



The Lonely City: Adventures in the Art of Being Alone

By Olivia Laing

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The Lonely City: Adventures in the Art of Being Alone By Olivia Laing

An expertly crafted work of reportage, memoir and biography on the subject of loneliness told through the lives of iconic artists, by the acclaimed author of *The Trip to Echo Spring*

What does it mean to be lonely? How do we live, if we're not intimately engaged with another human being? How do we connect with other people? Does technology draw us closer together or trap us behind screens?

When Olivia Laing moved to New York City in her mid-thirties, she found herself inhabiting loneliness on a daily basis. Increasingly fascinated by this most shameful of experiences, she began to explore the lonely city by way of art. Moving fluidly between works and lives - from Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks* to Andy Warhol's Time Capsules, from Henry Darger's hoarding to the depredations of the AIDS crisis - Laing conducts an electric, dazzling investigation into what it means to be alone, illuminating not only the causes of loneliness but also how it might be resisted and redeemed.

Humane, provocative and deeply moving, *The Lonely City* is about the spaces between people and the things that draw them together, about sexuality, mortality and the magical possibilities of art. It's a celebration of a strange and lovely state, adrift from the larger continent of human experience, but intrinsic to the very act of being alive.

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The Lonely City: Adventures in the Art of Being Alone By Olivia Laing Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #44319 in eBooks
- Published on: 2016-03-01
- Released on: 2016-03-01
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

Review

"A beautiful meander of a book"?**Hanya Yanagihara, *The New Yorker***

"Olivia Laing, in her new book, *The Lonely City*, picks up the topic of painful urban isolation and sets it down in many smart and oddly consoling places. She makes the topic her own . . . Perhaps the best praise I can give this book is to concur with Ms. Laing's dedication: 'If you're lonely, this one's for you.'"**Dwight Garner, *The New York Times***

"This book serves as both provocation and comfort, a secular prayer for those who are alone?meaning all of us."?***The New York Times Book Review***

"One of the finest writers of the new non-fiction . . . compelling and original."?***Harper's Bazaar***

"An uncommonly observant hybrid of memoir, history and cultural criticism . . . a book of extraordinary compassion and insight."?***San Francisco Chronicle***

"Laing is an astute and consistently surprising culture critic who deeply identifies with her subjects' vulnerabilities . . . absolutely one of a kind."?**Maureen Corrigan, NPR's *Fresh Air***

"It's not easy to pull off switching between criticism and confession?and like *Echo Spring*, *The Lonely City* is an impressive and beguiling combination of autobiography and biography, a balancing act that Laing effortlessly performs. Her gift as a critic is her ability to imaginatively sympathize with her subject in a way that allows the art and life of the artist to go on radiating meaning after the book is closed."?***Elle***

"A lovely thing. Exceptionally skillful at changing gears, Ms. Laing moves fluently between memoir, biography (not just of her principal cast but of a large supporting one), art criticism and the fruits of her immersion in 'loneliness studies' . . . She writes about Darger and the rest with insight and empathy and about herself with a refreshing lack of exhibitionism . . . Every page of *The Lonely City* exudes a disarming, deep-down fondness for humanity."?***The Wall Street Journal***

"Laing's prose is elegant and concise, with a breath of Joan Didion . . . In its interdisciplinary scope and mix of culture, theory, and memoir, *The Lonely City* brings to mind other nonfiction hits of recent years, books like Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts* or Leslie Jamison's *The Empathy Exams*."?***The Millions***

"*The Lonely City* bristles with heart-piercing wisdom... It's a ghostly blueprint of urban loneliness?an emotion that Laing calls 'a city in itself'?that reminds us how loneliness can sometimes bring us together."?**Jason Heller, NPR**

"Laing's meditation gradually gathers force into a manifesto, taking aim at the assumption of simple, unknowable 'mental illness' to explain the life and creative work of the outsider artist Henry Darger or of Solanas?or of Warhol, for that matte...Without glamorizing either loneliness or the urban decay of New York in the '70s, *The Lonely City* builds an impassioned case for difficulty and difference, for social rebellion and the unpredictable artistic richness that can result."?***The Washington Post***

"Laing, who used group biography to examine the connections between alcoholism and literature in *The Trip to Echo Spring*, here performs an almost magical trick: Reminding us of how it feels to be lonely, this book gently affirms our connectedness."? **The Boston Globe**

"Laing is always circling back toward a piercingly relevant observation. And, oh, those observations! . . . Laing is a great critic, not least because she understands that art can and often does manifest multiple conflicting meanings and desires at once."? **Laura Miller, Slate**

