

Teresa Bruś*

University of Wrocław
English Department
Wrocław, Poland

LOUIS MACNEICE'S ZOO AS A PERSONAL MENAGERIE

Abstract

This paper approaches the problem of writing and re-configuring personal history in the presence of animals by a modern subject who in the politically charged climate of the 1930s, as a result of developing an intimate relationship with the London Zoo, modifies his attitude towards life. The paper takes a specific interest in the London Zoo as a parable of history. I argue that *Zoo* is a hybrid crypto-autobiography which drives towards a didactic ending encouraging the reader to turn to animals, to hear the disconcerting voice: "Le Zoo, c'est moi".

Key words: parable, experience, gaze, personal history, collection

In Louis MacNeice's little recognized crypto-autobiographical narrative *Zoo*, the non-human world of animals sustains a parabolic fantasy, the type Samuel Hynes speaks of as "constitute[ing] judgments of life as it exists (Hynes 1992:36)."

Zoo was commissioned by Michael Joseph as a book on the London Zoo and it was first published in 1938. Jon Stallworthy writes that it was "designed for the armchair reader" and that it was expected to be more "impressionistic than Julian Huxley's Official Guide to the Zoo (Stallworthy 1996: 225)", a text recommended by MacNeice in his preface. Despite

* E-mail address for correspondence: tbrus@poczta.onet.p

the rushed circumstances of *Zoo*'s composition in four busy months¹, Stallworthy notes that it came out of extensive field research and the deep personal interest of the poet. Prior to writing the book, MacNeice went to Edinburgh Zoo, Bristol Zoo, Paris Zoo, Whipsnade and London Zoo. He also carried with him vivid memories of childhood visits to the Dublin Zoo. MacNeice had been fascinated by Zoos ever since his first visit as a schoolboy on holiday. He had come to think of the Zoo as a “cross between a music hall and a museum,” a place to be visited half because he liked looking at the animals and half because he liked looking at people. It was also “a nice sort of dream-world, and you can get into it for a shilling (MacNeice 1938: 225).

A “Book Society Recommendation,” *Zoo*, published with Nancy Sharp's realistic and “precise” drawings, “sold well enough (Stallworthy 1996: 231).” Over the decades it has been consistently ignored, sparse notes of its criticism spoke of “flimsiness of thought,” Kenneth Allott's label which seems to have been unfairly adhered. Peter McDonald, a very scrupulous critic of MacNeice, links *Zoo* with the poet's other “rushed compositions” or “productions” which, despite their faults, he says, show important traces of the development of MacNeice's “aesthetic sense.” McDonald categorizes *Zoo* as a “book of ‘reportage’ steeped in autobiography (McDonald 1991: 78)” which is also an example of MacNeice “attempting to destabilize the self in the writing and to establish personal ‘honesty’ more firmly as an imaginative resource (McDonald 1991: 79).” But like most critics, McDonald does not invest more attention into the tensions of what we may impressionistically, more than strictly categorically, label as a post-human dimension of this autobiography².

Zoo, defined in the preface as “a series of impressions” with “a good deal of information,” consists of fifteen chapters and twenty nine drawings by MacNeice's companion, who is introduced by the author as a “realist artist of unusual perception and skill”. MacNeice also adds that her animals are put “with a precision unobtainable in writing (MacNeice 1938: 9).” Such precision is certainly manageable in photography but he dismisses it for the sake of the art which first made the animal its subject, the art

¹ In chapter XV MacNeice mentions the hurried conditions in which he is writing, saying that “my publisher is clamouring for this script” (MacNeice 1938: 245).

