



Book of Longing

Leonard Cohen

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Leonard Cohen is one of the great writers, performers, and most consistently daring artists of our time. *Book of Longing* is Cohen's eagerly awaited new collection of poems, following his highly acclaimed 1984 title, *Book of Mercy*, and his hugely successful 1993 publication, *Stranger Music*, a *Globe and Mail* national bestseller. *Book of Longing* contains erotic, playful, and provocative line drawings and artwork on every page, by the author, which interact in exciting and unexpected ways on the page with poetry that is timeless, meditative, and at times darkly humorous. The book brings together all the elements that have brought Leonard Cohen's artistry with language worldwide recognition.

From the Hardcover edition.

Book of Longing Details

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Author : Leonard Cohen

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From Reader Review Book of Longing for online ebook

Somaieh says

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Pete daPixie says

Leonard, the horny old Jewish priest, returns from the summit of Mount Baldy with his ten of songs. Published 2006, this collection of poems and songs with many pencil sketches to accompany the pages, covers mainly, his work over the last three decades. Leonard Cohen is a poet, first and foremost. The book contains many self portrait drawings, as though the man is totally immersed in the search for soul. The poems radiate his wit and humour that is contained in much of L.C.'s works, but with profound depth just waiting on the next line.

Max McNabb says

Leonard Cohen was a Jew who became a Zen monk who wrote songs and poems about Jesus for fifty years. He was also the absolute embodiment of what it means to be a writer. Book of Longing is alive with Leonard's nights and days in the monastery on Mt. Baldy, featuring 230 pages of poems and drawings, most of those pages blackened during his time as a monk.

I learned to write poetry from reading and re-reading the poems in this book. I studied his work for meter and stress. I tried to figure out how he could've written such lines that burn with luminous intensity. Frequently, I'll find myself in a situation where a stray line or phrase will drift through my thoughts... After publication, a few of the poems here later became lyrics on some of Leonard's final albums. Songs like the dark and stunning "Nevermind" had their beginning in Book of Longing.

The artwork mostly falls into two categories: unflattering self-portraits and naked ladies. As someone who has drawn the occasional unflattering self-portrait and a naked lady or two, I enjoyed them very much. If you're a Cotton Mather-type, however, you may not.

Some of the other reviewers have been harsh about the inclusion of "weaker" poems. They don't seem to understand that the volume functions, in part, as a psychological chronicle of Leonard's time on Mt. Baldy. Which means that an utter masterpiece like "Alexandra Leaving" may appear alongside a more off-the-cuff, stream of consciousness journal entry like "Food Tastes Good." To me, that's one more reason to love this book—it's a revelation of Leonard's life and state of mind during those years.

Book of Longing is my favorite volume of poetry and Leonard Cohen is my favorite poet. If you're a fan of

his music but haven't given any of his poetry a try, this is the perfect place to start.

—Sincerely, M. McNabb

Huda AbuKhoti says

Raw and unedited, I felt like I was having a conversation with Leonard Cohen. wasn't particularly amazed by the poetry, but it is really smart. The moment I start losing interest he'll drop that witty or deep poem which will keep me going. I don't love it and I can't say I hate it. I think I will leave it at respecting his being.

I could not kill
The way you kill
I could not hate
I tried I failed
No man can see
The vast design
Or who will be
Last of his kind
The story's told
With facts and lies
You own the world
So never mind

D. Pow says

This book. This beautiful, beautiful book. Damn, I'm glad I picked this up. I've never read such a wonderful combination of sensual reverie, raw but fading lust and something damn close to Zen enlightenment. Cohen is a good, perhaps great poet, but he was also a practicing Zen monk when he wrote these poems as well as a long standing pilgrim in faith of the holiness of the body. For every poem extolling the benefits of Zazen and mindfulness you'll read another of fruitful and unalloyed appreciation of the female form and the female mind. What makes this book so joyous is that these inspirations are in no way dichotomous but are just different strands of the spiritual sustenance Cohen finds, and delivers back through his poetry and music, in this wonderful, broken, fucked-up and beautiful beyond belief world. The wonderful volume is greatly abetted by Cohen's warm, sensual, witty drawings and captions. This book joins my short shelf of books that entertain and inform but also show subtlety and with great depth of feeling and craft what it means to be human. To be human and stumbling towards meaning, purpose and sacred union with others while the world teeters on the cliff-edge of Apocalypse.

