Celebrity and the Poetic Dialogue of Irving Layton and Leonard Cohen

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At the beginning of Leonard Cohen's career as a poet, he met Irving Layton, the most controversial mentor he could have chosen among Canadian writers. They soon began writing poems for and about each other, often with reference to each other's works. During the intense years of their celebrity, this poetic dialogue was a vehicle for a pointed rivalry, but the poets also revealed concern for each other and for their freedom of expression. Cohen initiated and often sustained the dialogue by questioning Layton's persona and his implied fear of being defined by his audience. More influenced by Layton's poems than vice versa, Cohen implied that he was afraid of being defined by Layton and his generation. These potentially real fears are reflected in the ironically masculine and religious representations of celebrity in their poetry. Exploiting the problematic authority of masculinity and religion, they promoted each other's celebrity; however, Layton and Cohen also fashioned their personas to be ironic, and both appeared wary of their culture's extraordinary approval of them.

To avoid uncritically reinforcing such approval, most recent studies of celebrity — Marshall (1997), Rojek (2001), Turner (2004), and Jaffe (2005) — expose the relations of power, commerce, and media that construct celebrity. These studies counter the tenuous assumption that celebrity is necessarily an indication of artisitc excellence, personal greatness, or legitimate cultural leadership. Some recent studies, such as Moran (2000) and Glass (2004), however, have also begun to examine individual experiences of celebrity. Lorraine York's *Literary Celebrity in Canada* (2007) does both; York argues, furthermore, that celebrity "is a much more powerful force in the history of Canadian literature than has been suspected, and its possessors have not been blasé about or unaffected by its workings in their careers and lives" (34). The study of Layton and Cohen is, therefore, important because they both wrote critically and creatively about their celebrity; until now, their celebrity has only been examined indirectly through its similarity to their popu-

larity (in Dudek, 1969) and in relation to Layton's fame (in Trehearne, 1992).

In contrast to other types of public recognition, the attention aroused by celebrity is intense and brief. Whether or not narratives of celebrity use the term *celebrity*, they usually concentrate on the flash and fade of being known. The brevity of an artist's celebrity often leads to a sense of loss while the intensity of celebrity leads to a sense of personal crisis. For Layton and Cohen — the first Canadian poets to be known through television and film in addition to their writing — this crisis was enabled by the unprecedented integration of mass multi-media in twentieth-century culture. Layton and Cohen exploited the media (and their own poems) for mutual promotion and gained a degree of exposure that few Canadian poets have experienced. They often seemed to enjoy the attention, but the prospect of the inevitable loss of celebrity (or its transformation into a different type of recognition) was a concern. Worse than its brevity, however, was the potential damage that its intensity could do to their work and lives.

To maintain a private life under scrutiny, literary celebrities often attempt to shelter themselves behind their chosen personas, whereas other celebrities more often resort to bodyguards and lawyers. The literary persona can be understood as a decoy offered to the public; it can appease the public's desire for a compelling entertainment by providing an illusion of personal access. The closer the scrutiny, however, and the more success depends on the revelation of biography, the closer the persona must come to the private life. To renegotiate this development, the celebrity can make the persona "larger than life." Layton and Cohen chose personas — prophet and saint — that were exaggerations of their sincere preoccupations; their real lives were writ large. Their poetic dialogue thereby hides their private concerns in plain view while it also uses their personas and symbolism to heighten the sense of their importance as celebrities. This dialogue must be interpreted in the context of their real lives, but what they say to each other must also be understood as mediated by their personas — even if the impression is of eavesdropping on a fascinatingly personal conversation.

Although the biographical fallacy is not usually considered to be the author's problem, it can harmfully affect how literary celebrities understand themselves. Celebrity can provoke an identity crisis caused by the persona's "colonization" (Rojek 11) or the "invasive reconfigura-

tion" (Latham 110) of the person. I refer to this crisis more neutrally as a fusion of selves because I want to acknowledge that people rarely seek their own "colonization" or "invasion," but they do seek widespread recognition, usually *fame*, which is recognition in the "good sense" (*OED*) compared to the "notoriety" (*OED*) connoted in *celebrity*. Nevertheless, my choice of *fusion* implies *meltdown* ,crisis, and a typecasting that can limit the celebrity to a narrow range of expression defined in anticipation of the public's narrow expectations. The split self (person/persona) is not as problematic as the selves becoming indistinguishable to the celebrity.

This potential fusion, as a problem of expression, is one of the reasons why Layton and Cohen needed to supplement their face-to-face communication by writing to each other in their books of poetry. Their poetic dialogue was a survival mechanism. It was their way of reminding each other to strive for a critical distance from their own celebrity; it reassured them that poetry was a serious art; and it was proof that they could still manipulate a range of techniques for expression. This proof was necessary because their increasing celebrity made selling books less and less dependent on the quality of their poetry; according to most critics, the quality of their poetry really did decline. Although their poems written for and about each other are not (in my opinion) their best, their poetic dialogue merits attention as a creative response to problems of celebrity; these problems would have been oversimplified if Layton and Cohen had only written essays or given interviews about the consequences of their public recognition.

