quietness is allowing for the freedom of the other: what will it be? Where will it come from? How will it behave? These things will be described by that which is being attended to rather than the one attending.

Aaltola (2018, p. 197) links Murdoch's and Weil's conceptions of love and attention to an almost Zen openness to the unexpected, and it is very much this sort of 'letting go' that (whilst avoiding the extremities of asceticism and rejecting introspection) the present treatment of quietness is recommending. Aaltola (2018) points out that loving attention, of the type meditated upon by Weil, demands embracing unexpected difference or individuality, and this chimes well with the kind of encounter (with creatures very different from ourselves) that zoo experience and education in a broad sense seem to aim for. As Weil (2002, p. 135) says: 'Every being cries out silently to be read differently', and by trying to limit our own activity, our own noise, in our encounters with zoo animals, we allow this kind of reading.

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and its lockdowns, there may be some temptation to fill the Covid-quiet that was wrought by this disease with the noise it forcibly expelled from our public spaces, to reimpose ourselves into that empty acoustic space, but it also gives us an alternative opportunity. The absences enforced by lockdowns, the things to which we did not have access, can accentuate their value; this absence can teach us appreciation, and instead of filling that void with ourselves and our noise, we have an opportunity to allow the value of other things to impress themselves on us more powerfully than before. The beauty, wonder and importance of the natural world is made available to us within zoos; perhaps we now have a chance to appreciate those things more fully.

Nor should any of this fancy conceptual deep delving and pseudo-poetic philosophising preclude the highly common-sense shape of the overall suggestion. Many of our public spaces and activities have this model of quietness (and noise) built into their cultures. What follows will be an attempt to outline those existing manifestations and discover if their treatment of quietness fits that which has been sketched here. If public attractions analogous to zoos already employ something of this model of quietness, it will be easier to find a prudent application for zoos.

3. LIBRARIES AND SCHOOLS: WHAT IS THE 'HIGHEST QUALITY ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION'?

It is safe to say that the emphasis of zoo education is on young, school-age learners (although older learners are certainly not excluded — many projects do, in fact, explicitly target other age groups: the Deep aquarium in Hull, for instance, has a project called 'Silver Sharks', which targets retirees with its educational programme; BIAZA 2022c). When zoos proclaim an aim of education, there is a sense in which this is primarily directed towards children; there is, furthermore, an implicit educational ethos that imagines 'fun' as being integral to the kind of 'highest quality environmental education' which zoos aim to provide for these children. One problem with the suggestion that people should be quiet in zoos

(we might say it is the problem) is that being quiet doesn't seem very fun. A central premise of a 'holiday' (during which zoos make most of their money from ticket sales) is to get away from the kind of school environment that demands the sort of attentive quietness which has been outlined here. So perhaps quietness in zoos is doomed to fail before it even leaves the stalls.

There are 2 primary retorts to this fun-based objection to encouraging quietness in zoos: firstly, it suggests another pedagogical assumption — that (noisy) fun leads to a higher quality environmental education; secondly, it suggests that the zoo should have a child-focused educational (and business) model. This second retort is closely related to another implicit assumption: that 'fun' and 'entertainment' are necessarily noisy things (i.e. that there are no other kinds of entertainment besides noisy entertainment); some alternative models of fun and entertainment will be discussed in connection with cinemas and art galleries. It is also worth noting that there are times when asking for quietness is a fairly straightforward delivery of factual information when quietness is the thing that is required by a particular species (Dancer & Burn 2019). This is certainly something already done by many zoos for those species that most require quietness, but the kind of general quietness being discussed in this paper goes much further than these occasional requests for the sake of specific species.

What this current discussion should not (and will not) do is firmly predict possible or probable sources of income for zoos; this is not an exercise in market research. That said, during our conversations with zoo visitors who had been asked to participate in experimental quiet and silent visits, a high proportion suggested that they would be willing to pay a premium in order to gain access to the zoo for designated quiet visiting times. Our sample was self-selecting and older, and we will not attempt to extrapolate any firm market projections as to untapped demographics for zoo visitors. However, the near unanimity of approval for quiet visiting which was expressed by those groups is supportive of challenging a status quo which excludes quietness by habit rather than by judgement.