² It proposes to read life narrative in negotiations of the human that considers, among others, encounters with the animal as theorized by, for example, Donna Haraway and Cary Wolfe.

he finds more truthful and authentic. Recollecting his favourite childhood book, *Cassell's Natural History*, he speaks nostalgically of its unrealistic illustrations, still lifes, coloured plates, pictures engravings “which are so much more romantic than photographs (MacNeice 1938: 68).” His fondness for what he calls the “naïve romance of Natural History,” especially the tidy “*paysage exotiques*” as if from a “*petit bourgeois parlour*,” speaks to his early taste and informs the choice of illustrations.

In Sharp's sketches, animals' eyes never look straight at us; they are turned down and sideways. In most cases they are either closed or are not even there. Foregrounding parts of the figures, and concealing the eyes, what MacNeice calls “the final glass barrier (MacNeice 1938: 65)”, Sharp provides her own critique of the zoo which can be aligned with John Berger's acute views from *About Looking* that the look which “may have played a crucial role in the development of human society, ... has been extinguished. Looking at each animal, the unaccompanied zoo visitor is alone (Berger 1991: 28).” But MacNeice does not rebuke the loss, engaging with the zoo not as a “monument” or “epitaph” to a loss, as does Berger, but with the zoo as a post-auratic place of potential communion with oneself and the alien other. He observes that animals may not look at us, but they do look through us (MacNeice 1938: 165). And, like many writers of the 1930s, he grounds his book's concerns with the seemingly truthful and sincere treatment of the real:

I am, and always have been, very interested in the zoos and animals, and also in the people who look at them. All the remarks of visitors here recorded I have actually overheard, just as Nancy Sharp's drawings have been actually drawn from the animals (MacNeice 1938: 255).

In the poem “The Panther” by Rainer Maria Rilke, the first original (and untranslated) stanza of which MacNeice uses as the motto for the entire book, the animal, which etymologically speaking stands for “all beast”, is so exhausted “from seeing the bars” that, “it no longer holds anything anymore”. In the third stanza of this poem, the beautiful panther dies. Rilke wrote the poem in the Jardin des Plantes, the Paris Zoo, following Rodin's advice to look for inspiration there. He found silence and the panther's exhausted seeing. MacNeice records a visit to this zoo, “very much a glory in decline (MacNeice 1938: 242)”, a “melancholy relic of history” with his South African friend Ernst who knows Rilke's fine poems

about “flamingoes (MacNeice 1938: 235).” He says they felt too exhausted with the “overloaded” atmosphere of this menagerie, and left behind the hundred thousand bars Rilke noted in his poem.

I am mainly interested in how this very thirties book, a collage of the personal and the documentary forms like reportage, negotiates and recasts the subject’s connection with history experienced in the presence of animals in the European zoos visited by him. Do multiple encounters with animals and their fundamental distinctness move the subject out of the orbit of history? Do the animals offer some form of explanation and provoke a necessity to refigure his *bios*, modify his attitude to life? And finally, how is the London Zoo, the poet’s personal parable for history, also a lesson he expresses as: “What man does with the outward and visible animals he has already done with the inner ones (MacNeice 1938: 122).” In a politically charged climate, in *Zoo*, like in Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer* in Orwell’s famous essay “Inside the Whale,” the writer proceeds by identifying with the unserious, and “irresponsible,” believing and asserting that “it is most important *and* useful *and*, indeed, serious that the less serious branches of serious activities, should continue to be practiced (MacNeice 1938: 19).” This postulate is realized by activating surfaces and textures, extravagance, elegance, nonsense, grotesquerie, the images of the pleasure of what he calls “dappled things”. The subject’s consistent attitude of casual observer additionally helps sustain claims to lightness. He plays down “whatever is hallmarked as serious – pamphleteering, preaching, praying, goose-stepping, grinding axes (MacNeice 1938: 19).”