Through their personas, Layton and Cohen critiqued but also reinforced two other problems of literary celebrity: what Loren Glass identifies as its masculinity (18) and what other critics have identified as its religious pretense. In the context of literary celebrity in Canada, masculinity is an issue especially relevant to poetry because Canadian fiction has an unusually high proportion of celebrities who are women. In the poetry of Layton and Cohen, the problems of sexuality and religion are so closely related that a sign of one is often a sign of the other. In this article, for concision, my groundwork is mainly on the latter. Celebrity has a pseudo-religious social function (Turner 6-7): it is secular but adapts "myths and rites of religious ascent and descent" (Rojek 74) — such as the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ — and uses celestial symbolism in commercial media to form a "star system" that encour-

ages the adulation of celebrities. Celebrities are not considered literally sacred in most cases (Frow 201, 204); however, the granting of celebrity is profane and ironic, and the "cult of personality" is sometimes as much a sardonic indulgence in spiritual kitsch as it is an uncritical deification of celebrities and their ways of life. Layton, especially, seemed to expect an ironic reception as a celebrity poet; his pseudo-religious persona — which was related to his actual role as a high-school and university teacher — indicated his scepticism about his status. Although Cohen has actively pursued religious identity — by becoming, for instance, a Buddhist monk in the late 1990s (Eder par. 10) — and although he seriously adopted the persona of a psalmist in *Book of Mercy* (1984), his poetry is often very funny in its disparagement of his suitability for a religious life. The comedy of pseudo-religious performance helped make Layton and Cohen popular.

Many of Cohen's books reveal his abiding interest in the Jewish heritage he shared with Layton, but when Cohen became popular in the early 1960s he chose a martyred saint — what Michael Ondaatje calls a "pop-saint" (61) — as his main persona. Despite Layton's tendency to imply that he was the new Messiah, his considerably less Judeo-Christian persona was the more prominent topic of debate in his poetic dialogue with Cohen, and Layton rarely dwelled on Judaism (Baker 43). Friedrich Nietzsche's prophet, Zarathustra (loosely based on the Zarathustra of the Zoroastrian religion), is the model for Layton's celebrity poet. Layton followed Nietzsche by using celestial symbolism (Francis 47) — the sun (a star) — to suggest that his poet is favoured as a mouthpiece of the gods; however, both poets' "prophets" are depicted as clownish, failed teachers. Eli Mandel notes that "whatever else he might be, Layton is . . . a teacher" (18) and "didactic poet" (19), but Layton's pedantry is to some degree ironic (and tragic) because of its relation to the religious pretense of his persona.

Channeling Zarathustra, Layton also channels the Greek god Dionysus, who was Nietzsche's "favorite deity" (Del Caro and Pippin 124n). Dionysus, like Jesus, is known for his resurrection (Hamilton 61-62), and Nietzsche is known for his will to power, an "irrefutable urge to become which is forever forming and dissolving and reforming — giving birth to itself, dying and being reborn" (Francis 47). Mandel observes that the coexistence of such opposites in Layton's work (32-33) is an indication of his commitment to "paradoxical" (31) freedom.

Layton's concept of freedom is one that "includes everything, which could only mean the manifestation of a god" (Mandel 33). The coincidental fusion of other opposites than "dying" and "being reborn" — such as public and private — suggests that Layton was using his pseudo-religious persona to make the "invasive reconfiguration" of celebrity appear voluntary. In other words, the religious pretense offered a way to fight fire with fire. Layton theorizes this Dionysian flux — or freedom to change by an act of will — as an escape from the typecasting power of the public. This becomes the potentially impossible standard of the celebrity poet that Cohen measures himself against. In response, Cohen's persona of the saint eventually sacrifices his Laytonic freedom and allows what Stephen Scobie calls the "destruction" of "all vestiges of [the saint's] individual will" (9).

Layton's concern for will and freedom, his representations of celebrity, and his actual celebrity coincide suggestively. By the mid-1950s, Layton was a "star attraction" (Solecki xv); although his more sensational poems also promoted him, the poet was primarily known through his appearances on CBC-TV's *Fighting Words* program and his relentless letters printed in newspapers. His well-known poem "Whatever Else Poetry Is Freedom" (1958) can be interpreted as self-promotional, but it also establishes a "transformative model of selfhood" (Trehearne 141) by presenting the poet as a celebrity who fears being stifled or fixed by his audience. By 1965, he feared becoming a "captive of [his] own image" (qtd. in Cameron 373). Arguably, the restrictiveness of his celebrity outlasted his actual celebrity and led Al Purdy to write, in a 1979 review, that "Layton has been imitating himself for years, in a perfect parody of his own style, and has written nearly all of his poems before, some many times" (qtd. in Cameron 422). Similarly, Cohen commented, in 1983, that Layton "will never grow, his work or himself. His sense of the urgency of the poetic identity is unparalleled" (qtd. in Cameron 359). Cohen seemed to understand the ironic relationship between Layton's freedom and his celebrity. The poems that he wrote in response to Layton often critique this relationship. Indeed, their poetic dialogue can be interpreted as a debate that demonstrates which artist is more free.

The earliest poem by Layton to determine the criteria of this debate and to influence Cohen's development in general is "The Cold Green Element" (1955). It is Nietzschean but suggests that the only flux avail-

able to the celebrity poet is a fatal cycle of ridicule and rejection that is imposed on him by an audience. In the poem, the speaker implies that a "dead poet . . . who [drowned and] now hangs from the city's gates" (7-10) might be one of his "murdered selves" (29). Crowds stare at the body and then "return / with grimaces and incomprehension" (11-12) to the city; similarly, "the eyes / of old women" (23-24) make the speaker the object of a public gaze. The speaker and the dead poet seem fused. The dead poet's pseudo-crucifixion implies his martyrdom and is echoed in both the speaker's drowning and the Christian resurrection the end of the poem leads us to expect. These Christian allusions provide Cohen with a model for his own "saintly" sacrifice to the public.

