"Dance Me Through the Panic Till I'm Gathered Safely In" — A Fan Remembers and Acknowledges Leonard Cohen's Work and Genius

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Abstract

When Leonard Cohen died in November 2016, many people the world over felt very sad and indeed bereft, at the loss of such a great artist, poet and songwriter. It felt, in Auden's (1958) words on Freud's death, another example of:

> For every day they die
> among us, those who were doing us some good,
> who knew it was never enough but
> hoped to improve a little by living. (p. 68)

The title of this paper comes from Leonard's 1984 song "Dance Me to the End of Love", and has often seemed a powerful description of what a mother provides for her baby and what we as therapists provide to our clients. We try to help them "dance through the panic" and ultimately to feel safely gathered in — firstly with us, within the therapeutic relationship, and in due course within themselves. We provide a "promise of home", or at least some hope for our clients that they might be able to find that individual sense of self within themselves and connection to others, which feels like "home".

Whakarāpopotonga

I te matenga o Leonard Cohen i te Whiringa-a-rangi 2016, pōuri kau ana te tini te mano huri noa i te ao mōteatea kau ana i te ngarohanga atu o te tohunga tito waiata, toikupu mahi toi nei. E ai ki tā Ōtene kī (1958) i te matenga o Whoritu:

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Mō ia rā taki hinga
rō ngai tātau, rātau e whai hua nei mō tātau,
mōhio tonu kore rawa i rahi engari
tōminahia mā te kaiao e whakawhanake. (w. 68)

I ahu mai te pane o tēnei pepa mai i te waita a Renana o te tau 1984 "Kanikanihia au ki te Mutunga o te Aroha", ā, tērā ia e whakaarohia ana he whakaahuatanga mārohirohi o te o te āhua whakarato a te whaea i tana pēpē me tā tātau ngā kaiwhakaora hinengaro hoki ki ā tātau kiritaki. Ko tā tātau he nana ki te āwhina i a rātau, "pīkarikari i te maurirere" ā, taioreore kia tau te mauritau ki a tātau, i tō tātau whanaungatanga haumanutau tae atu ki te wā e tau ai tō rātau ake mauri. Ko tā tātau he whakarato "oati mauri tau", he maramara wawata rānei e kitea ai e ā tātau kiritaki he kiritau, he whanaungatanga ki ētahi atu pēnei tonu i te "kāinga".

Keywords: Leonard Cohen; psychotherapy; attitude to women and sex; attitude to depression; attitude to mortality and death

Introduction

I must start by acknowledging my partner Bill Dacker, historian, poet and community worker. Before meeting Bill my only awareness of Leonard Cohen's work came from the very famous '60s songs, such as "Suzanne", "Bird on the Wire" and "So Long, Marianne". Bill introduced me to everything that Leonard produced from the early '70s on, but particularly the albums from 1984 through to his death.

This paper is based on a presentation given at the NZAP Conference in March 2017. At the presentation, musical selections of Leonard Cohen's work were played — obviously this is not possible in a written paper, but the lyrics are included. Readers are encouraged to find and play the songs.

Dance me to your beauty with a burning violin
Dance me through the panic till I'm gathered safely in
Lift me like an olive branch and be my homeward dove
Dance me to the end of love
Dance me to the end of love. (Cohen, 1984a)

This is the full first verse of the song "Dance Me to the End of Love", from Leonard's 1984 album *Various Positions* (on which "Hallelujah" is the most famous song). It is a song that has always spoken to me. I found that I was not the only one — some two weeks after the US election last year, there was an article in the *Otago Daily Times* (McLean, 2016) entitled "Distractions help to dance through panic", where the columnist, Elspeth McLean, found this song going through her mind as she tried to manage her feelings about Trump's victory.