"Laing writes with a compassion and curiosity rarely seen in any genre . . . Although I read *The Lonely City* in the same urban spaces that usually impart a familiar loneliness?loud cafés, quiet apartments and slow trains choked with strangers?I felt different while reading it . . . Something surprising happened, something Laing most likely intended"? **The Rumpus**

"A singular, fiercely candid and rare book."? **The Buffalo News**

"[An] acute, nervy and personal investigation into urban solitude . . . [Laing] writes with lyrical clarity, empathy, and a knack for taking a wandering, edgy path, stretching themes (and genres), while never losing an underlying urgency . . . A group biography all in one, which takes a difficult, almost taboo, subject and deftly turns it over anew."? **New Statesman**

"Luminously wise and deeply compassionate, *The Lonely City* is a fierce and essential work. Laing is a masterful biographer, memoirist and critic. Fearlessly tracing the roots of loneliness, its forbidding consequences, and its complicated and beautiful relationship with art, it is powerful, poignant and magical. Reading it made my heart ache yet filled me with hope for the world."? **Helen Macdonald, author of *H is for Hawk***

"[An] imaginative and poignant quest . . . Through her ardent research, empathetic response, original thought, courageous candor, and exquisite language, Laing joins the ever-growing pool of writers?among them Ta-Nehisi Coates, Hope Jahren, Jhumpa Lahiri, Leslie Jamison, Helen Macdonald, Sally Mann, Patti Smith, Tracy K. Smith, Edmund de Waal, and Terry Tempest Williams?who are transforming memoir into a daring and dynamic literary form of discovery that laces the stories of individuals into the continuum of humanity and the larger web of life on Earth to provocative and transforming effect."? **Booklist (starred review)**

"By focusing on four artists . . . Laing's writing becomes expansive, exploring their biographies, sharing art analysis, and weaving in observations from periods of desolation that was at times 'cold as ice and clear as glass.' She invents new ways to consider how isolation plays into art or even the Internet (which turns her into an obsessed teenager, albeit one who calls the screen her 'cathected silver lover'). For once, loneliness becomes a place worth lingering."? **Publishers Weekly**

"[An] absorbing melding of memoir, biography, art essay, and philosophical meditation . . . [An] illuminating, enriching book."? **Kirkus Reviews**

"A remarkable combination of personal mediation and psychological and artistic inquiry, *The Lonely City* is always superbly written, fascinating and often sharply moving. Ultimately the book has a paradoxical effect: at the same time as it makes one aware of one's own inescapable solitude, it leaves one feeling less alone."? **Adam Foulds, author of *In the Wolf's Mouth***

"An extraordinary more-than-memoir; a sort of memoir-plus-plus, partway between Helen MacDonald's *H Is for Hawk* and the diary of Virginia Woolf; a lyrical account of wading through a period of self-

expatriation, both physical and psychological, in which Laing paints an intimate portrait of loneliness....
The Lonely City is a layered and endlessly rewarding book, among the finest I have ever read.”

- **Maria Popova, Brain Pickings**

About the Author

Olivia Laing's first book, *To the River*, was published to wide acclaim and short-listed for the Ondaatje Prize and the Dolman Travel Book of the Year. She has been the deputy books editor of the *Observer*, and writes for the *Guardian*, *New Statesman*, and *Granta*, among other publications. She is a MacDowell and Yaddo fellow, and the 2014 writer-in-residence at the British Library.

Susan Lyons has appeared on numerous television shows, including *A Country Practice*, *Police Rescue*, *Something in the Air*, and *All Saints*. Among her film credits are *Winds of Jarrah* and *In a Savage Land*. She is married to Tony Award-winning actor Jefferson Mays.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Anthony Valdez:

The actual book *The Lonely City: Adventures in the Art of Being Alone* will bring one to the new experience of reading a book. The author style to elucidate the idea is very unique. In case you try to find new book to read, this book very suitable to you. The book *The Lonely City: Adventures in the Art of Being Alone* is much recommended to you to study. You can also get the e-book from official web site, so you can more readily to read the book.

Anthony Pisano:

A lot of people always spent their free time to vacation or even go to the outside with them family or their friend. Do you realize? Many a lot of people spent they will free time just watching TV, or perhaps playing video games all day long. If you want to try to find a new activity this is look different you can read a new book. It is really fun in your case. If you enjoy the book that you read you can spent all day every day to reading a reserve. The book *The Lonely City: Adventures in the Art of Being Alone* it is rather good to read. There are a lot of those who recommended this book. These were enjoying reading this book. When you did not have enough space to develop this book you can buy the e-book. You can more simply to read this book through your smart phone. The price is not too costly but this book offers high quality.

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