While Layton was gaining exposure as a celebrity poet in the mid-1950s, Cohen was aware of Layton's work and preoccupations. When Cohen announces himself with "Elegy," the first poem in *Let Us Compare Mythologies* (1956), he alludes to a drowned god who would not be found in "cold" (3) mountain streams but in "the warm salt ocean" (7) of "slow green water" (9). In a passing comment at a conference in May 2006, Sandra Djwa remarked that Cohen's "Elegy" might have been alluding to Layton's "The Cold Green Element," whose image of the drowned god seems, in turn, to have been inspired by E.J. Pratt's "The Drowned" or, as Brian Trehearne suggested to me, by Lycidas in A.M. Klein's "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape." Although the connection between "Elegy" and "The Cold Green Element" is not certain, it raises the possibility that, from the outset of his poetic career, Cohen wanted to be associated with Layton and his work. The rather exclusive and mutually promotional relationship that they soon developed corroborates Aaron Jaffe's argument about modernist cliques in *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* (2005), and the sense of competition that is also an aspect of that relationship is surprisingly convincing evidence for Harold Bloom's theory of poetic rivalries in *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973).

"To I.P.L." in *Let Us Compare Mythologies* deifies Layton but also critiques him — though more meekly than "For My Old Layton" eight years later. The speaker of "To I.P.L." is dissatisfied with Layton's "zarathustrian tales" (2) because they do not explain how God could be unseated by a poet. The speaker wants to know "how the streets and alleys of heaven / were not safe for holy girls" (3-4) and why God "raged, depraved, / hanging around street corners, / entertaining hags in public

places" (7-9). The speaker wants to know, first, how God lost his power to protect "holy girls" and then went mad "in public" and, second, how Layton "finished" (15) the job started by God by arriving, "more furious than any Canadian poet, / [to] find Him gasping against a cloud" (12-13). From Layton's apprentice, these questions express apt reservations about a model of celebrity that demands that the poet supplant God in the role of a clown performing for an undesirable audience of "hags" (e.g., the "old women" from "The Cold Green Element") and "stray children" (10) in "public places" (9).

The speaker insinuates the answer to the first question: Layton — already well-known for his sexual bravado — succeeded in deflowering the holy girls and dominating "the streets and alleys" of God's otherwise protected heaven because God's "seraphim" (5) were "indoors" (5) repressing sexuality in a vestigially Victorian "century of curfew" (5). Because of Layton's transgression, the angels (Layton's other, more critical and desirable audience) "rattled their fists / and chanted odes" (18-19); their approval of their new God is ambivalent. The implied answer to the poem's second question — how Layton "finished up the job" (15) — is that the poet was more "furious" than God and thereby replaced "Him," but because he had no better "answers," an audience of critics might soon denounce his problematic sexual assumptions.

One of Layton's next major poems, "A Tall Man Executes a Jig," predicts that the celebrity poet's discriminating audience will desert him and that his more pejoratively popular audience will also exploit him. The poem reprises the Nietzschean themes related to celebrity found in Layton's earlier poems. In Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra attracts animals that substitute for disciples instead of "proper human beings" (Nietzsche 265). Similarly, the tall man attracts a swarm of gnats, a bee, and a snake. The gnats are especially relevant to him because, as symbols of a popular audience, they "assault" (25) him and cling to his skin like parasites that will exhaust and then abandon their host. Most dangerous in this exchange is the tall man's potential integration into the audience (akin to the fusion of private and public selves); because they parasitically bite "his sleeveless arm" (22), he becomes a "maddened speck" (24) among them. Their assault threatens his freedom, and although in some ways he seems to enjoy their company, he also seems to fear becoming gnat-like himself, part of their "chain" (17).

The gnats eventually reject the tall man, and he discovers freedom in their absence. When they leave, the tall man recovers himself, only to be rejected by a bee that "left him for a marigold" (42). Dejected, the tall man "drop[s] his head and let[s] fall the halo / Of mountains" (62-63) that was a sign of his socially dependent pseudo-religiosity. In his humility, he seems to attract the snake, his third and most genuine audience. The snake appears as a "violated grass-snake that lug[s] / Its intestine like a small red valise" (64-66). He warns it, "Your jig's up; the flies come like kites" (72). The returning gnats herald the end of the snake's life and "jig." The "jig" represents the act of writing or performing a text by invoking the figure of the author through association with God's "Unapparent hand" (18), which jigged the chain of gnats — "Jig jig, jig, jig" (15) — with the rhythm of either a scannable line of poetry or a dance. When the gnats "execute" or put the snake to death, the speaker reveals that the tall man's "mind" (89) has a "flicking tongue" (89); thus, the tall man "executes" his own "jig" by reviving the snake in his imagination — in a nascent poem — to satisfy the sense of *execution* as a skilful artistic performance (*OED*). Layton thereby suggests that after celebrity, a poet might regain the freedom to be creative.

Layton shared "A Tall Man Executes a Jig" with Cohen in 1961 (Cameron 329), prior to its appearance in *Balls for a One-Armed Juggler* (1963); Cohen thought it capped Layton's career (Cameron 330). Also in 1961, Cohen published a poem whose kite imagery was even more prominent than "the flies [that] come like kites" in "A Tall Man Executes a Jig." In "A Kite Is a Victim," from *The Spice-Box of Earth* (1961), Cohen reveals his own desire for personal and poetic freedom at an important early transition in his career. Michael Q. Abraham explains that "the kite is a clear metaphor for the tension between limitation and freedom" (109). The poem includes several elements that echo Layton, but the most prominent is the theme of restricted freedom related to the Zarathustrian implication that the poet is both a teacher (a "master") and a clown (a "fool"): "You love it because it pulls / gentle enough to call you master, / strong enough to call you fool" (2-4), and "you can always haul it down / to tame it in your drawer" (8-9). The kite, as Cohen later makes clear, represents "the last poem you've written" (15) and is "a contract of glory / that must be made with the sun" (20-21). Emphasizing the intermittent tug of the kite in the poet's hand through the consonance of "pull" and "call," Cohen suggests that his "calling" of

poetry sometimes restricts his freedom to express himself. In the end of the poem, he prays that the poetry will make him "worthy and lyric and pure" (26), but these are the same qualities that he often rebel against in his next book, *Flowers for Hitler* (1964). In terms of being worthy and lyric and pure, "A Kite Is a Victim" is in some ways Cohen's "last poem" to embody those values.

