Benjamin Schaper

University of Oxford

Gerd Hammer

University of Lisbon

Preface

*Die wenigsten Menschen
verstehen, wie unendlich
viel in der Einsamkeit liegt.*
Wilhelm von Humboldt

The present issue of DEDALUS contains lectures that were given at the international colloquium "Loneliness" in the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Lisbon on February 13th and 14th, 2020. The event was organized by the group *Aesthetics of Memory and Emotions* of the Center for Comparative Studies at the University of Lisbon in collaboration with Benjamin Schaper from the University of Oxford.

In the early 21st century, loneliness has entered the public spotlight as an acute societal issue: Loneliness is understood as a new "mass disease" that is responsible for physical and mental suffering and the most frequent cause of death in the western world (Manfred Spitzer *Einsamkeit: Die unerkannte Krankheit*, 2018) and western societies have started to react to the problem. The British Government, for example, created a "Ministry for Loneliness" in January 2018, in order to fight the "real and diagnosable scourge" of loneliness that particularly affects teenagers, the elderly and the disabled. In the early 2000s, a turning point in medical research occurred when e.g. the works of John T. Cacioppo and his collaborator demonstrated that loneliness can cause physical detriments to health. In the course of the ensuing

pathologization of loneliness, various self-help guides on loneliness entered the bestseller lists.[1]

The notion of loneliness, however, has a much longer cultural tradition in all epochs and artistic forms. In the modern era, a positively connoted religious loneliness that, as the figure of the hermit shows, should guarantee a more intimate relationship with god through social isolation, is challenged by enlightened thought in the 18th century. Henceforth, loneliness is rather associated with melancholy, which establishes the basis for our contemporary understanding of loneliness as social isolation. In contrast, the phenomenon of *Waldeinsamkeit* develops as a central literary motif through Ludwig Tieck's *Der blonde Eckbert* (1797) in the tradition of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (1782), which emphasizes the importance of loneliness as precondition for scientific, artistic and philosophical production and the positive side of loneliness. In the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution, a form of Social Darwinism corroded social bonds and led to a fragmented society, which only intensified at the turn of the 20th Century, when the partially positive Romantic idea of loneliness is replaced by existential abandonment, as it is evident from Friedrich Nietzsche's dictum "Gott ist tot" or Georg Lukács' notion of the "transzendentale Obdachlosigkeit" ("transcendental homelessness"; *Theorie des Romans*, 1916). This transcendental loneliness, paired with rapid technological developments and urbanisation, creates new forms of loneliness that, as amongst others described in Georg Simmel's 'Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben' (1903) and *Soziologie: Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung* (1908) or Sigmund Freud's *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (1930), increasingly tend towards the negative, abandoned side of loneliness. This form of loneliness sets the stage for the inhabitants of the Digital Age, in which new forms of loneliness emerge despite worldwide connectivity and

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[1] Such as Katharina Zimmer *Die Kunst, allein zu leben*, 2002; Ulf Poschardt *Einsamkeit: Die Entdeckung eines Lebensgefühls*, 2006; Mariela Sartorius *Die hohe Schule der Einsamkeit: Von der Kunst des Alleinseins*, 2006 and popular science essays from e.g. Olivia Laing *The Lonely City: Adventures in the Art of Being Alone*, 2016, and Diana Kinnert *Die neue Einsamkeit: Und wie wir sie als Gesellschaft überwinden können*, 2021.

the tendency towards dissolution of the private sphere by social media (Sherry Turkle *Alone Together*, 2011).

Beginning with keynote speaker Esperanza Guillén's lecture on the significance of solitude in the creative process, the articles collected in this special issue of DEDALUS will trace the cultural history of loneliness from around 1800 to the 21st century. With a close analysis of memoirs, diaries and letters, Guillén demonstrates how renowned artists such as Claude Monet, Paul Klee or Oskar Kokoschka required physical and emotional isolation to instigate a profound dialogue with their own subjectivity, fostering the myth of the lonely genius and asserting the singularity of their work.

The colloquium's second keynote speaker Jochen Hörisch explores the interplay between art, labour and capital in the works of Karl Marx. In the works of Marx, loneliness, isolation and the egotistic will to save one's property divide the citizens of bourgeois societies, establishing a tension between individualism and society, loneliness and solidarity. Hörisch analyzes Marx's literary inspired criticism of capitalist money economy, highlighting how Marx uses works by Goethe and other eminent authors to critique the isolating force of money.