RE-POST. OLD REVIEW

Zohreh Hanifeh says

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?????? ?? ?? ?? ?? ????????. ??????? famous blue raincoat ?? you got me singinig ?? winter lady ?
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Peycho Kanev says

Sadly, this is the best poem in this book:

THOUSANDS

Out of the thousands
who are known,
or who want to be known
as poets,
maybe one or two
are genuine
and the rest are fakes,
hanging around the sacred
precincts
trying to look like the real thing.
Needless to say
I am one of the fakes,
and this is my story.

Andrew says

Leonard Cohen's poetry is... uneven. Some of the poems in this volume are wonderful little incantations. Others strike me as song lyrics-- and the unfortunate thing about song lyrics is that they tend to make horrible poetry, even if they're great lyrics, and a great lyricist Leonard Cohen undoubtedly is. And yet others are Zen-inspired pabulum that seemed fine in Allen Ginsberg's day, but now-- especially that I live in a Buddhist country, and have developed a repulsion towards Buddhism equal to my youthful repulsion towards Christianity-- strike me as a rather more exotic version of the motivational not-so-bon mots written in cursive on Precious Moments calendars at my Grandma's house in Kansas.

My, that was snarky! But there are some good poems in here. And his drawings are neat.

karen says

this book...basically, when he was in his sixties, leonard cohen went up a mountain to live and study in a buddhist monastery, and during the five years he was there, he was really horny and wrote a bunch of poems about it.

i'm sure it didn't help that the monastery was the mt. baldy zen center, which is quite a suggestive name.

leonard cohen's always been the guy who lives on the seam where the the spiritual meets the erotic, only here he's moved away from imagery based in biblical and jewish mystical tradition and infused his sensuality into buddhist spirituality.

and somehow, when leonard cohen does it, it's not icky, as it would be for many older gentlemen suffused with lust. is it because he was canadian? because he was dapper? or as he wrote,

*Because of a few songs
Wherein I spoke of their mystery,
Women have been
Exceptionally kind
To my old age.
They make a secret place
In their busy lives
And they take me there.
They become naked
In their different ways
And they say,
"Look at me, Leonard
Look at me one last time."
Then they bend over the bed
And cover me up
Like a baby that is shivering.*

it's a little bit from all of those columns; his generosity and humility and classiness, but it's also his humor. he opens a poem called *The Death of Zen* with a description of cunnilingus, and this poem most certainly speaks to the difficulty of pursuing a spiritual journey when the physical urges won't go gently:

EARLY MORNING AT MT. BALDY

Alarm awakened me at 2:30 a.m.:
got into my robes
kimono and *hakama*
modelled after the 12th-century
archer's costume:
on top of this the *koroma*
a heavy outer garment
with impossibly large sleeves:
on top of this the *ruksu*
a kind of patchwork bib

which incorporates an ivory disc:
and finally the four-foot
serpentine belt
that twists into a huge handsome knot
resembling a braided *challah*
and covers the bottom of the *ruksu*:
all in all
about 20 pounds of clothing
which I put on quickly
at 2:30 a.m.
over my enormous hard-on

as a collection, the poems aren't his best; a little indulgent, a little scattered, a little forced, like someone poeticizing their diary, and some of it is straight-up bragging

and, oh, those drawings. leonard cohen was very fond of doodling ladybutts and boobs, the stuff of a 12-year-old boy's spiral notebook, with more realistic proportions:

also fond of self-portraits, most of which make his face appear to be melting on a hot day, but a few with captions that made me laugh

ladybutts, meditation, self-reflection, more ladybutts, pretty words, nothing jaw-dropping here.

as far as the man goes, he gets all the stars for writing the songs that have hypnotized me, consoled me, inspired me, and been my soundtrack since i discovered him when i was fifteen. but these poems...they are not his best. these are more metaphysical and meandering. they're all over the place. some of them were later turned into songs appearing on the less-beloved albums (*Ten New Songs* and *Dear Heather*) in between *The Future* and *Old Ideas* when he started getting great again. it's worth reading, because some of them have that pure cohen grace, like the introduction to the chinese-language translation of *Beautiful Losers*, and it's always kind of fascinating to watch a master at work, in the category of "how are you making this not sound skeevy, old man?"

