**Reviewer 1: Gerd Hammer – Recommendations: Minor corrections**

**Loneliness on Valentine’s Day – My journey to the Lisbon Colloquium on Loneliness**

Earlier this year, St Anne’s supported my trip to the International Colloquium on Loneliness at the Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa with an Early Career Research Grant. After finishing my teaching for the first half of term, I set out for Portugal to get some inspiration for my post-doctoral research project on loneliness and human-machine interaction from Romanticism to the Digital Age.

I initially contacted Lisbon’s German Department and Research Centre for Comparative Literature in spring 2018, proposing my idea for what would eventually become the conference held on the 13th and 14th of this past February. The Call for Papers that I drafted with Professor Gerd Hammer, Head of Lisbon’s German Department, attracted colleagues from institutions around the world, such as Columbia University in New York, the University of Mpumalanga in South Africa, the Universidad de Granada, Warsaw University, and the Freie Universität in Berlin. (For the programme see: [https://lisemotions.weebly.com](https://lisemotions.weebly.com/))

The conference traced loneliness as a literary motive across a range of periods and artistic forms. Presenters focused prominently on the German Romantic phenomenon of *Waldeinsamkeit*, a rather positive idea of loneliness as seeking refuge from the accelerated pace of life experienced by most in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution, stemming from the tradition of Rousseau’s 1782 *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*. The conference’s exploration of this particular notion culminated in Kathrin Wittler’s detailed analysis of Goethe’s famous poem “Über allen Gipfeln” and Professor Jochen Hörisch’s enlightening keynote speech on the influence of Romantic poetry on Karl Marx.

In addition to presentations exploring the productive and beneficial solitude of German Romanticism, colleagues gave intriguing papers on gender politics in recent SciFi literature, East German queer cinema, and the loneliness of Shakespeare’s Richard III. After the presentations, our discussions continued over bacalhau and vinho verde and future collaborations were initiated: I was invited to join the *Solitude – Die Einsamkeit der Literatur* (“Literature’s Loneliness”) early career research group supported by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (“German Research Foundation”), which is currently being established at the Freie Universität, Berlin. A conference anthology will be published as a special issue of the academic journal *Dedalus - Revista Portuguesa de Literatura Comparada*  in summer 2021.

Excitingly, I was able to gain insights into primary works and current research on loneliness which will prove valuable for my post-doctoral project. I will also incorporate these takeaways into two articles I am currently writing. The first explores the potential of human-machine interaction as a cure for loneliness in Alex Garland’s *Ex Machina*, Spike Jonze’s *Her*, and Charlie Brooker’s and Annabel Jones’ *Black Mirror*.The second analyses Austrian author Marlen Haushofer’s influence on the novels of Robert Seethaler and Thomas von Steinaecker.

On the whole, my Lisbon conference experience has deepened my knowledge of the subject and expanded my international academic network. I look forward to collaborating with colleagues on future projects which address loneliness, which will open new avenues for my career.

**Reviewer 2 – Siân Round – Recommendations: Accept with Major Revisions**

**Loneliness on Valentine’s Day – My journey to the Lisbon Colloquium on Loneliness, Ben Schafer**

*Accept with Major Revisions*

Overall, this review, while very interesting, reads as too personal with not enough information about the conference. My suggestion is that the work is restructured so that there is more evaluative information about the conference. Most of the content you need is in the review but my advice is that you shift the focus so that the reader understands more about the purposes and achievements of the conference.

I suggest that the opening paragraph should explain in a few sentences the current body of research on loneliness and how the conference is reacting to and intersecting with the field. The reader will likely know nothing about loneliness as an object of study so a sentence or two explaining it will help the whole review. This paragraph should address the objectives of the conference so that you can evaluate the conference at the end.

The information about the conference, and your role in organising it, in the second paragraph is good. I would say February 2020 rather than ‘this past February’ for clarity. This information will also be more pertinent if you follow my suggestions for the opening paragraph.

The third and fourth paragraphs are the strongest part of the review and I suggest that you expand them with more information about the presentations and their similarities and differences. The reader should be aware of what knowledge the conference has produced and how it has contributed to studies in loneliness.

Personal information about how this conference is useful to your research is fine but it should be linked to a wider point or you should list specific aspects of the conference which helped your research. At the moment, the fifth paragraph feels vague and not completely relevant.

The concluding paragraph’s focus should be about the success of the conference rather than your personal opinion of it. Was the conference successful in achieving its aims? Also, it would be nice to know if there will be subsequent conferences. I would save the information about the conference anthology to the final paragraph as well so that the outcomes of the conference are clear.

**Reviewer 3 (1st round) - Dylan Thursfield – Recommendation: Major Revision**

1. Is the subject matter of the article suitable for an interdisciplinary audience?

Yes

1. Does the title reflect the subject matter of the article?

Whilst the second half of this title is definitively connected with the content of this piece, the opening part of the title may be perceived as misleading.

1. Does the article make a contribution to the discussion in its field?

Whilst this article does mention some interesting papers delivered at the ‘Lisbon Colloquium on Loneliness’, it engages with them in a very brief and potentially superficial manner. This article would be greatly improved if significant ideas from the papers given at the colloquium were elaborated upon within its body. Furthermore, despite the colloquium taking place prior to implementation of coronavirus restrictions, I find it rather strange that this article does not engage with the widespread loneliness inspired by the on-going Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, the article does not acknowledge the significant impact which the current times – and the isolation many people are facing – will have upon the literary, cinematic, and artistic worlds. This omission is especially surprising given the author’s intimate involvement with the academic study of loneliness.

1. Is the article clearly written?

Yes, although the tone is somewhat informal at times (such as in the second sentence).

1. Is the article well structured?

Yes

1. Are the references relevant and satisfactory?

No. Please see my response to question 3.

1. Do you feel the article appropriately uses figures, tables, and appendices?

N/A

1. What is your recommendation?

Major Revision

Reviewer’s comments to the author:

Whilst this article does have the potential to offer informative and interesting insight into the academic study of loneliness, it does not currently explore or define loneliness in a satisfactory manner, and does not sufficiently elaborate upon the ideas presented at the ‘Lisbon Colloquium on Loneliness’. Additionally, this article does not fully realise the significance of loneliness within the contemporary *zeitgeist*, and does not highlight how research in this field will be of great importance in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. I recommend amending this piece before its publication.

**Reviewer 3 (2nd round) - Dylan Thursfield – Recommendation: Accepted for publication**

1. Is the subject matter of the article suitable for an interdisciplinary audience?

Yes

1. Does the title reflect the subject matter of the article?

Yes

1. Does the article make a contribution to the discussion in its field?

Yes

1. Is the article clearly written?

Yes

1. Is the article well structured?

Yes

1. Are the references relevant and satisfactory?

Yes

1. Do you feel the article appropriately uses figures, tables, and appendices?

N/A

1. What is your recommendation?

No further changes required. This article is ready for publication.

Reviewer’s comments to the author:

This article offers interesting commentary upon what took place at the Lisbon Colloquium on Loneliness and makes a substantial contribution to the field to which it is contributing. It is eloquently written, well presented, and acknowledges the growing importance of loneliness as a field which requires academic analysis in art. I fully recommend it for publication in its current state.