Already, Cohen was writing elegiacally about transitions in his career. "Last Dance at the Four Penny" in *The Spice-Box of Earth* is set in 1958 (according to a handwritten manuscript in Cohen's archived papers at the University of Toronto's Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library) and refers to an art gallery called The Four Penny that Cohen co-managed for a short time. Abraham argues that this poem is among a series in the book that shows Cohen's "movement" away from his Jewish influences toward a posture of "determined defiance" (119). The poem is addressed to "Layton, my friend Lazarovitch" (10), who engages with the poet in a Jewish dance called a freilach. Although Cohen argues that "no Jew was ever lost" (11) during the dance, he concludes — regretfully but with insistence — that his Jewish tradition is no longer prominent. The question "Who cares whether or not / the Messiah is a Litvak [a Jew]?" (24-25) is especially poignant because Layton himself indulged occasionally in a Messianic persona. The last lines conclude that "we who dance so beautifully / . . . know that freilachs end" (35-36); Cohen is preparing himself — and Layton — for a "poetic departure" (Abraham 119) that would reduce the Jewish aspect of his image and help to make him appear more secular — a "pop-saint," yes, but with the emphasis on "pop."

The poetic dialogue between Cohen's *The Spice-Box of Earth* and Layton's *The Swinging Flesh* — both published in 1961 and launched together on 29 May in Montreal (according to a promotional flyer from their publisher) — suggests that both men felt ambivalent about their differences and their relationship in general. With *The Swinging Flesh*, Layton was evidently thinking of himself not only as a teacher and celebrity but also as a father, as demonstrated in "My Eyes Are Wide Open," even though he had been an actual father since 1946 (Cameron 169). Although Cohen said in a 1983 interview that Layton was never "avuncular or paternal" (qtd. in Cameron 361) to him, Cohen seems to have responded to Layton's poem with "There Are Some Men," which was originally written for his actual father, Nathan Cohen. A prelimin-

ary typescript of "There Are Some Men" in the archives reveals that "Nathan" was the original title, but the poem shares an unmistakable image with Layton's "My Eyes Are Wide Open"; the similarity suggests that Cohen was imagining himself as his mentor's son. The archival records do not indicate which of the poems has the earliest date of composition; arguably, however, these poems work in sequence to reinforce a patriarchal lineage of celebrity that begins with T.S. Eliot (see below), passes through Layton, and ends with Cohen.

At this point in the dialogue, the connection between this sense of lineage and the religious pretense becomes especially clear. In Layton's "My Eyes Are Wide Open," the speaker remarks on his "rising son" (2) who grows in strength while he weakens with age. The speaker of "My Eyes Are Wide Open" begins by describing his son: "my rising son / Measures his fist daily against mine. / His grows, mine as certainly declines" (2-4). The rising son is also the rising *sun*, aligning the poem with Dionysian, Zarathustrian, and Christian pseudo-religious celebrity symbolism that prefigures the Golden Boy image that Cohen borrowed from Layton to advertise *Flowers for Hitler*. The speaker envies his son, who will have life beyond his own and whose "bright" (2) and "shin[ing]" (1) youth is more conducive to celebrity than the father's advancing age. He admits later in the poem that the only immutable part of him is the fact of his mortality. When the son compares the size of his small fist with his father's, he unconsciously anticipates the day when he will be stronger than his dad.

Unexpectedly, the father mainly avoids sentimentality in thinking about his death and his son's life in his absence. Not willing to be outdone by death, the father taunts his son, claiming to laugh with "eyes wide open" (21) from beyond the grave:

> But my lipless smile, that has not changed.
> Can you not see it beneath the skin?
> A thousand years from now from the grass,
> From the dust I'll flash you the same grin. (12-15)

Considering the coincidence of the skeletal imagery — the father's smiling skull — and the son's demonstration of his growing fist (a symbol of violence), the poem suggests that the son will in some way murder the father in Oedipal fashion. The son seems to have learned the problematic code of masculine behaviour in a patriarchal society. Furthermore,

by using Eliot's skeletal images and rhymes ("skin" and "grin") from "Whispers of Immortality" (1920), the speaker hopes that Eliot's authority will compensate for the power lost to his maturing son.

On that theme, Cohen's "There Are Some Men" begins as an implicit obituary, an elegy for dead men who merit monuments: "There are some men / who should have mountains / to bear their names to time" (1-3) because tombstones are "not high enough / or green" (4-5). Readers might be surprised to be reminded of Layton's imagery when Cohen writes that "sons go far away / to lose the fist / their father's hand will always seem" (6-8). Alluding to the distinctive father-fist comparison in Layton's "My Eyes Are Wide Open," Cohen replaces his actual father Nathan — who died prematurely in 1944 (Nadel 6) — with Layton. Contrary to Layton's poem, however, Cohen implies that Layton, the symbolic father, instigated the comparison of fists, which initiated their rivalry and taught him masculine codes of conduct that involve competition and even violence. By shifting the agency of the implied violence to the father, Cohen also insinuates that the father, now dead, is a memory that can be neither forgotten nor confronted.

