Ben Lazare Mijuskovic
Loneliness in Philosophy, Psychology, and Literature.
iUniverse 2012.
306 pages
$31.95 (Paperback ISBN 9781469789330)

Ben Lazare Mijuskovic's *Loneliness in Philosophy, Psychology, and Literature* is a marvelous work of scholarship that engages, wrestles with and comes close to terms with the concept of loneliness across the title disciplines. I do not have a classical training in philosophy, but as a general humanist I am able to admire the rigor and spectrum of contexts that undergird the argument. I am intrigued by the idea that the book 'proves' the condition of loneliness and the desire to mitigate and assuage that loneliness it asserts through its own rhetorical instincts—to seek rubrics other than philosophy, here the discourses of psychology and literature as well—to promulgate its contentions. This conflation comports well with my own epistemological fetish, that capacious postmodern theoretical discourse in which I have been immersed and that has assuaged my loneliness.

Mijuskovic's book offers grounded, well-considered and apt examples of support from the three fields he pursues that we human creatures establish identity through social means sought by our instinctive anathema to alone-ness. The author's familiarity with the terrains, icons and manners of several fields allows the presentation of compelling evidence for his case that is wide-ranging and convincing. Not only are Descartes and Kant employed, but also Bronte, Conrad, and Erich Fromm. This is an erudition that itself struggles against loneliness, against interrogating any singular discipline, through the company of multiple rubrics of inquiry.

Occasionally, Mijuskovic fights an even more fluid concourse when his exegeses remain solidly enclosed within the categorical manners of their respective domains. I quibble, for instance, with his parochial premise that 'all meaningful concepts must have a significant opposite.' My training indoctrinates me to believe that systems are more fluid, mysterious and capable of differently construed interpretations than this dire prescription allows. But, again, I have taken this to be exactly Mijuskovic's point: as he is contending so capably that human behavioral drives are centrifugal and away from loneliness, the point implicitly is that intellectual areas also long to be unlonely and multiply configured as they seek contact and negotiation. Much is compelled (or/and impelled) through the drive to thwart loneliness. That longing to mingle multiple disciplines campaigns all of us researchers to broadly apply the author's contentions to other, less demarcated arenas.

It would be productive, perhaps, to examine some texts of popular culture for the dynamics of professed loneliness. In music, what are the character and transitivities of yearning in the songs *Only the Lonely* (empathy is occasioned by a fraternity of loners) by Roy Orbison or *I'm Mr. Lonely* (the soldier longs for home) by Bobby Vinton or, better, some non-Western lyrics. In art, still Western, David Hockney has made some headway here showing the instinct to assuage loneliness even in aesthetic objects by painting portraits of two people in one frame. The examination of only regional, disciplinary or geographic texts can lead quickly to prim dead ends, aporia, the obliteration even of loneliness, the utter denial of possibility.

Finally, in addition to the rigorous scholarship, there is much poetically to be gleaned here. 'There are neither sides, nor interior dimensions, nor exterior angles to our thoughts' (xli). Indeed, Professor Mijuskovic, indeed.

The text becomes ultimately an anthem to our human hunger for relationships. Mijuskovic does not posit the efforts of this drive as an antidote to loneliness—there is none—but as the only anodyne we have. Mijuskovic is truly on to something, and provides a significant exploration that is much needed. Readers will be in satisfying intellectual company, and less lonely, for engaging this fine study.

Patricia Cherin
California State University, Dominguez Hills