For now, we should deal with the idea that noisy fun makes for a good education. Sahlgren (2018) reports on the role of pleasure and enjoyment in learning, and suggests that far from enjoyment being beneficial for learning, it is more often counter-productive. Whilst this flies in the face of some 'progressive' trends in education, the suggestion is far from counterintuitive. The report focuses on performance in existing school-age assessment exercises (exams), and finding a link between grinding hard-graft and good performance in exams should not be overly shocking. There is an intuitive association between focused, somewhat relentless, isolated and quiet behaviour and academic concentration. Nor should this association be restricted to older children and examinations: Gallagher's ethnography of sound in primary schools demonstrates the strength of the established connection between quietness and good learning in mainstream educational culture with much younger children (Gallagher 2011). Although he doesn't vouch for the efficacy of the connection in relation to educational attainment, Gallagher (2011) makes clear how central noise levels are in the general practice of the teachers with whom he worked: 'During my fieldwork, I was struck by the importance attached to quietness within the school culture. Teachers repeatedly emphasised the importance of being quiet and expended much time and energy in attempts to regulate noise levels' (Gallagher 2011, p. 51). Ultimately, the reason that libraries and examination rooms (and some classrooms) are quiet is so that everyone can better concentrate on what they are doing.

In contrast with the somewhat dictatorial power structure of classrooms sketched by Gallagher (2011), there is a collective ethos in the library, an ethic by which one's behaviour (including quietness) is maintained not only for the outcomes it generates for oneself but, rather, out of consideration for others. In a library, quietness is a precautionary status quo, because even if some individuals might find some noise conducive to concentration, others may not, and quietness is the safest bet. Nor does public quietness in a library or other study setting preclude private noise in a certain sense: those whose concentration may benefit from some sounds, perhaps music, might have their own private sounds piped directly through headphones, but the expectation is of public quietness. This collective ethos reappears throughout the examples of quiet public spaces given here and, therefore, will form an important part of the argument for quietness in zoos; concentration for the sake of learning is only one case where this public consideration holds true.

If the kind of education which zoos wish to achieve is akin to that which might be reflected in good exam results (the learning and reproduction of facts), then Sahlgren's report is damning of a 'fun' environment. And yet, zoos might still justifiably conceive of their educational aims as being permitted by fun regardless of any educational compromise that fun might require; this is to say: these tourists are out to buy fun, they can get that elsewhere and not get anything edu-

cational or they can get it at the zoo and perhaps, however diminished by noisy others, learn something. This somewhat brutal admission might call into question aspirations towards the 'highest quality environmental education', but it is a powerful stance against any top-down requirement for quietness in zoos. Such a requirement is not the only possible (or even most plausible) expression of the finding that quiet in zoos is a good thing. Quietness might be bottom up (a culture which grows out of public popularity for being quiet whilst visiting the zoo for the benefit of oneself and others), and it can be something in between (it might be a culture which becomes popular amongst some zoo visitors and also something which is simultaneously encouraged, though not required or instructed, by zoos).

4. CINEMAS, THEATRES AND GALLERIES

Of course, zoos are not the only public institutions or tourist attractions that were negatively impacted by the Covid-19 lockdowns; cinemas, theatres, art galleries and other public spaces for consuming and appreciating the creative arts were similarly struck by a lack of ticket sales. But one thing which does separate these places and institutions from zoos is that many of these have always carried a culture of quietness. And why so? Why be quiet at an art gallery? Why be quiet at the cinema?

Ultimately, some of this art-orientated culture of quietness differs very little from that of libraries. The culture is partly based on a consideration of the interest of others in concentrating. However, rather than being based on a clear idea of education, the end goal here is in an area which drifts towards a form of 'entertainment'. Concepts of learning and entertainment are, however, both complicated quite usefully by these exhibitions of art. Is an art gallery supposed to be merely 'fun'? A desire to improve one's understanding of art, its context and history could all have far more in common with 'learning' than with 'entertainment', and 'appreciation' might be a more useful term. They are spaces for the engagement and exercise of aesthetic and conceptual faculties. Cinemas and theatres might help us, too, since we can well imagine one film or play which really is 'fun' and another which really isn't, and yet all the while find both films entirely deserving of our attention and fulfilling of the intended function of the theatre more generally. Perhaps most crucially of all, the analogy of the theatre also helps us to appreciate the role of culture in the kinds of quietness which are expected and enjoyed. Not only do different kinds of cinema and theatre aim to evoke different reactions from their crowds (raucous laughter during a comedy or gasps of terror at a horror film would seem entirely appropriate, and some plays — we might imagine pantomime — actively encourage loud participation from the audience), but so too do these institutions have very different cultures of quiet and noise in different places and with different groups of people. One of the most famous examples of this comes from Milan's La Scala opera house, where a relatively small group known as the 'loggionisti' continue a tradition of noisy objection if any element of the performance does not meet with their expectations. Vlado Kotnik explains how this tradition, though it is an old one, nevertheless serves to emphasise how the overriding culture of opera is of quiet attention (Kotnik 2013).