The third stanza provides a list of the father's qualities: "he lived and died in mighty silence / and with dignity, / left no book, son, or lover to mourn" (10-12). Of all the poets in Canadian history, this list applies least to Layton. It might apply more accurately to Cohen's actual father, but it would then suggest that Nathan Cohen did not have a "son" who outlived him. Figuratively, then, Leonard Cohen died when his father died. Indeed, Nadel claims that Nathan Cohen's death "was the central event of Cohen's youth and provided a rationale for his art" (6) — a rationale that explains the self-destructiveness of so much poetry by Cohen, especially throughout the 1970s. The death of his father also "sent him on a quest for a series of father/teachers" (Nadel 6) such as Layton. Layton was both "friend" and "father" according to the Nietzschean model of friendship that Donald Brown outlines (321, 325), and "There Are Some Men" suggests that Cohen's close relationships with older men were necessary for his artistic survival.

In its final stanza, the poem argues that it is less an obituary or "a mourning-song" (13) than "a naming of this mountain" (14), as if the dead father and his monument could be equated. The ostensible "naming" of the poem is ironic because the actual name of the elegized man — whether Nathan Cohen or Irving Layton — is never disclosed.

Cohen's decision not to name his actual father helps to protect his privacy and respect his family while his nameless allusion to his symbolic father both protects and promotes Layton. A celebrity can be known by style without being named, however, as Michel Foucault proved in his anonymity experiment in *Le Monde* in the early 1980s (Jaffe 50-52). By subverting the public's expectation of Layton's worst behaviour (because the list in the third stanza is in such contrast to Layton's loud-mouthed ranting, indiscriminate publishing, and numerous lovers), Cohen confirms his mentor's identity and celebrity while affirming Layton's figurative death — his state of having passed or being passé. By treading on "this mountain," Cohen confirms Layton's foundational influence but also his fixity.

The dialogue of poems with the father-son motif continued, though Cohen was not always the one to follow the other. In *The Spice-Box of Earth*, Cohen published "The Genius," an unsettling poem about Jewish victimization. Each stanza begins with the speaker claiming, "For you / I will be a . . . jew," with the ellipsis replaced by Jewish stereotypes: "ghetto" (2), "apostate" (9), "banker" (16), "Broadway" (21), and "doctor" (27). The final stanza exposes the horrible consequence of such repeated denigration: "For you / I will be a Dachau jew" (31-32). The evocation of a Nazi concentration camp is a chilling rejoinder to the rest of the poem.

Seven years later, an echo of "The Genius" appears in Layton's *The Shattered Plinths* in 1968. "For My Sons, Max and David" alludes to the 1967 Arab-Israeli war in addition to Layton's sons. Similarities with "The Genius" suggest that it offers advice not only to his actual sons but to his symbolic son, Cohen. Like "The Genius," "For My Sons, Max and David" lists all kinds of stereotypical Jews such as the "wandering Jew [and] the suffering Jew" (1), and the poem ends with a shocking turn. Assonance and an initial spondee in the last line intensify the shock as Layton begs Max and David, "Be none of these, my sons / My sons, be none of these / Be gunners in the Israeli Air Force" (36-38). Cohen could have construed this as pointed advice since he had supported the Arabs, not the Israelis, in the 1967 war (Nadel 196); he later changed his mind (Nadel 198). He also could have interpreted the poem as encouragement for his attention to Jewish history in "The Genius." Furthermore, as Trehearne suggested to me, the implicit warning to

Cohen is that he should avoid being known but poorly understood as a Jewish-victim stereotype.

As he does in a National Film Board documentary filmed in 1964, Layton continued to try helping Cohen to be properly understood. The film, entitled *Ladies and Gentlemen . . . Mr. Leonard Cohen* (1965), includes part of an interview hosted by Pierre Berton. The Layton-Cohen dialogue therein is poetic insofar as it is metaphoric and exemplary of the rivalry in their actual poems. In the clip, Layton tries to speak for Cohen. When Cohen says to Berton that he seeks a "state of grace" akin to the freedom of "an escaped ski," Berton interrupts and demands an explanation. Layton then interrupts to say, "What Cohen is trying to do right now is to preserve the self, that's his real concern, and I think that is the concern of every poet: to preserve the self in a world that is rapidly steamrollering the selves out of existence and establishing a uniform world." In contrast, the subtle tension between Layton and Cohen is gone — or has changed in mood — when they appear on film again together, sixteen years later, in Harry Rasky's *Song of Leonard Cohen* (1980). In that film, Layton flatters Cohen. His stridency becomes sweetness; his serious precision becomes ham-fistedly decorative (an impression reinforced by his flamboyantly striped blazer and the conspicuous medal around his neck).

In *Ladies and Gentlemen . . . Mr. Leonard Cohen*, both Layton and Cohen contribute to the intensity of their discussion with Berton, but their styles are very different, even competitive. Cohen, for instance, does not want to "do the commentary" as Layton does; rather, he wants to express himself poetically with a metaphor, the "escaped ski" related to sainthood ("grace") that later appears in *Beautiful Losers* (1966). Not willing to be outdone, Layton responds more confrontationally and uses his "steamroller" metaphor as the support for, rather than the substance of, his idea. Cohen's rhetoric is tangential and — to Berton — irritatingly playful, but Layton's rhetoric is direct, perfectly suited to a sound bite and to instruction. Layton is speaking to his generation to explain Cohen, whereas Cohen is speaking to the younger generation, which watches somewhere beyond the cameras. His refusal to explain himself at Berton's insistence is provocative and demonstrates the generation gap that would dim Layton's celebrity in the coming years.