So Leonard came to mind for this columnist, in trying to make sense of the world — and in the way of all great art, whether written, audio or visual, his songs regularly accompany events in my life and the wider world. When very busy, for instance, Bill and I will quote to each other these lines from "The Darkness" (from the 2012 album *Old Ideas*),

> The present's not that pleasant
> Just a lot of things to do. (Cohen, 2012b)

I remember, however, only once explicitly quoting a Leonard Cohen song to a client, during a session. These were words from the song "Avalanche", from his third album, *Songs of Love and Hate*:

> And do not love me quite fiercely now, when you know that you are not sure. (Cohen, 1971a)

This line seemed to fit with the discussion about overcompensation, within a client's relationship (although I don't believe the client really knew of Leonard Cohen at all — and as is often the case, when the session is somewhat "driven" by me, it didn't really assist).

Other explicit use of his work in a therapeutic situation was related to me by a colleague — this line from the song "Anthem" (from the 1992 album, *The Future*):

> There is a crack in everything
> That's how the light gets in. (Cohen, 1992a)

— was quoted to her by a client, to describe how even in the client's worst depression there were some moments of hope and lessening of the bleakness. Perhaps these words provided some promise of home for this client.

According to Sylvie Simmons (in her 2012 biography of Leonard), these words are used in the documentation for a rehabilitation facility in the States. And perhaps, more surprisingly, the same line is found in the preface of a Marian Keyes (2009) novel — her humorous "chick lit" always being somewhat flavoured by the serious, in this case the trauma of acquaintance rape.

This paper attempts to speak to the profundity and significance of Leonard's work, as something akin to great poetry or religious/spiritual texts. I also hope to rescue him, for those who don't know his work, from the false perception of "music to slit your wrists to".

I can't improve on these words by the singer, Jennifer Warnes who performed with Leonard regularly throughout the '80s:

> What set him apart was his ability to embrace the darkness that we all have inside us. America just hides all their darkness in their closets ... there is a need to keep your sunny side up. And so it always seemed artificial when artists would not represent the complexity and Leonard comes along and describes the complexity.... so there was God and there was sex and there was spirituality and joy and laughter all in the same song... so I went to it because it was true, also it was great. (BBC Radio 4, 1994)

Warnes loved Leonard's work, as this quote shows — and she was much more commercially successful than Leonard at this time in the 1980's (her duet with Joe Cocker, "Up Where We Belong", the theme tune to the film *An Officer and a Gentleman*, had won a Grammy a few years earlier). On the other hand, Leonard's record label Columbia had not even

released *Various Positions* in the States in 1984 (although it was released later). The boss had said "Leonard, we know you're great, we just don't know if you're any good!" (quoted in Simmons, 2017).

My focus in this paper is less on what Warnes terms the spirituality of his work and more on what particularly speaks to me, in five specific areas — namely his attitude to sex and women; his writings on relationships, both intimate and parental; and his thoughts on politics, depression and mortality.

Sex and women

It is not possible to separate out these two — as we know, conflicted attitudes or feelings about sex and sexual feelings typically lead to or impact on attitudes towards women, who are blamed, by some men, for causing the sexual desire that is felt. In the classic scenario, women can be either madonna or whore — that is, they are either idealised or denigrated, but they are not real; a classic "splitting". This is very clear in the Christian tradition, where women are stereotyped as either the Virgin Mary or Mary Magdalene — that is, they cannot be sexualised beings at all or they are prostitutes.

Such misogynistic attitudes are found in other religious traditions, for instance from the Manusmriti, an ancient Hindu law book, as cited in Vikram Seth's wonderful novel *A Suitable Boy* (1993):

> Day and night, women must be kept in dependence by the males of their families. In childhood, a woman must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband and in old age to her son; a woman must never be independent because she is as innately impure as falsehood.... The Lord created woman as one who is full of sensuality, wrath, dishonesty, malice and bad conduct. (p. 1,153)

Similarly from one of the *Hadiths* (reports on Mohammed, which accompany the Koran and constitute a secondary source of Islamic jurisprudence), "Amongst the inmates of Paradise women will form the minority, and amongst the inmates of hell a majority" (cited in Seth, 1993, p. 1,153). Both these quotes are in the context of a letter from one female character to another, summed up by the writer as "Hit or myth...that is the attitude to women in every religion" (p. 1,153).