Taking the volume into the 20th century, Olaf Berwald, similar to Hörisch, focusses on the relationship between the individual and society when debating "the paradox of solitude versus solidarity" (Adam Zagajewski) in his comparative reading of works by the Austrian novelist, essayist and poet Hermann Broch and the American poet and essayist Stanley Kunitz. Using the exiled voice of Friedrich Hölderlin's eponymous Mnemosyne, Berwald explores the intertextual links between Hölderlin's, Broch's and Kunitz's thematization of mourning and the trauma of solitude.

Anna Jagłowska focusses on female letter writing as a way to battle loneliness. Analyzing letters by the eminent female intellectuals and artists Clara Schumann, Alma Mahler-Werfel and Ingeborg Bachmann in comparison, she establishes the notion of a particularly feminine loneliness, which is characterized by a strong emphasis on emotions and sensuality. Eventually, however, Jagłowska reads the letters as an attempt to overcome loneliness and as pursuit of happiness, harmony and self-realization.

Other than the community established with the addressee in letter writing, Eugene de Klerk's paper analyzes the theme of artistically productive autoeroticism in the writings and works of Salvador Dali and its influence on the artist's position within society. Through the lens of Jacques Lacan's concept of *Le Sinthome*, de Klerk suggests that Dali's singular auto-erotic fantasy leads to an experience of loneliness as subjects become trapped in a worn-out and commercially-dominated symbolic sphere.

Solipsism is the main theoretical focus of Tiago Clariano's article on Joris-Karl Huysmans' *À Rebour* and Samuel Beckett's *Murphy*. He argues that solipsism is crucial for our understanding of modern loneliness when we are lonely amongst many. Huysmans' and Beckett's novels offer Clariano examples for how solipsism motivates a set of practices that disregards the existence of others and creates a notion of loneliness that questions the aesthetic predisposition validated by solitude.

Nicoleta Enciu examines loneliness as a central motif in coming-of-age literature. Using Romanian literature – in particular Mircea Eliade's *Diary of a Short-Sighted Adolescent*, Mircea Cărtărescu's *Travesti* and Liliana Corobca's *Kinderland* – as a case study, she demonstrates how the Romanian authors engage with loneliness to enter into a dialogue with European Modernism during the country's conservative interwar period. The works' adolescent protagonists that grow up at the beginning of Romania's path towards modernization enable Enciu to explore the social and cultural features that have shaped the idea of loneliness in Romanian literature.

Taking the notion of loneliness further into infancy, Ana Fernandes' study of Jean-Marie Le Clézio's child protagonists scrutinizes loneliness emerging from the clash between the childhood and the adult worlds. She examines the challenges children face when evolving into adults and the nostalgia of adults after having lost the perks of infancy. Fernandes argues that eventually it is solitude that characterizes the child's world, allowing for an intense communion with nature and creating a space of knowledge and understanding closed off from adults.

Removed from the earthly realm of nature, Dorothea Boshoff investigates science fiction's increasing interest in loneliness as a

social phenomenon. Her case study on the science fiction series *The Sentients of Orion* by Australian author Marianne de Pierres engages in a close textual analysis of the social, emotional and physical effects of loneliness in de Pierres' four novels, reflecting on the effect that a lack of intimacy has on the perceived level of threat posed to humanity by different alien races.

The issue's section on Classicism and Romanticism begins with Oliver Kohns' comparative reading of William Shakespeare's *Richard III* and Friedrich Schiller's *Die Räuber*. With a theoretical framework derived from Jean Bodin's *Six livres de la République*, Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Walter Benjamin's *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* and Michel Foucault's *Les Anormaux*, Kohns establishes loneliness as intrinsic characteristic of dramatic evil. Thereby, he reads Schiller's Franz Moor as intertextual successor of Richard III, adapting the drama of the prototypical lonely villain for the genre of bourgeois tragedy.

Also focussing on loneliness in German literature around 1800, Stefan Lindinger explores the notion of "Waldeinsamkeit" in Ludwig Tieck's seminal novellas *Der blonde Eckbert* and *Waldeinsamkeit* as well as in Adalbert Stifter's *Der Hochwald*. He initially traces changes in social bonds in the 18th century that brought forth new forms of loneliness, and then analyzes how "Waldeinsamkeit" emerged as a central literary notion in German Romantic prose and poetry.

In the concluding piece of the special issue, Carmen Sousa Pardo identifies a shift in the depiction of loneliness in Western Art in the 19th century. Whereas loneliness had mostly been portrayed in religious iconography until then, its representation acquired a more personal character in Romanticism due to a new subjectivity and sensitivity. In this context, individualism and loneliness played a crucial role in re-conceptualizing notions of artistic creation as the solitary genius materializes as desired ideal for expressing the self in art.