Ladies and Gentlemen . . . Mr. Leonard Cohen had begun as a film about Layton, Cohen, Earle Birney, and Phyllis Gotlieb, but it became

the first major example of Cohen's celebrity — to the exclusion of the other poets. Rather than squabble over the film's emphasis, Layton focussed on the cause of his fading celebrity and "explained the puzzling centrality of Leonard Cohen in the filmed tour of 1964 as the result of Layton's too-frequent appearances before the public" (Cameron 371). Cohen evasively said (with detectable false modesty), "For some technical reason only the parts of the film that dealt with me seemed to have been good" (qtd. in Harris 28). The "technical reason" was that Cohen appealed to the media — unlike the less sexy older poets — because of the novelty of the burgeoning youth culture, a culture that contributed to the "great boom of young poets [that] began in 1964" (Dudek 117). The filming of *Ladies and Gentlemen . . . Mr. Leonard Cohen* and this "boom" are significantly coincidental milestones of that year.

Arguably, when Layton realized that his celebrity was actually fading, his work became deliberately more outrageous, angry, and misogynistic; perhaps the best example is the maniacally rancorous *The Laughing Rooster* (1964). It contains evidence that Layton thought he could heighten or at least maintain his profile by associating himself with someone of comparable celebrity. "Portrait of a Genius" is a portrait of Cohen; as its title suggests, it is laudatory, but it is also ironic. Layton emphasizes his playful friendship with Cohen by teasing him with a flattering comparison to "Leonardo" (1) da Vinci. By celebrating or ironizing Cohen, Layton implies that he is also either a genius or someone with sufficient taste to recognize one. Layton argues that Cohen might be leading but they are "taking turns winning" (10); he is not falling more than "one game" (11) behind Cohen.

"Portrait of a Genius" catalogues Cohen's flaws: "the cold green glitter of his eyes" (16), which implies that Layton thought Cohen was jealous ("green") of his poems (such as "The Cold Green Element," which Cohen had imitated in "Elegy"); his juvenile narcissism, as when he "crawls under the bed / to stare at himself in the mirror. / It reflects only his boyhood teeth" (25-27); Layton's paranoia about being undone, revealed in his wariness of the United Nations because he finds its "initials [UN] inauspicious" (32); and his obsession with sex and poetry, as when he "seduces women with words / and vice versa" (34-35). Ironically, all these flaws can also be attributed to Layton, who knows of what he speaks.

The poem ends by predicting that the passing of youth will "wipe

away [Cohen's] boyhood smile, / leaving only the blank terror staring from the wall" (57-58). In other words, Cohen's hidden ("under the bed") narcissism will become "blank terror" instead of pleasure; his youthful mirrored image will transform with age into something unknown and closer to death. Like the list of Cohen's flaws, this prediction might describe Layton in his life in 1964 — a "captive of [his] own image" — as much as it describes Cohen in the future.

Layton usually wrote his poems and published them very soon afterward, so the early drafts that became "Portrait of a Genius" – which had an unusually long gestation of three years — suggest that Layton was seriously concerned about Cohen's future and could wait until the opportune moment to deliver his advice. These manuscripts exist in several versions among Layton's archived papers at Concordia University's Vanier Library. The drafts for "Portrait of a Genius" and "Alexander Trocchi, Novelist" (from *Balls for a One-Armed Juggler*) appear on the same leaves, often on the same page. The proximity of these drafts (which are tentatively dated 1962 in the library's catalogue, though another manuscript at the University of Saskatchewan is listed as 1961) shows that Layton was thinking of Cohen while criticizing the superficiality of the art that Alexander Trocchi produced to endorse drug use. Trocchi was a Scottish novelist and painter who moved to the United States in 1956 and became a notorious heroin addict. In 1961, he was charged with giving drugs to a minor; if he had been convicted, he might have faced the death penalty (Scott 88). Out on bail, Trocchi demonstrated the use of drugs on nationwide American television and — seemingly to no one's surprise but his own — had to flee from the FBI. He escaped into Montreal with a stolen passport (Scott 90-92). According to Andrew Murray Scott, his biographer, Trocchi was met at Montreal's central station by the "young, virtually unknown poet, Leonard Cohen" (92). According to Nadel, Trocchi gave opium to Cohen, who temporarily "went blind" and then "fainted" (100). A few days later, Trocchi returned to Scotland by ship. Layton's poem in response to this event was surely a veiled warning to Cohen about the danger of mistaking drugs for more authentic forms of inspiration. Such a suggestion is quite contrary to what Layton calls his "favourite saying" (32): "Leonard, are you sure you're doing the wrong thing?" This question appears in Rasky's memoir of his film on Cohen, *The Song of Leonard Cohen: Portrait of a Poet, a Friendship and a Film* (2001)

and also appears as "Layton's Question" in Cohen's *Book of Longing* (2006).

Cohen did seem sure; his poem in *Flowers for Hitler* on the topic of Trocchi — "Alexander Trocchi, Public Junkie, Priez Pour Nous" — casts Trocchi in the role of a public saint in Montreal. Trocchi's prayers might help to save Cohen from the fate of other poets, who "work bankers' hours / retire to wives and fame-reports" (6-7). If Layton had been implicitly advising Cohen to stay out of trouble (advice that might only have been possible in the reflective form of poetry — certainly not in the sound bite about "doing the wrong thing"), Cohen is lamenting that too many poets remain at a distance from their work, their wives, and their fame or celebrity. If Cohen chooses a side in this debate, he chooses that of Trocchi, the side of being *in* trouble (and in public). His appreciation for the "Junkie" is not simply for the abuser of drugs but also for the "Public" status of that abuse; it becomes an act of rebellion against a culture of strictly scheduled "bankers' hours."