Similarly love and/or sex is either idealised or denigrated and coarsened. In other words it's either so "spiritual and sacred" it's not of the body at all, or it is base/"locker room" or outright abusive.

An alternative view is provided by W. B. Yeats (1933) in his poem "Crazy Jane talks with the Bishop", in the line "But Love has pitched his mansion in | The place of excrement". This love is both sacred (it is love) and absolutely of the body, in the genitals, "the place of excrement".

Mahatma Gandhi was such a wise and compassionate man, that he fought his whole life against the oppression of the Untouchable caste within Hinduism, and was ultimately assassinated by a Hindu fundamentalist for his determination that India would be a home for Muslims too. But he was highly conflicted about sex, almost certainly linked with his

arranged marriage at 13 to another 13-year-old, and having his first sexual intercourse in his father's house, the night his father suddenly died. Sex and death became profoundly and guiltily linked in his mind. He became so determined to be celibate that he would have young women sleep beside him, to "prove" himself (Gandhi, 2006).

Women are blamed for causing desire and then attacked. Gandhi, with his compassion, did not go this far, but it is obviously very clear in Islamic countries where women are forced to wear burkas. Something not too dissimilar occurs in fundamentalist Christian groups, like Gloriavale, where women must wear long dresses and headscarves. When sex is forbidden, of course, as sinful, women become forbidden fruit, and very high levels of sexual harassment and violence are common. It's all Eve's fault, for eating the apple and causing the downfall of men/humanity. Interestingly, in India, sexual harassment/groping on public transport is extremely widespread and the reality minimised by calling it "Eve teasing".

I may have laboured this point, but I feel very frustrated and tired by the way women are attacked and blamed for so much — and in all religions it seems, no matter their differences in other ways.

In contrast and so refreshingly, in Leonard's work, women are neither angels nor devils — they have desire and they can mess up. They're neither better nor worse than men. The following lines from "Everybody Knows", from *I'm Your Man* (Cohen, 1988a), demonstrate this beautifully (and with such humour, they make me laugh every time I hear them).

Everybody knows you've been faithful
Give or take a night or two
Everybody knows you've been discreet
But there were so many people you just had to meet
Without your clothes
And everybody knows.

There is something so understanding and forgiving (for both women and men) in these lines from "Closing Time" on *The Future* (1992b):

I loved you for your beauty
That doesn't make a fool of me
You were in it for your beauty too.

And of course the culmination of this merging of the sacred and the profane is found in his most famous song "Hallelujah", where he brilliantly mingles sex and religion. This song has now been recorded some 300 times, since Leonard's recording in 1984 and a whole book has been written on it, entitled *The Holy or the Broken: Leonard Cohen, Jeff Buckley and the Unlikely Ascent of "Hallelujah"* (Light, 2012).

There was a time you let me know
What's really going on below
But now you never show it to me, do you?
And remember when I moved in you

The holy dove was moving too
And every breath we drew was Hallelujah. (Cohen, 1984b)

This simultaneous expression of the spiritual and the earthy, both metaphorically and also genitally, are epitomised in these words, "what's really going on below". Similarly one can view "when I moved in you" as both description of the male perspective in sexual intercourse and the deep emotional connection (now lost) between the couple.

Or in these words, from the lesser-known "Light as the Breeze" (from *The Future*) which could refer to cunnilingus as much as anything else:

It don't matter how you worship
As long as you're down on your knees
So I knelt there at the delta,
At the alpha and the omega

or later in the same song:

And she says, Drink deeply, pilgrim
But don't forget there's still a woman
Beneath this resplendent chemise. (Cohen, 1992e)

Because Leonard wrote so well about all human emotion and experience, there are also songs that speak to that most deeply significant relationship: the one between parents and their children. For instance, in these lines from Leonard's song "Night Comes On" (also from *Various Positions*) something very profound and intensely poetic is said about child development; the way all children, including our own children, grow up and "hide in the world".