To build and assure the validity of a non-expert position, unlike Julian Huxley who, evoked at the beginning is assumed to be speaking authoritatively of the zoo from within, The Writer begins by staging an act of “self-defense” rendered in a form of a dialogue with an imaginary Reader. Unlike animals with their conditioned specialization in the zoo, “professional animals,” very remarkable and “narrow specialists” living a “steady and one-sided existence where their job is merely to be on show (MacNeice 1938: 31)”, the Writer speaks and looks like a “layman”. A public man, “outside his proper sphere,” he tries to claim his right to experience child-like entertainment. This experience is obtained from engagement with forms of life which are understood as alien. But such experiences require the listener. Unless shared they are useless: “the human being cannot experience anything - *anything*, mind - you without reacting to it both with his emotions and his intelligence (MacNeice 1938: 15).” The

Writer, speaking as “I” but also, identifying with other visitors as “we”, believes that to be successful, he has “to be so many things (MacNeice 1938: 31)” - a researcher on the zoo subjects, Nancy’s partner, the artist, a traveler, a teacher, and an autobiographer – a tense plurality confronted against beings which “are not human and never can be (MacNeice 1938: 64).” He validates his position of the true and informed observer by claims to a genuine interest in the subject and the actuality of the experiences he is writing about. He is not too worried about *writing* itself. But he suggests that readers who are seeking facts should turn to experts in the field, those who *know* “thousands of fascinating facts about habits and histories, the outsides and insides of animals” and of course to animals themselves (MacNeice 1938: 255). Thus the experience with animals does not produce knowledge; its nature is mainly impressionistic. That is why he also rejects those aspects of the zoo which would solidify the factual claims of his book.

The essential discontinuity between human and non-human lives is made very pronounced in the condition of the subject’s autonomy, unrestrained mobility and freedom, compared with the animals’ framed predicament. He is the visitor in the zoo. “Visitor” is a word heavy with implications in MacNeice’s poetry and prose, especially in connection with his images of the Irish home. Tom Paulin explains that in the West of Ireland, where MacNeice is from, the word is used to speak of tourists, and that the sense of dispossession applies to both its metaphysical and topographical dimensions (in Corcoran 1993: 17). But outside Ireland, the encounter of such a sovereign subject with the animal makes clear that not every being can enjoy the status of a visitor. For the animals in the zoo “the flow of joy that comes from living not *in* or *as* a body but simply from being an embodied being has no place (Coetzee 1999: 35).” But the speaker in *Zoo* is not agonizing over this aspect of the world with which he develops such an intimate relationship.

His attention to animals rests mainly on the assumption that they refuse direct communication. His earliest zoo memory contains an image of the first monkey he saw “an organ-grinder’s monkey in Ireland scooping for pennies in a gutter of Irish mud (MacNeice 1938: 69).” In John Berger’s words, animals do not “confirm” him, “either positively or negatively (Berger 1991: 5).” Drawn to the zoo, the self in its “plurality” is challenged and tested by the exciting specificity of the relationships whose terms preclude responsibility, communication, envy and which most of all exclude the

existence of language. The utter distinctness and dissimilarity of animals, the fact that they are “even more different than my sleeping self is from my waking self (MacNeice 1938: 67)”, suffice to attract him towards zoos. As fascinating objects of observation, the animals gradually make him aware of the existence of superficial parallelisms like the “impulse to go on living (MacNeice 1938: 65)” but also curious reversals when animals appear more developed and becomingly dressed than humans (MacNeice 1938: 195). Anatomizing the animals metaphorically, gazing at the zoo’s “catalogues of rich and exotic and unknown extravagances (MacNeice 1938: 217-218)”, the visitor subjects his selves to attention and contemplation. He speaks of “the top part of my soul, the contemplative aesthetic part,” about the “lower parts of my soul (MacNeice 1938: 76)”, about animals which we have in us and which are numerous members of his private world (MacNeice 1938: 124), and also of the *bric-à-brac* and incidentals of his private world. The London Zoo is an excessive, irresistibly delightful menagerie. He is there because he finds looking and animals but also looking at people pleasurable. The wealth of images and sumptuousness of scenes assure a source of entertainment “cut off from what we call actuality (MacNeice 1938: 65).” “Like a man eating an artichoke (MacNeice 1938: 218)”, the Writer reckons with an always “incorrigibly plural”³ life, encouraging at the end the acceptance of the animal in him: “le Zoo, c’est moi (MacNeice 1938: 255).”