Flowers for Hitler is in dialogue with Layton about Trocchi and also contains a portrait of Layton that is analogous to his "Portrait of a Genius." "For My Old Layton" interprets Cohen's mentor with the same unforgiving but mythologizing judgement that Layton had bestowed upon the younger poet, but unlike "Portrait of a Genius," it cannot be so easily read as a poem about its own author. Cohen fashions Layton into an alley cat and writes that the "town saluted him with garbage / which he interpreted as praise" (7-8). Arguing that the cat misinterpreted insult ("garbage," including "Orange peels / cans, [and] discarded guts" [9-10]) as "praise," Cohen appropriates the image of the orange-peeling crowd that surrounded the dead poet in Layton's "The Cold Green Element."

The imagery also suggests that Layton's poems have an origin in "pain" (1) that has been "unowned" (1) or unacknowledged by his audience, which has misinterpreted him. The poem concludes by turning the cat into a crafty, daring, insolent outcast — an artist and philosopher who once "envied" (14) a live audience but now prefers the one found among the "monument[s]" (15) in the cemetery. The cat is "drunk / to know how close he lived to the breathless / in the ground" (16-18). As in "To I.P.L.," Cohen insinuates that "the old [and] the children of the town" (19) are Layton's main audience, along with sleeping drunkards (19) and the dead. Cohen suggests that Layton thrives on a love for

the marginal people in society; however, thes marginal audiences are unlikely to promote Layton's celebrity to the same level that Cohen would later reach, thanks to an audience of youth.

The conclusion to "For My Old Layton" is an act of homage with reservations. Like Layton's tall man, the poet here performs a feat by wearing "snakes" (24). Moreover, the sea-borne but "breathless" dead poet from "The Cold Green Element" resurfaces, but with different religious significance. When the tide goes out and reveals Layton's body, "the salt-bright atmosphere / like an automatic laboratory / [builds] crystals in his hair" (20-29). Layton's transformation into a monument of salt recalls the Biblical story of Lot's wife, who, escaping Sodom before God's wrath, looked back upon the city and was turned into a pillar of salt in punishment (Gen. 19:15-24). Cohen imagines Layton as a salt monument in a dried-up sea, a poet who escaped society but whose pity or interest compelled him to look backward and thereby crystallize into the one thing that he never wanted to be: an immovable object, something fixed. (Incidentally, Cohen had a bust of Layton on his writing desk in Greece [Nadel 214-15].) "For My Old Layton" argues that Layton would have been free if he had truly abandoned society; it is a balanced appraisal of the "crystal[lization]" of Layton's dynamic range.

Having seen Layton formulate and test on his career a theory of poetic freedom (with mixed results), Cohen seemed ready to disconnect from his mentor and pursue his own individuation. The society Cohen abandoned was Layton's. *Flowers for Hitler* was "a revolution of style for Cohen" (Ondaatje 39), and "Style" is its centerpiece. Asked in 1969 if he had styled himself after anybody, Cohen replied, "No, I wish there was someone I could style myself after. But when I came of age there were very few models around" (qtd. in Harris 27). In this statement, Cohen conspicuously omits Layton. Correspondingly, in *Flowers for Hitler,* Cohen asserts himself in a way that Layton could not have done. "Style" bears little resemblance to Layton's *style* in the sense of "the manner of expression characteristic of a particular writer" (*OED*); rather, Cohen suggests that he has internalized what he later calls a "style of freedom" (see below). This is arguably Layton's style of freedom; Cohen needed to substitute his own ironic assertion of poetic freedom.

The speaker insists, "I will forget my style / I will have no style" (17-18). What is significant about forgetting or losing one's style? According

to Dick Hebdige, style is a mark of distinction that provokes or disfigures a culture's established power (3); it is not merely fashion or "the manner of expression." Until the mid-1960s in North America, the culture's power belonged to established adults; however, style belonged to the youth. Whereas Layton wrote *In the Midst of My Fever* (1954), Cohen wrote "in the midst of my slavery" (9), possibly as a complaint about the oppressive influence of "Old Layton's" generation. Indeed, Cohen's concern was that "his" style was not really his and that it was not a new style but an old one; thus, if Hebdige is correct, what Cohen inherited from "Old Layton" was no longer style. Layton's counter-cultural stance was outdated; in a culture whose values had shifted, Layton's views were, in some ways, even less central than the latest, hippest counter-cultural fringe.

Readers might logically assume the speaker in "Style" is Cohen (born in 1934), who was in his "twenty eighth year" (35). The speaker does not "believe the radio stations / of Russia and America" (1-2) because the recent propaganda of Stalinism and McCarthyism had corrupted some people's trust in the media. The more immediate source of disbelief (or denial) was the Cuban missile crisis, which could have led, as John F. Kennedy warned, to a nuclear war and the "abyss of destruction" ("Forty"). Cohen's differentiation from Layton was also in crisis because he achieved stylistic originality at an apocalyptic historical junction that could make individuation meaningless; the prospect of artistic development during nuclear fallout is not much of a prospect. In *The Anxiety of Influence*, Bloom did not reflect on a scenario that could serve the ephebe such a catch-22.

In "Style," the speaker no longer trusts the older generation but does feel nostalgia for it. He expects to forget the grass on his mother's lawn (13), her telephone number (15), and his style (17, 28) because these memories connect him to his childhood. At the age of only twenty-eight, he begins to feel the erosion of his memory; this erosion mimics the sound of "a thousand miles of hungry static / and the old clear water eating rocks" (19-20). Signals fade, or they are actively destroyed. Nuclear holocaust, operating metonymically through radio, functions as the technology of forgetting. In "Style," the "early morning greedy radio eats / the governments one by one the languages / the poppy fields one by one" (41-43) without pausing to punctuate its gorging.