But my son and my daughter climbed out of the water
Crying, Papa, you promised to play
And they lead me away to the great surprise
It's Papa, don't peek, Papa, cover your eyes
And they hide, they hide in the world. (Cohen, 1984c)

Or, from "Suzanne", from his first album *Songs of Leonard Cohen*,

... there are children in the morning
They are leaning out for love and they will lean that way forever. (Cohen, 1967c)

We can all, including our clients, feel like "children in the morning" who are "leaning out for love".

Relationships

From the homicidal bitchin'
That goes down in every kitchen
To determine who will serve and who will eat. (Cohen, 1992c)

In 19 words, these lines from "Democracy", from *The Future,* brilliantly describe the power dynamics at the heart of many relationship struggles, including those ultimately leading to violence and even homicide. Providing the same vivid precis of the day-to-day reality of relationships but in a lighter vein, these words also from "Light as the Breeze",

But you'll never be forgiven
For whatever you've done with the keys. (Cohen, 1992e)

Or in these lines, from "First We Take Manhattan", from *I'm Your Man*,

Ah you loved me as a loser, but now you're worried that I just might win. (Cohen, 1988b)

the impact on the relationship of one person changing (for instance, as we know, by entering psychotherapy) is superbly described. Or alternatively, when a relationship dynamic is unable to change, in these words from "Famous Blue Raincoat" (from *Songs of Love and Hate*). This song concerns a triangular relationship, and Leonard is addressing the "other man".

Yes, and thanks, for the trouble you took from her eyes
I thought it was there for good so I never tried. (Cohen, 1971b)

In these lines, from "Waiting for the Miracle" (*The Future*) he explores beautifully the difficulty in maintaining true intimacy, without merging:

Now, baby let's get married
We've been alone too long
Let's be alone together
Let's see if we're that strong. (Cohen, 1992f)

According to Sylvie Simmons (2012), this was Leonard's marriage proposal to his partner of some years, the actress Rebecca de Mornay. A very Leonard Cohen proposal, she says, "resigned, cheerfully pessimistic, and with references to nakedness and war" (p. 356).

Leonard seems to have been a great friend but not a great partner. He never married (despite this proposal to Rebecca de Mornay) and struggled with the demands of commitment. He wrote one issue of a problem page in an American men's magazine in 1993, answering the question "What is the one thing men ought to know about women?", with "Women are deeply involved in a pattern of thought centred around the notion of commitment" (quoted in Simmons, 2012, p. 358).

However, I have some understanding of Leonard's struggles with commitment as women

were certainly very attracted to him. There is a wonderful clip on You-tube, entitled "Why it's good to be Leonard Cohen", where, in the course of filming him on tour, in the late '60s, the film-maker captures a young German woman, trying to "persuade" Leonard to come somewhere private with her! There was a quote from Marianne Ihlen, his Norwegian partner of many years and inspiration for a number of songs, most particularly "So Long, Marianne", in an article in the *New Yorker* recently (Remnick, 2016): "Good gracious, all the girls were panting for him."

He often explored the difficulties inherent in relationships, particularly the anxiety that women/relationships tie men down; that they take away their freedom and creativity. These thoughts are expressed in these few (disconnected) lines from "So Long, Marianne", from *Songs of Leonard Cohen*.

> Well you know that I love to live with you but you make me forget so very much
>
> Your fine spider web is fastening my ankle to a stone
>
> You left when I told you I was curious, I never said that I was brave. (Cohen, 1967b)

Or famously, these lines from "Hallelujah" (Cohen, 1984b):

> She tied you to her kitchen chair
> She broke your throne and she cut your hair

— which clearly reference the biblical story of Samson and Delilah but bring it into the modern world, with that archetypal image of modern domesticity, the kitchen chair.