At the deplorable end of summer fullness of 1938, before autumn’s “reposeful mists and autumn smells” which will provoke his final accounting of the decade, the titular zoo is most of all the “*ailleurs*” (MacNeice 1938: 253), a special world, imbued with its period background, bolstered up and transposed with personal references, plain reportorial style, a variety of intertexts like histories and documents by experts, diary entries, drawings, notes, and a lot of parodying⁴. It is very much concerned with the identity and private history of its visitor, a solitary animal engaged in projecting this special world and its relations. It is both a very private world and

³ See his poem “Snow” (MacNeice 1979: 30).

⁴ Speaking of his omissions in the book, MacNeice mentions the “Zoo’s Occurrence Book which is kept up day by day,” he speaks of other documents not available to the public but also the presence of animals in literature “from Aristotle and Apuleius and the folk stories to Brer Rabbit and Kipling and D.H. Lawrence” (MacNeice 1938: 254), the linguistic wealth of tautologies in nomenclature (like *Bufo bufo*) and also animal films like *Swiss Family Robinson* (MacNeice 1938: 188).

a communal place. The zoo conglomerates multiplicities and excess. It generates movement, noise, sensations, play and games, curiosity, physical pleasure and trash. A dynamic enclosure, the zoo is like a “vast floating multicellular organism,” a “cross between a music hall and a museum,” a “dream – world (MacNeice 1938: 29).”

I read *Zoo* as MacNeice's modern parable in prose. It proceeds parabolically, not for its own sake, but to encourage the return to animals and their return “to language⁵”. As a “kind of double-level writing, or ... sleight-of-hand,” it offers what MacNeice in *Varieties of Parable* described in Freudian terms as latent and manifest meanings (MacNeice 1965: 3). While at the surface level we read the glitter and exciting surfaces of the zoo, the underlying level of this “double-level” writing has more to do with his large and not directly articulated anxiety over life. He goes in and out of the zoo so often that his activities outside begin to mix in with “beasts (MacNeice 1938: 125)” and the way he sees them. A real physical place with gates and terraces, cast-iron decorations, vegetation, cinema, and many special Houses, even the Studio of Animal Art, the zoo is located in proximity to the subject's new place. It is a convenient extension of his home, it is his neighborhood. He says he took a flat “looking over Primrose Hill,” and decided that the zoo “would do for my garden. I should be able to drop into the Zoo for coffee.” He expects to be able to “look at one animal and come out again (MacNeice 1938: 68).” The connection he indicates here has to do with sustenance and the possible transformative value of such occasional domestic space linking raw nature and culture. He acts like a visitor, parabolically journeying to this world, looking at the zoo from within and from outside, from his flat window, and from above, as a close-up and panoramically, in the pattern of dark and light, in rain and in the sun, at its most formal, and when presenting itself with a “certain Hollywood vulgarity (MacNeice 1938: 187).” There is also death and refuse in the zoo, dead rats and mice are common. The close-up of animals “dead on their bellies, their dead hands bent at the wrists, their naked tails, still deader, stretched on the shingle (MacNeice 1938: 191)” show the less familiar sights. But the zoo is also a textual location in annual reports of the Zoological Society, its long documented history which the visitor opens up, “tired of reading

⁵ I owe this phrase to J.M. Coetzee's admirable reading of the poets' engagement with animals and their alien worlds (Coetzee 1999: 47-69).