We are assisted here in drawing a sharp focus on the model of entertainment which prevails in zoos and the underlying assumptions which perpetuate this model. In what way are zoos selling their animals? What kind of enjoyment are visitors being sold? How are visitors being encouraged to be entertained by the zoo animals? Exploring these questions and seeking to understand the amount of cultural and cognitive room for alternate models of zoo 'entertainment' were some of the aims of the experimental zoo visits, mentioned above. Feedback focus groups held after these visits demonstrated real appetite for alternate, quiet formats for visiting zoos (Rice et al. 2023).

It must be noted, following the cinematic analogy, that the variety of species in zoos corresponds to not a single screening of an individual film, but rather multiple screens showing multiple kinds of film. One established element of zoo entertainment and the way zoos are selling their animals is that different kinds of visitor have different favourite animals which can constitute the focus of their zoo visit. In discussing which animals are the favourites of zoo visitors, Carr (2016) suggests that also identifying the least favourite could help in the conservation goals of zoos, and it is here that we might find one conjunction of education, conservation and alternate kinds of entertainment in the zoo setting. People wanting to have a 'fun day out', as Carr's interviews suggest, are currently the dominant demographic visiting zoos: the most common reasons for the most popular animal being most popular was that they are 'entertaining/comical/funny/amusing' (Carr 2016, p. 73). Yet, these are only one kind of visitor, and this is only one reason for specifying a favourite animal. Our project has sought to indicate the possibility of alternative rationales. The sheer variety of kinds of entertain-

ment which zoos can offer (partly through the existing variety of species) opens the possibility for untapped types of 'entertainment': some species may invite quiet viewing or even listening (our experimental visits suggested that this is the case). There is, however, an even deeper sense in which the prevailing model of 'a fun day out' may invite revision in the light of the educational and conservation goals of zoos: an invitation to a more appreciative kind of entertainment.

Cinemas, art galleries and other places of 'art consumption' champion their exhibits as being worthy of attention, of appreciation, and there are a range of types of entertainment which those exhibitions might feasibly offer, and yet, by and large, an expectation of quietness is either explicitly ('please turn off your phones') or implicitly part of the culture of these places. Even more crucially, however, the kinds of art that are associated with (a) deep value and (b) behaviour change are particularly associated with a kind of entertainment which is not at the 'fun day out' end of the scale. Documentaries (and we might particularly note wildlife documentaries), historical war dramas, political and social justice orientated art installations are kinds of 'entertainment' aimed not only at 'entertainment' but also at drawing the audience's attention to the importance of its subject matter, educating them about that value and, as such, attempting to assist in appropriate behaviour change. What zoos (or zoo management) must ask themselves is: Does this model of entertainment better fit the kind of 'highest quality environmental education' which they are trying to offer in the zoo environment? Does it fit with the kinds of educational messages they are trying to impart and the types of environmentally conscious behaviour they are trying to encourage?

One group which may help us to understand this alternate, deeper kind of zoo entertainment (other than our experimental quiet visitors) is zoo staff. Whilst talk of political and social justice art installations might sound like an absurdly narrow kind of attraction (if one could even use the word 'attraction'), the relationship between zoo staff and zoo animals can demonstrate a deeper appreciation of the value of zoo animals, of the potential role of quiet appreciation, and still remain within the realms of the varied and occasionally fun, silly, amusing, exciting, cute and cuddly species which zoos offer to the public. Zoo staff are the very people for whom the value of an individual species or a variety of species has resulted in a lasting impact on their lives. Love for and love of particular animals and particular species is developed and demonstrated through the daily lives of zoo staff and, crucially, through the attention they pay to the animals in their care. It is also worth noting that zoo staff are also interested in the effects of noise on the welfare of the animals in their care (Harley et al. 2022, Williams et al. 2023).