But, despite his own struggles with domesticity, or perhaps because of them, he writes very movingly and profoundly about the end of love or about relationships that are in trouble or over. Furthermore the women are not denigrated — to put it bluntly no woman is a "bitch" in Leonard's work, even those who have rejected him. So, for instance, from "Hallelujah",

> And even though it all went wrong
> I'll stand right here before the Lord of Song
> With nothing on my tongue but Hallelujah. (Cohen, 1984b)

Or "Tower of Song", from *I'm Your Man*,

> I see you standing on the other side
> I don't know how the river got this wide
> I loved you baby, way back when.
> All the bridges are burning that we might have crossed
> But I feel so close to everything that we've lost
> We'll never have to lose it again. (Cohen, 1988d)

The irony of feeling "so close to everything that we've lost" seems very Cohenesque. In a similar vein, these lines from "Closing Time", on *The Future*,

> And I loved you when our love was blessed
> And I love you now there's nothing left, but sorrow and a sense of overtime. (Cohen, 1992b)

Leonard was very influenced by Yeats — and these lines from the song "The Future" (on *The Future*),

> Things are gonna slide, slide in all directions (Cohen, 1992d)

— seem a modern echo of Yeats' (1933) famous lines "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold" from his poem "The Second Coming".

Even more so, Leonard was inspired by the Spanish poet, Federico Garcia Lorca. Leonard's song "Take This Waltz" (from the 1988 *I'm Your Man*), is a translation or, perhaps more, an interpretation of a Lorca poem "Pequeno Vals Vienes" (in English, "Little Viennese Waltz"). Both the poem and the song are well worth reading — here are just a few random lines from the song.

> There's a shoulder where Death comes to cry
>
> With its very own breath of brandy and Death, dragging its tail in the sea
>
> With a garland of freshly cut tears
> I, I — I — I
> Take this waltz, take this waltz
> Take this waltz, it's been dying for years. (Cohen, 1988c)

There are numerous literary and historical allusions to be found, for instance in these lines from "Tower of Song",

> I'm standing by the window where the light is strong. (Cohen, 1988c)

where Lady Gregory, Yeats' patron and Irish Republican activist (despite being born into the Anglo-Irish aristocracy) speaks these words directly to the IRA, following threats of violence, during the Irish Civil War of the early '20s.

Or again in these lines from the title track on *The Future*,

> You'll see your woman hanging upside down
> Her features covered by her fallen gown. (Cohen, 1992d)

where the reference is to the fate of Mussolini and his mistress, after they were executed by the Partisans and their bodies hung upside-down from lamp posts in Milan.

Politics

I don't think most people would think of Leonard Cohen as a political writer (unlike Dylan, for instance), but he was as incisive and thoughtful about the outside world, as the inner one. (He died the day before Trump was elected, or we might have seen some brilliant musing on that particular event!)

"The Future" is a particularly bleak song in many ways (although the music is upbeat), describing an apocalyptic world view. Lines like,

> Take the only tree that's left
> And stuff it up the hole in your culture. (Cohen, 1992d)

have only become more relevant.

"Democracy", on the same 1992 album, is even more applicable today in its commentary on the United States. The whole song is worth reading and listening to — here is one verse.

> It's coming to America first
> the cradle of the best and of the worst
> It's here they got the range
> and the machinery for change
> and it's here they got the spiritual thirst
> It's here the family's broken
> and it's here the lonely say
> that the heart has got to open
> in a fundamental way. (Cohen, 1992c)

And from "Anthem":

> While the killers in high places
> Say their prayers out loud. (Cohen, 1992a)

And lastly from his final album, which came out only a few weeks before his death, *You Want It Darker*, the song "Steer Your Way":

> As he died to make men holy, let us die to make things cheap. (Cohen, 2016)

Depression

Leonard struggled with depression his whole life, as did his mother, a Lithuanian emigrant and "Chekhovian figure" in his words. His father's family were very well-established and wealthy members of Montreal's Jewish community. His paternal grandfather, according to Leonard, was the most significant Jew in Canada. His father ran the family's clothing business and was always very well-dressed, as was Leonard, his whole life.