'literature' (MacNeice 1938: 106)⁶ and which render the zoo in terms of an impressive collection of building projects involving the public and a private support. The visitor "reads" the zoo in books with animal pictures and animal stories, in poetry and prose. It is a site of early memories populated with toy animals, it is a state of the mind, a repository "for our fun or for our science (MacNeice 1938: 239)." The zoo is finally a vast preserving and isolating asylum denied the real dialectic of living, "a life of progress, pattern of dark and light, the necessity of winning our bread which builds our wits, the tension without which there is no music and the conflict without which there is no harmony (MacNeice 1938: 239)."

The London Zoo attracts not only the subject, it "fetches people", it "ranks first among London's public shows". He says its grounds are penetrated by:

two million faces, inhaling and exhaling, goggling and giggling and smiling and joking and smoking and puffing and pouting and yawning and looking in compacts, and of these four million feet, in brogues or sandals or sandshoes or suede or patent leather or python, pattering and tripping and limping and lagging and jumping and stumping and standing (MacNeice 1938: 28).

The crowds carry their personal histories, "intricate family backgrounds." He observes that people moving about the zoo are like "trailing clouds of history" (MacNeice 1938: 76). Each of these men is a conglomerate, in each there are many animals "but the community is undemocratic – the beasts enslaved for ever, caged or buried (MacNeice 1938: 122)." He imagines distinctive characteristics of these private worlds recorded as snaps of synecdochic collage of "new shoes gingerly tripping to the turnstiles – navy and white or black patent leather and *suede*" or a "made-up face, a Cockney accent, a hat that trailed a net of episcopal purple," a "suit too closely fitting" (MacNeice 1938: 94). The noise of the crowd and their "tired," "hearty," "ribald" manners make claims on the space of the "pleasure garden (MacNeice 1938: 125)." People come to experience the London Zoo in their leisure and they leave it without "compromising" their status. People leave "without communion." The "stream of their lives" temporarily diverted does not merge with other currents. The animals and

⁶ The main source is The Reports of the Council and Auditors of the Zoological Society of London (for 1937).

the visitors remain contained in their “own pet little worlds (MacNeice 1938: 124).”

Other histories meet in the zoo. It is a vast public place which includes the zoo’s “main thoroughfare” - the War Memorial right at its main entrance. The Memorial’s form seems occluded by a “happy-go-lucky luxuriance of weed-like flowers and big daisies – and even some mulberry trees (MacNeice 1938: 54).” We read that it is additionally “surrounded by the Reptiliary, the Aquarium, the Reptile House and the Monkey House – also by eight pillar-box-red wire waste-paper baskets (MacNeice 1938: 54).” The Memorial itself is dismissed as an unattractive reproduction of a medieval French “Lantern of the Dead” with “two over-romantic lines from James Elroy Flecker”⁷ as well as a list of twelve names of war victims “killed in the Great War,” the unnamed “– three keepers, five helpers, one messenger, two gardeners, one librarian” are preserved in the special functions they performed (MacNeice 1938: 54). The War Memorial is picked up by a sort of osmotic process, its place on the page shared with the drawing of the functional design of the Penguin Pool’s multiple entrances and exits, stairs and slopes and with the description of the austere Lion House, fitting, he says, Aristotelian “the pleasure proper to tragedy (MacNeice 1938: 56).” In such a busy arrangement, comprehension of isolated singularity is vitiated. History like the prominent rhizomatic, weed-like vegetation partaking of multiple versions of interactions, hitting the senses like the robust geraniums, everywhere has its inalienable meanings. Green patches were practical and in their significance. We learn that during the War, the zoo “did vegetable gardening” and “lunched the troops in its restaurant,” it organized numerous exhibitions “to demonstrate the dangers of blowflies and horse-flies... to demonstrate the wickedness of rats and mice and to publicize the methods of their destruction.” It helped invent “new ways to deal with manure and refuse,” it raised pigs and chickens, and “most noble of all – sacrificed a number of their own show animals for food (MacNeice 1938: 146-147).”