In addition to zoo visitors, our project set out to discuss sound and quietness with zoo staff, particularly those responsible for the direct care of the zoo animals. Very often, exposure to and familiarity with the small details of these animals' lives (including their sounds) allowed these zoo staff to reflect on both the minutiae of the animals' behaviour and their value. Indeed, we found that zoos are run by a group of people with an existing deep appreciation of the value of the animals within their collections and the vital role of close and quiet attention to both individual animals and species more generally. There is, then, a kind of quietness, a kind of attention, which is paid by those who professionally study animal behaviour (both captive and wild), those who care for animals, and the combination of these two which many zoo staff embody. If the prospect of attempting to appeal to an alternate way of appreciating zoos and zoo animals seems to offer only a vague and unknown goal, it is zoo staff themselves who can provide a definite example of the kind of appreciation towards which this culture shift should point. There are institutions which display and curate art and information and which extend invitations on the basis primarily of appreciation as opposed to mere enjoyment or entertainment. The visitor is cast not primarily as a consumer to be served, or to be fed from an open buffet of treats, but rather as a co-connoisseur who, alongside the curators themselves, can appreciate the value of the exhibits. What the visitor is buying when they pay for such an experience is not just the freedom to consume whichever item takes their fancy, but rather the expertise of the curators and their guidance in appreciating the deeper meaning and importance of the exhibits. Quietness, we suggest, is an action, attitude or behaviour which is consistent with the practice of appreciation in zoos and beyond.

5. A MONUMENTAL EDUCATION

If the haughty refinements of an art museum were not sufficiently rarified or anti-fun, there is a deeper and far darker public institution to which the zoo should be compared if its stated goals are to be better realised: memorials.

One of the critical roles of the environmental education being offered by zoos is to impress upon their visitors the urgent perils facing the natural world.

Zoos often place particular emphasis on the endangered species which they exhibit. These captive endangered populations are also key to the captive breeding and 'conservation through captivity' aims of zoos. And yet, as Keulartz (2015) argues, these projects are often high questionable in both their efficacy and ethics. The idea that a high quality environmental education could be devoid of (or even not dominated by) discussion about anthropogenic climate change, habitat destruction, species extinction and global reductions in biodiversity is incredible. Of course, zoos do make efforts in this regard, but what must be queried is what place these subjects (which, incidentally, seem likely to be less than cheerful and may not be co-participants in the 'fun') should have in the zoo experience.

It is important to acknowledge that the content of this anthropogenic destruction of biodiversity is not amoral. It is plausible that a museum might educate visitors about the Cretaceous–Paleogene extinction event (or any other prehistoric extinction event) in a mood of curiosity (rather than horror or remorse). Dinosaur bones might be displayed with an aim of achieving a high-quality paleontological education which has very little moral content. These fossils and their accompanying educational media might be designed to inspire awe, fascination, delight, fun, excitement and other cognate moods that can be associated with the kind of 'fun day out' experience which such institutions frequently advertise. But the plausibility of such ebullient experiences in regards to education around prehistoric extinction events does not hold true for the kind of environmental education that zoos aim to provide. The anthropogenic quality of the multiple environmental crises which are integral to the education to which zoos aspire carries necessary moral weight. So, of all the analogies which might be drawn between zoos and other public institutions, it is that of the monument which most pointedly describes the need for quiet on an ethical basis. By this analogy we should keep quiet in zoos because noise, the sound of distracted merry making and 'a fun day out', are simply not appropriate.

One important element of the memorial analogy is the kind of moral lesson which the exercise entails. What a memorial does not necessarily do is apportion direct moral culpability. We do not pay our respects out of a sense of direct personal responsibility for the deaths of these people. We do owe some kind of extended debt: in some cases, such as war memorials, for example, it could be said that they 'died for us', so there is a sense of obligation, but the sense of regret is not personal, but rather, indirect and impersonal: 'never again!' We must appreciate the enormity of the calamity and endeavour never to repeat any mistakes which might have led to that situation.

Why do we expect quiet at moments of remembrance? Why do we hold a minute's silence by way of remembering the sacrifice of those who died during the world wars? Why do we stop what we are doing and set aside time for the sake of those who are gone? Silence is culturally associated with respect in many contexts. We are silent to show appropriate gratitude and sorrow. It is a form of public sacrifice: we sacrifice our time, our schedules, our convenience, as a gesture of respect. But we stop ourselves for another reason, we make sure that the full enormity of that horror, the manifold evils of war, is refreshed in our minds so that we can be more certain of not repeating past mistakes.

