

Party of One: The Loners' Manifesto


By *Anneli Rufus*

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The Buddha. Rene Descartes. Emily Dickinson. Greta Garbo. Bobby Fischer. J. D. Salinger: Loners, all—along with as many as 25 percent of the world's population. Loners keep to themselves, and like it that way. Yet in the press, in films, in folklore, and nearly everywhere one looks, loners are tagged as losers and psychopaths, perverts and pity cases, ogres and mad bombers, elitists and wicked witches. Too often, loners buy into those messages and strive to change, making themselves miserable in the process by hiding their true nature—and hiding from it. Loners as a group deserve to be reassessed—to claim their rightful place, rather than be perceived as damaged goods that need to be "fixed." In *Party of One* Anneli Rufus -- a prize-winning, critically acclaimed writer with talent to burn -- has crafted a morally urgent, historically compelling tour de force—a long-overdue argument in defense of the loner, then and now. Marshalling a polymath's easy erudition to make her case, assembling evidence from every conceivable arena of culture as well as interviews with experts and loners worldwide and her own acutely calibrated analysis, Rufus rebuts the prevailing notion that aloneness is indistinguishable from loneliness, the fallacy that all of those who are alone don't want to be, and wouldn't be, if only they knew how.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this compendium of everyone who was anyone who ever spent a moment alone, readers bump fleetingly into Kurt Cobain, French Resistance fighters, the Lone Ranger ("Tonto notwithstanding"), Michelangelo, Alexander Pope, John Lennon, cowboys, Saint Anthony and other solo acts. Rufus, the books editor of East Bay Express, views Degas's plain-faced dancers as "pretty ballerinas" whom the artist leaves every time he exits his studio, and Warhol's biography as "tellingly titled Loner at the Ball." She chases her motif, not so much a manifesto as a cri de coeur, through an assortment of perspectives: religion, advertising, clothes, crime, art, eccentricity, environment, literature, religion and popular culture. She also identifies "pseudoloners" like Theodore Kaczynski and Jesus Christ (who "was too good at guiding crowds to have been one of us"). There's an us/them tone to this book that makes one wonder who the audience might be. The "us" people "do not need writers to tell us how lovely apartness is"; the "them" people will surely weary of being identified as "Nonloners. The world at large. The mob." Taken in column-sized doses, Rufus may be entertaining and informative, but her book feels as if too much random information has been cut-and-pasted together.

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Review

"A founding manifesto for an organization of self-contained people.... A clever and spirited defense." --
Kirkus Reviews (January 1, 2003)

About the Author

ANNELI RUFUS, the prize-winning author of numerous books, lives near the 38th Parallel.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

George Lehman:

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