At nine, his father died. After he watched his father lowered into the earth, he described,

> Then I came back to the house and I went to his closet and I found a premade bow tie. I don't know why I did this, I can't even own it now, but I cut one of the wings of the bow tie off and I wrote something on a piece of paper — I think it was some kind of farewell to my father — and I buried it in a little hole in the back yard. And I put that curious note in there.... It was just some attraction to a ritual response to an impossible event. (quoted in Remnick, 2016)

Clearly the action of a nine-year-old who would become a famous poet.

He described his depression, which set in towards the end of his undergraduate degree, as follows:

> What I mean by depression isn't just the blues, it's not just like a hangover from the weekend, the girl didn't show up or something like that. It's a kind of mental violence that stops you from functioning properly from one moment to the next. (quoted in Simmons, 2012)

These words fit the writer Andrew Solomon's view of depression (which he has struggled with, his entire adult life) as an "energy disorder", as he describes in his perceptive work *The Noonday Demon — An Anatomy of Depression* (Solomon, 2001).

Leonard's own experiences with depression probably explain why he played some concerts in state mental hospitals in the early '70s (with very little publicity). He felt that people with mental health problems would be particularly receptive to his work, and reportedly said, "I've always loved the people the world used to call mad" (quoted in Simmons, 2012).

In these lines from "Sisters of Mercy", from his debut album, *Songs of Leonard Cohen*, there is a great description of the alienation from life, which is often at the heart of depressive feelings and other forms of "madness":

> If your life is a leaf that the seasons tear off and condemn
> They will bind you with love that is graceful and green as a stem. (Cohen, 1967a)

To feel one has as little agency as a leaf in autumn is a powerful image. But the "sisters of mercy" (whoever they may be) are there to provide binding, in that flexible but strong image of a stem: the holding, the promise of home, which is provided by psychotherapists as we help to "dance" our clients "through the panic".

Mortality

Leonard always wrote about death, but it became particularly pronounced in his last three albums. These lines are from "Going Home" from *Old Ideas*. I know of at least one funeral where this song was so appropriately played.

> Going home
> Without my sorrow
> Going home

Sometime tomorrow
Going home
To where it's better
Than before

Going home
Without my burden
Going home
Behind the curtain
Going home
Without the costume
That I wore. (Cohen, 2012a)

Such intimations of mortality infuse the album *You Want It Darker*. From the title track:

If you are the dealer, I'm out of the game
If you are the healer, it means I'm broken and lame
If thine is the glory then mine must be the shame
You want it darker
We kill the flame

And later, in the same song:

Hineni hineni
I'm ready, my lord. (Cohen, 2016a)

"Hineni" translates as "Here I am" in Hebrew, and are the words Abraham uttered when he was ready to sacrifice his son, to that cruel Old Testament god.

It seems to me Leonard's words "You Want It Darker" can be taken in many ways — obviously a reference to the great closing down of the light, in death — but also perhaps a humorous tilt at those people who have called him the "Godfather of gloom".

In the previously cited *New Yorker* article (Remnick, 2016), there is a very moving account of a communication between Leonard and Marianne Ihlen, when a friend informed him she was dying.

> Well Marianne, it's come to this time when we are really so old and our bodies are falling apart and I think I will follow you very soon. Know that I am so close behind you that if you stretch out your hand, I think you can reach mine. And you know that I've always loved you for your beauty and your wisdom, but I don't need to say anything more about that because you know all about that. But now, I just want to wish you a very good journey. Goodbye old friend. Endless love, see you down the road.