OPENED MY EYES

G-d opened my eyes this morning
loosened the bands of sleep
let me see
the waitress's tiny earrings
and the merest foothills
of her small breasts
multiplied her front and back
in the double mirrors
of the restaurant
granted to me speed
and the penetration of layers
and turned me like a spindle
so I could gather in
and make my own
every single version of her beauty
Thank You Ruler of the World
Thank You for calling me Honey

in neil strauss' diary, that would be condensed to "ogled a waitress"

however he did it - it worked. i must confess, when he came to my store to sign stock of this very book and i was chosen to be in the green room with him for several hours, handing him the flapped books, i stood far closer than was strictly necessary or professional and at one point i absolutely pressed my ladygroin* against the back of his suited shoulder, because that's one of those opportunities you don't pass up. he didn't even notice, but at the end of the event, i brazenly** gave him a copy of a poem i'd adapted from one of his songs, and he emailed me a reply:

thank you for your song
a master song
can't seem to sleep

and the next few times he performed in nyfc, he set aside a few tickets for me for each of his shows. so perhaps i had some ladymagic after all.

all of that makes it super-weird that i never even *read* this book. i have several signed copies of it from that day, i have the new posthumous edition with even MORE nude doodles, and i even went to this philip glass concert which married glass' doodly-doo music to the poems and artwork from this book. but i always like to save a little something from authors i like, just in case. and now that "just in case" has actually occurred, i'm glad to have gotten this in my pagehabit box to give me a little kick in the butt. it's not my favorite, but at least it's something more from someone i will always adore.

an all-new posthumous book, *The Flame*, is out in october 2018, for those of you interested.

* adding the word "lady" to something makes it sound elegant and classy.

** the fact that i have determined "giving someone a poem" to be more brazen than "unsolicited pressing of my delicate flower upon a person" is something i need to have a think about.

this book was part of my quarterly literary fiction box from pagehabit.

Kaila says

4/5 stars

"The old are kind.
The young are hot.
Love may be blind.
Desire is not."

-Sorrows of the Elderly

Anyone who knows me knows that **I am in love with Leonard Cohen's music**, so it was only a matter of time before I delved into his poetry. His tone in the poetry was similar to his music, but also felt very different to just read rather than listen to. His poetry was **witty, intellectual, sometimes psychedelic and thought-provoking**. I tabbed so many of my pages, just collecting my favourite poems from this collection, because there were so many. I do believe that knowing the context behind many of the poems was vital to understanding the content, which made some poems hard to decipher. It felt as if these poems weren't made for the public, but were rather the inner musings of this complex man's life. **The poems were packed full of feelings** of desire, longing, sensuality as well as the effects of aging. Altogether, **I really enjoyed** reading these poems and feel as if I've gained a different sort of understanding of this artist.

I was truly touched at some of the poems, and have already re-read them multiple times. In stark contrast, some of his poems were brutally honest about his feelings on money, success and women; which gave this book a sense of honesty. The poems were not sugar-coated, much like with his lyrics. It was rather cynical, but some were also very Zen, reflecting his time as a Monk. As you can see, I'm having a difficult time explaining these poem as one entity, because they're all so different. It's also hard to bunch the themes of the collection into a few sentences, but I'm trying. The poems are also accompanied by drawings that range from sallow portraits of Leonard, to erotic sketches and even drawings of birds. In all, this was a seemingly private exploration of the world through the mind of an artist who sees things sometimes in humour and sometimes with cynicism. Of the entire collection **my favourite poems** were: *You'd Sing Too*, *My Mother is not Dead*, *My Time* (below) and *Pardon Me*.

"My time is running out
and still
I have nog sung
The true song
The great song

I admit
That I seem
To have lost my courage

A glance at the mirror
A glimpse into my heart
Makes me want
To shut up forever

So why do you lean me here
Lord of my life
Lean me at this table
In the middle of the night
Wondering
How to be beautiful"

-My Time

Víctor Bermúdez says

THOUSANDS

Out of the thousands
who are known,
or who want to be known
as poets,
maybe one or two
are genuine
and the rest are fakes,
hanging around the sacred precincts
trying to look like the real thing.
Needless to say
I am one of the fakes,
and this is my story."

Ana says

"A record of
Our little truth
The cloth we wove
The tools we used

The games of luck
Our soldiers played
The stones we cut
The songs we made

Our law of peace

Which understands
A husband leads
A wife commands"

Hansa says

I just recently started reading poetry, so I don't really know how to rate it. I did truly enjoy the whole book; the weirdness and the beauty of it, but then again I don't feel like I understood half of the book because I don't know much about Leonard Cohen and his life. Still, I'm going to give the book 4 stars, just because I really enjoyed reading it.