Zoos face a remarkably morally dissonant scenario: they seek to educate people, often young people, about some of the darkest, most terrible facts which can ever be communicated. We, our species, are responsible for death and destruction on a scale usually reserved for supervolcanoes and collisions with large asteroids.

The animals before you are the remnants of once flourishing populations, they are the indescribably beautiful and intricate result of millions upon millions of years of gradual change and refinement, and part of a delicately balanced web of life that once stretched across the planet and which humans have, in fairly short order, destroyed. Why not laugh at their antics, while you eat an ice cream?

Of course, this is a crudely provocative way of characterising the zoo's dilemma, and there is a very obvious sense in which the aim of zoos is to communicate the positive aspects of these organisms and therefore to hope to inspire people to care more about them and invest more serious time in conservation. But the point here is that encouraging a spirit of enjoyment and entertainment is not necessarily the best way to encourage someone to care about something. When we visit memorials in a spirit of mourning, regret, gratitude and even awe, we have a keen sense of appreciation without any sense of 'enjoyment'. There is, perhaps, a risk that enjoyment in the context of zoos, that thing which has also been described as a 'fun day out', is an enjoyment of consumption, and that viewing non-human organisms as things which can and should be consumed for the sake of enjoyment is an attitude that may, in some substantial part (for instance the capture of wild animals for the pet trade), be responsible for the destruction of environments and species which zoos seek to prevent.

If we say 'here are some animals which we are keeping in captivity; pay us money and you can come and enjoy them in whichever way you wish', we do the opposite of achieving a high-quality environmental education. If we say 'here are some animals which we are keeping in captivity so that you can come and appreciate them in a respectful way and learn about the plight of their wild counterparts', then we are engaging in a very different kind of activity: one which may share more in common with the memorial than the fun fair. Filling out this conception of zoos as memorials (or of zoos offering a slightly more memorial type of experience) brings us back to the initial definition of quietness with which this discussion began. This quietness can and should be conceived of as being part of an attitude of (respectful) appreciation: a way of being which is directed towards the importance of someone or something other than oneself.

It is important not to misconstrue this suggestion as being an oddly macabre insistence that everyone should be miserable when they visit zoos. Clearly, such a suggestion would be squarely at odds not only with the ticket revenue business model which zoos are obliged to follow, but also with many of the more positive aspects of this experience which have already been mentioned. Memorials are a poor fit for zoos in so far as the subjects which memorials ask us to dwell on are overwhelmingly negative. However, even memorials demonstrate how anything worth appreciating is a mixture of positive and negative aspects. A memorial to war dead is not only an opportunity to mourn and regret, it is also an opportunity for gratitude, to remember extraordinary valor, to stand in awe of the sheer courage and diligence shown by those who fought, and the sprits of cooperation and, indeed, of love, which prevailed. Similarly, even when zoos must and should communicate very unpleasant facts, they also show us profound beauty, the almost unfathomable wonder of the natural world, and yes, even the funny, cute and intimidating forms and behaviour of these animals. These animals are enjoyable, but the crucial thing here is that this is and should be a mixed experience, and that an attitude of appreciation, one which is coterminous with being quiet, fits this complex mixture of experiences far better than a culture of zoogoing which regards noise as normal.

6. HOSPITALS AND GARDENS

Appreciation, of that quiet and suspiciously erudite kind associated with art galleries and serious cinema, is not the only kind of enriching and even enjoyable activity which zoos can and should offer. There is a kind of fulfilling activity which has been associated with places of both relaxation and of healing which zoos are also apt to offer. It is important to note now that 'healing' needs to be understood here in a very broad sense, and whilst the analogy of hospitals holds true, it is not only healing of the most urgent and remedial kind which is being discussed here, but a more general sense of sustaining and enriching care in line with contemporary notions of 'wellbeing'. Indeed, in calling for a modification of the professed aims of zoos, 'wellbeing' could be understood as one of those primary aims. Rose & Riley (2022, p. 1) suggest that a better formulation of the aims of zoos would be 'education, engagement, conservation, research and wellbeing'.