Two days later, Leonard got an email from Norway:

> Dear Leonard,
> Marianne slept slowly out of this life yesterday evening. Totally at ease, surrounded by close friends.
>
> Your letter came when she still could talk and laugh in full consciousness. When we read it aloud, she smiled as only Marianne can. She lifted her hand, when you said you were right behind, close enough to see her.
>
> It gave her deep peace of mind that you knew her condition. And your blessing for her journey gave her extra strength... In her last hour I held her hand and hummed "Bird on the Wire," while she was breathing so lightly. And when we left the room, after her soul had flown out of the window for new adventures, we kissed her head and whispered your everlasting words.
>
> So long, Marianne... (quoted in Remnick, 2016)

He tried just about everything to reduce or lift his depression — drugs including pot, speed and acid. "I took trip after trip, sitting on my terrace in Greece, waiting to see God. Generally I ended up with a bad hangover" (quoted in Remnick, 2016).

He drank a lot of alcohol and of course there were numerous relationships. He tried many anti-depressants. And certainly his work functioned as a key self-object; but he was so perfectionistic in his work, his musical struggles were also part of his depressive self-attack. There are 80 verses of "Hallelujah" and it took him five years to write. In the *New Yorker* article (Remnick, 2016), in a discussion with Dylan, Leonard said "Hallelujah" took him two years to write, as Dylan had said one of his songs had taken him only 15 minutes!

He was particularly drawn to spirituality and religion throughout his life, including some experimentation with Scientology in the '60s. He became a follower of Zen Buddhism, following his teacher Roshi for many years, and became an actual monk in 1996, living his life in a retreat on a mountain outside Los Angeles. After many years living the arduous life of a monk, he went "back down the mountain", writing this poem, "Leaving Mount Baldy" which includes the lines:

> I left my robes hanging on a peg
> in the old cabin
> where I had sat so long
> and slept so little
> I finally understood
> I had no gift
> for Spiritual Matters. (Cohen, 2007)

Despite this typically self-effacing sentiment, he almost immediately went to Mumbai, to a Hindu teacher, and his depression lifted for some reason. He found, it seems, that "crack in everything where the light gets in". Following this, sometime in the mid-2000s, he found out his financial manager had stolen all his money — this was a tragedy for Leonard but as it led to his three incredible tours between 2008-13, a miracle for his fans. Bill and I were lucky enough to see him all three times he visited New Zealand.

Conclusion

Despite his "Godfather of gloom" image, I believe Leonard's works are ultimately uplifting, as these concluding lines, from "Hallelujah", demonstrate:

> There's a blaze of light in every word
> It doesn't matter which you heard
> The holy or the broken Hallelujah. (Cohen, 1984b)

Alan Light (2012) wrote about these lines.

> "A blaze of light in every word." That's an amazing line. Every word, holy or broken — this is the fulcrum of the song as Cohen first wrote it. Like our forefathers and the Bible heroes who formed the foundation of Western ethics and principles, we will be hurt, tested, and challenged. Love will break our hearts, music will offer solace that we may or may not hear, we will be faced with joy and with pain. But Cohen is telling us, without resorting to sentimentality, not to surrender to despair or nihilism. Critics may have fixated on the gloom and doom of his lyrics, but this is his offering of hope and perseverance in the face of a cruel world. Holy or broken, there is still hallelujah." (para. 28)

I believe we offer something similar to our clients. Although their traumatic backgrounds can't be changed and their pain can't be "excised", we can help them face their reality without sentimentality or despair, and hopefully, in time, find some actual joy. More than what Leonard Cohen's music can offer to clients, his work (as with other self-objects) keeps me going — and if I can't keep going, then I am of no use to my clients.

I end this in the same optimistic vein, quoting Leonard from "The Future,"

> But love's the only engine of survival. (Cohen, 1992d)

Finally, from "Anthem",

> Every heart, every heart
> To love will come
> But like a refugee
>
> Ring the bells that still can ring
> Forget your perfect offering
> There is a crack, a crack in everything
> That's how the light gets in. (Cohen, 1992a)

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