Some of my favorite poems from the book include: "Better", "Fun", "I Wrote For Love", "Nightingale", "The Faith" and "Report To R.S.B."

Ellen says

Favorite Poems

The Book of Longing

I can't make the hills
The system is shot
I'm living on pills
For which I thank G-d

I followed the course
From chaos to art
Desire the horse
Depression the cart

I sailed like a swan
I sank like a rock
But time is long gone
Past my laughing stock
My page was too white
My ink was too thin
The day wouldn't write
What the night pencilled in

My animal howls
My angel's upset
But I'm not allowed
A trace of regret

For someone will use

What I couldn't be
My heart will be hers
Impersonally

She'll step on the path
She'll see what I mean
My will cut in half
And freedom between

For less than a second
Our lives will collide
The endless suspended
The door open wide

Then she will be born
To someone like you
What no one has done
She'll continue to do

I know she is coming
I know she will look
And that is the longing
And this is the book

My Time

My time is running out
And still
I have not sung
the true song
the great song

I admit
that I seem
to have lost my courage

a glance at the mirror
a glimpse into my heart
makes me want
to shut up forever

so why do you lean me here
Lord of my life
lean me at this table
in the middle of the night
wondering how to be beautiful

Udai says

I really have mixed feelings about this....
when I started the book the first poem was so strong, so moving that every thing around me illuminated
but then through out the book there were some nice poems
not so nice poems
and some of them I just didn't understand
I really wanted to like Leonard Cohen more knowing that he had some influence on Kurt Cobain
maybe poetry isn't for me
or maybe I didn't find the right poet yet.

Marc-Antoine says

Thanks again Mr Cohen for your words, you will live on forever through them. Rest In Peace, Leonard Cohen.

Andrea says

The Book of Longing is a compilation of poems and sketches from Leonard Cohen's 'earlier poet days' and written during his time in a Buddhist monastery. They are poems of reflection, observation and personal experience being a man. As always, Mr. Cohen's poetry is poignant, playful, tongue-in-cheek, self-deprecating, brooding and enlightening. These poems are less lyrical, and closer to abstract musings, lending us glimpses or snapshots into his younger male life and comparing or lamenting his youth with his current, older self; longing for things spent, gone or lost. A few poems left me with a chuckle from the surprise ending: an intimate proclamation, or something sexual. Honestly, my first thought was "Leonard Cohen is a dirty old man!" but it is far from the truth -- the truth is that he is a man and, of course, his younger self still exists in him. We all encompass a body memory, and hold tight to a moment in time that altered or awoke us. Leonard's poems are a gift, a sharing of pieces of himself. We are fortunate to have him.

Jeremy Bibaud says

I really want to like Leonard Cohen. I'm not sure why, but I feel like he's a writer out of his time. I find myself drawn to his work but, disappointingly, have yet to read anything that I enjoy. I've even tried to listen to most of his music and it just doesn't work for me. I suppose it could be that I enjoy his persona more than his writing.

'Book of Longing' marks my last attempt to become a fan. There's probably 200+ pieces in total here and I would call it a stretch to say I even liked three of them. Nearly every piece feels like a half-thought that he scribbled into a notebook in a cafe somewhere and never returned to make sense of them or flesh them out. Instead I got weirdly stunted imaginings, jokes that fell flat, and pieces that Cohen himself seemed to get bored of halfway through.

There are a lot of themes explored but rarely do the poems themselves work hard enough to tie them to the sense of longing the title might suggest.

Ultimately, it feels more like a writer's scrapbook, which is reinforced by the repeated drawings of his face, over and over and over with slightly different looks. Not only do these drawings add nothing to the collection, they take up probably a quarter of the book. The whole thing ends up feeling like supplemental material, like DVD extras, aimed more at Cohen superfans.

Either way, if I'm dishing out over \$20 for a book of poems, I should come away with at least a handful that burn themselves into my mind. I didn't get that. Too bad.

Ryk says

One of the best lessons I learned from this book is to just let go and write, not worrying if it's going to be "good" or not. Don't get me wrong- there is incredible poetry in here (along with often very astute drawings) but there is also a lot "I promised myself I would write something". Some of it is inspired, some not.

Included are lyrics to a few of my favorite Cohen songs, like "Alexandra Leaving" and "Love Itself" which only makes the collection better.

Most of the poems/scribbblings concern the time he spent in Monastery, so there is a big dose of "wrestling with God" in here, along with "wrestling with love, sex, things of the flesh".

A fine, fine book.

Foad says

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