Schwartz (2012) indicates that quiet has for millennia been considered the best acoustic environment in which to heal the sick. The therapeutic value of quiet is described in Egyptian, Greco-Roman, Jewish and Islamic medical traditions and has been incorporated into modern Euro-American notions of the optimum environment for treatment and recovery (Schwartz 2012). Indeed, Dr Quiet has long been recommended as a good physician in Western medicine, while Florence Nightingale, an influential figure in the development of modern nursing, maintained that quiet was vital to the wellbeing of patients (Shapin 2003, Schwartz 2012). Although sometimes accompanied by music, quietness is also often regarded as optimal for contemporary practices orientated towards (especially mental) health and wellbeing, such as meditation and mindfulness. Noise, by contrast, is frequently described as being injurious to health and a potentially considerable stressor (e.g. World Health Organisation 2018).

Hospitals and other places of explicit healing are, then, public places where quietness is often expected, and they can help us to understand another model for zoo behaviour. If zoos could be treated (even if only sometimes) as places where people come for a different kind of fulfilling, enriching, sustaining and even healing experience, then we may have another good reason for quietness to be kept.

However, there are far more direct analogies than hospitals which extend this healing quietness. The 'natural world' is also often thought to offer experiences of quiet which can be restorative and beneficial in terms of health. Though rural areas and spaces such as nature reserves or large parks may, in the right season and at the right time of day, be rich in bird, insect and other animal vocalisations (and so not quiet in absolute terms), environments of this kind

can present opportunities for human listeners to be away from human crowds, and from the comparatively loud, sudden or relentless sounds sometimes associated, for example, with the city and its traffic. Like the quietudes of these 'natural' areas, the quiet offered by some gardens, for instance, has also often been characterised as calming and soothing, a balm for the pressures of modern life. Interestingly, urban zoos or zoological gardens were partly conceived as places which offered urbanites some respite from the city and its stressors, including its noise (Hanson 2002). The presence of large volumes of visitors at some times and seasons, though, means that modern zoos have perhaps somewhat lost this association.

Participants in the silent and quiet visits run as part of the *Listening to the Zoo* project frequently mentioned feeling that being quiet made their experience of the zoo conducive to meditation, mindfulness and relaxation. The visits, they felt, allowed them to engage with the zoo environments in ways which they felt enhanced their wellbeing, and which were in firm contrast to the stressful visits they had made, often in high season, when they were obliged to be among noisy crowds. They also often remarked that their acoustic quiet was often accompanied by a physical quiet or stillness, which further echoed a mental quiet or quietness of mind. We would suggest that being quiet in the zoo offers a potential route towards at least partially restoring their purpose as places for quieting 'overstimulated minds', with related benefits in terms of health and wellbeing for human visitors, not to mention many non-human residents of the zoo (Hanson 2002). Zoos, then, can be spaces for 'therapeutic quietudes' (Schwartz 2012, p. 274).

7. AN OPTION

In closing, it needs to be emphasised that this paper has not argued that all and every kind of sound being made by a zoo visitor is bad. Instead, it has argued that there is a kind of attentive, appreciative, respectful and restorative quietness that is eminently appropriate for the zoo setting. How such a quietness could be achieved is a topic for another discussion, one with a fuller engagement with zoo visitor psychology. Our guided visits and discussions with zoo visitors have certainly established that quietness in zoos can be a success in the ways highlighted here. Some of our quiet visitors welcomed the idea of designated quiet visiting times and quiet areas, and exploring these possibilities would undoubtedly be a good way to understand the practical implications of the recommendation to quietness made in this paper. Going further will require initiatives from zoos themselves.

This article has argued that quietness in a wide variety of public places and institutions is not a bizarre thought experiment; it is a very real and even frequent phenomenon, but it is one which is usually absent from our zoos. Given the stated educational (and morally elevating) aims of zoos, this paper has argued that such an absence is fit to be remedied. Education comes in many forms. Being inspired by the wonder, majesty, thrill and endearing qualities of various species, encountered in person, is undoubtedly a noble and compelling way to achieve a kind of environmental education, but that pedagogical foundation, already common in zoos, can be deepened and enriched by understanding the role of quietness in our experiences. By encouraging and allowing visitors to direct their attention more fully at the animals, plants, environments and information in zoos, these places can offer us all something far richer and more valuable than they already do.

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