The visitor’s individual history inserted almost accidentally like a parabolic “sleight of hand,” or a “sample of typical personal history,” is used to illustrate personal modification of the attitude necessary for anyone who goes into the zoo (MacNeice 1938: 76). The key to his history are zoos in various European locations. The Dublin Zoo of childhood recollections

⁷ They are inscribed on the plaque of the memorial, at its base and go as follows: “Till the red war gleam like a dim red rose / Lost in the garden the sons of time.”

and subsequent visits, for example, is the place of empty or inadequate cages, passive animals which show signs of exhaustion, and where the Irish grass, as in his autobiographical poems, is always overgrown. The zoo of childhood memories reaches beyond its gates. Animals and their natural companionship define the visitor's remembered place of origin: "the streets were crowded with beasts going to a cattle fair-squealing of pigs, smell of cow-dung and shag – and some children were sitting in the gutter making dung pies." In Ireland, he recollects, there are always wicked goats "by the roadside ... roaming free, leering down at you from gorsy rocks (MacNeice 1938: 97)." He bolsters the fullness of this seemingly natural scenery with the urban view of Dublin which itself "has such a strongly physical presence, even in its brick and stone, that a zoo seems hardly necessary" (MacNeice 1938: 70). Reference to England, where he moved, presents a strikingly different set of relations with animals defined by "most arrogant self-expression (MacNeice 1938: 74)." Its zoos are expected especially by those with "public-school-cum-country-squire attitude" to be vast show grounds and scientific institutions (MacNeice 1938: 221). English large dog shows, displaying artificially bred and kept dogs, demonstrate "artificial products of the fancies (MacNeice 1938: 74)." He endorses these popular "gems of impossible logic or blatant but unconscious egotism – Love me, love my dog and hate everybody else's," their "virulence and vanity (MacNeice 1938: 73)."

The personal chapters in *Zoo* include miniature biographical stories of marginalized animals reduced to the status of pets with which he entertains himself. This relation, like the relation with animals in the zoo, precludes parallel development of their lives. The subject who portrays himself as a dog lover, one with many episodes with pets, has no illusions as to the nature and pattern of these relationships:

When I am alone with my dog, there are not two of us. There is myself and something Other. It gives me a pleasant feeling of power, even of black magic, to be able to order this Other about and to give it food which it actually eats. The dog, as we have domesticated him, is in a sense our creation, a toy, an art-object. We play Pygmalion with him and he comes to life (MacNeice 1938: 64).

The portraits of his dog-pets leave no doubt that they are objectified beings-in-the-world engaging at the owner's will, his double-layered soul. They are not expected to be understood or show understanding; his experience of contact with them can be both "horrifying" but also

“fascinating”. He recollects, for instance, when his bull mastiff bitch puppy, ill and almost paralyzed, “retained her reflexes of obedience and with crippled legs and almost sightless eyes would hobble after one if ordered to (MacNeice 1938:75).” This depiction, in its use of impersonal “one” is a parody of companionship, a spectacle of separation. But even such a grotesque experience with an urban pet seems a gain for the subject. As Berger observes, a relationship with an animal can offer the mirror to parts of a human which would otherwise be not made visible; the pet “*completes him*”, and as a result he becomes “the-special-man-he-is-only-to-his-pet” while the pet becomes reduced and silenced to a sort of the puppet in the private world of the family (Berger 1991:15). MacNeice says that eventually his pet had to be destroyed (MacNeice 1938:75).

The sample of personal history inserted between summer impressions of the zoo takes us only seemingly away from the proper subject. It charts a significant personal change that concerns the subject’s past, his interiorized ancestry. He justifies the digression as a “recantation, a modification of attitude, a putting aside of snobbery” – a pre-requisite for going to the zoo: “no one who goes to the Zoo must go as a snob (MacNeice 1938: 76).” Re-visiting the place of his childhood after many years of absence, “insulated with comfort and private memories (MacNeice 1938:84)”, he unexpectedly sees not the repellent and discredited Ulster, but the pleasantly ordinary and even radiant city. Despised, almost fanatically, the sinister and tyrannical Ulster of his “harassed and dubious childhood (MacNeice 1938: 81)”, emerges in a weekend light as extravagant, sunny, even a comfortable and agreeable place. Surprised or even enraged, he finds it free from the old “macabre elements (MacNeice 1938:81).” On the boat taking him back to London, he decides that it is time to forget his nightmares, to accept, to stop hating.

There are some parallels employed in the way he commands the space of the zoo and, though only momentarily, the space of the family-home. The actualization of the paratactic method is MacNeice’s strategy of gathering, one of the anxious symptoms in the face of the approaching crisis. Aiming at some provisional fusion, this method can assure some comfort and serenity. He approaches both sites with a similar degree of curiosity, attention to detail, and delight. Both sites lend themselves to a consolidating process of inventorying. In the “sample” inserted in the chapter called “A Personal Digression” he speaks of his family’s house “under the Black Mountain” which emerges as no longer black but a

“luminous grey-blue (MacNeice 1938: 81).” Like the London Zoo and like the War Memorial, it, too, is wrapped in foliage, its fullness and richness. The variegated externality of plants, of his favourite azaleas and geranium always disturbs clarity and precision of delineation. The house is old, very comfortable, stuffed with things to look at. Its walls are decorated with framed engravings, oil portraits, floral wallpaper and “plaster vine-leaves grossly choking the cornices (MacNeice 1938: 81).” “Idling” there, eating leftover chocolates, he recognizes he is experiencing a “world without progress”. And this unspectacular, monotonous but insistent “context,” leisurely viewed ephemera not seen for years, attains some higher importance, it leads to an event resulting in a transforming question: “who was I to condemn them?” Its release produces a decisive affective attitude. Successive encounters with the spectacular in the zoo will be marked by this change. But it is amid the throwaway, the over-familiar, the banal, and the useless that this pivotal component of personal history is made. The subject’s emplacement in material and organic excess, challenging the symmetry of the usual sense of distances and proportions, issues in a change of a point of view. It drives him away from himself. In the dizziness of the exterior, he opens up to new ways of looking which produce an ethical potential expressed in Zoo’s central moral lesson. Confronting his child-like desires for pleasure, he answers to the capacity of the encounter with the other. This consciously created dimension of his autobiographical narrative is not incidental but integral to life: “The eyes continued smiling and we left for England. One must not dislike people, I thought, because they are intransigent (MacNeice 1938: 85).”

Zoo’s parabolic, hybrid, and fragmentary narrative drives towards a didactic ending in which the subject encourages the reader to go back to the zoo and to turn to animals, to hear the disconcerting voice: “le Zoo, c’est moi (MacNeice 1938: 255).” This is the semantic message of the parable. Its peculiar coordination of diverse repositories of contrastive images, despite the universalizing drift of the parable, seems a more complex and symptomatic characteristic. Zoo is a menagerie containing things, places, people, and animals, multiplicities and extravagancies which sustain this coalescing territory as a site of private and increasingly public meanings.

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Тереза Бруш

ЗООЛОШКИ ВРТ ЛУЈА МЕКНИСА КАО ЛИЧНА МЕНАЖЕРИЈА

Сажетак

Овај есеј бави се проблемом стварања и ревидирања личне историје у политичком и социјалном окружењу тридесетих година двадесетог века и начином на који појединац мења став о свету као последицу интимног прихватања живота у лондонском зоолошком врту. У есеју се лондонски зоолошки врт посматра као параболо историје. У есеју се износи став да је *Зоолошки врт* у суштини хибридна

аутобиографија која стреми дидактичком завршетку храбрећи читаоца да се окрене животињама и ослушне збуњујући глас: „Le Zoo, c'est moi“.

Кључне речи: параболоа, искуство, поглед, лична историја, збирка