The radio heralds the destruction of culture as it is "eat[en]" by war. He claims that

> a silence develops for every style
> for the style I laboured on
> an external silence like the space
> between insects in a swarm (45-48)

The style he "laboured on" was Layton's, which Cohen now links to a bomb "aimed at us" (50) — at himself and his "brothers" (52). The "space / between insects in a swarm" is plural: they are spaces of silence and isolation amidst furious activity of carefully delineated and monitored radio frequencies or fissioning atoms. The enjambment between these two lines illustrates this space and accentuates the fearful, claustrophobic sense of encroachment of the poem's closing lines. Arguably, Layton's nuclear individualism left Cohen disoriented and lonely. The brotherhood motif that Cohen introduces here is a sign of his desire for inclusion.

Two years later, the ambivalence in Cohen's view of style becomes the impatience of youth in the prose poem "Here we are at the window" from *Parasites of Heaven*: "So long I've tried to give a name to freedom, today my freedom lost its name, like a student's room travelling into the morning with the lights on. Every act has its own style of freedom, whatever that means" (23). While Layton's most famous "whatever" is a confident declaration of one "style of freedom," Cohen's "whatever" is indifferent to that style and implies that he had ceased to trust Layton's belief in the poet's freedom. When the speaker says, "Freedom lost its name to the style with which things happen" (23), he seems to mean that the old "style of freedom" did not "[make] things happen." The old style — one based in Layton's individualism and on deference to Layton as teacher — figuratively imprisons Cohen in a "student's room" that seems like a prison cell. As Scobie argues, "This is the terrible force of Cohen's destruction of individuality: that he endorses it" (9). Cohen offsets the loss of individuality by resolving to join, on equal terms, the rebellious community of student-prisoners: "Brothers, each at your window, we are the style of so much passion, we are the order of style, we are pure style called to delight a fold of the sky" (23). Cohen began to realize that Layton's influential style and preoccupations were too idealistic: freedom could be theorized, but it was a fantasy. Conceding

the impossibility of achieving freedom (at least in Layton's pseudo-religious way), Cohen would later find inspiration in figurative slavery and imagined community in *The Energy of Slaves*.

Before then, however, Cohen published a bestseller and achieved a level of financial freedom that had eluded Layton. With the release of his *Selected Poems: 1956-1968* (1968), Cohen arrived at a level of poetic celebrity that has probably been unmatched since. The peak of his celebrity, of course, was not strictly owing to his poems but also to his music. He made his debut in 1967 at the Newport Folk Festival and on CBC-TV's *Camera Three* (Hutcheon 21-22). In 1978, Barbara Amiel wrote in *Maclean's*, "In 1967 Cohen released his first album, *Songs of Leonard Cohen,* and a cult of international dimensions was established" ("Leonard" 56). She states that by 1978 his books had been translated into eleven languages; he had sold over two million books and over nine million albums. Of his books, *Selected Poems* was notable for selling 700,000 copies in the United States alone ("Leonard" 56); Ondaatje states that it sold 200,000 in the first three months (5). In contrast, this is what Purdy said about his own *Selected Poems* (1972): "I think I once got $500 as an advance on a book of poetry and it has taken six years for my *Selected Poems* to sell 10,000 copies" (qtd. in Amiel, "Poetry" 50). He wryly noted in the same interview that his A-frame house in Ameliasburgh still did not have plumbing.

Even if we adjusted this comparison to account for the difference of four fiscal years in these statistics, Purdy's *Selected Poems* would not begin to approach the commercial success of Cohen's equivalent book. Similarly, Layton's breakthrough selection, *A Red Carpet for the Sun* (1959), "had sold 7,500 copies [by 1964]" (Cameron 369). By that measure, Purdy's book was more popular than Layton's, but Purdy had less claim to celebrity and far less interest in it. Regardless, all three poets were *popular*, in the sense of being "liked or admired by many people" (*OED*). In that sense (and as a celebrity), Cohen was unrivalled among Canadian poets by 1968. Layton's celebrity had mostly faded — despite strong book sales until the early 1970s (Cameron 425). Layton accepted a professorship at York University in 1969 (Cameron 382) and began travelling the world at every holiday (Cameron 379, 389); in that way he distanced himself somewhat from the Canadian media.

Instead of displaying happiness in response to his success, Cohen appeared militant and suicidal in *The Energy of Slaves* (1972). However,

even its seemingly harshest poems sometimes have moments of sensitivity and humour — such as its response to a poem Layton had published in 1963 in *Balls for a One-Armed Juggler*. Layton's "The Dazed Steer" describes an encounter between the poet (hypothetically Layton) and Norman Mailer (to whom it is dedicated): "He greeted me by saying: / 'What if I hit you in the belly?'" (1-2). The two writers stare at each other, and after a minute Mailer "turned his head / like a dazed steer" (8-9). The confrontation seems random, but Mailer and Layton are similar; both are ambitious, anti-establishmentarian Jewish celebrities. Even if they had never met, in "The Dazed Steer," Layton boosts his own status by naming and purportedly defeating Mailer. The poet's machismo, however, is not without sympathy: he implies that his indomitable gaze "had dealt [Mailer] a blow / from which he'd never recover" (11-12), but he also allows for the possibility that "someone or something" (10) else had hurt Mailer.

Of course, "he" might not have been intended as Mailer; however, Cohen reads the poem (as I do) on the assumption that Mailer is "The Dazed Steer" and that Layton is the poem's speaker. Whether Layton needs defending or not, Cohen brusquely steps forward in *The Energy of Slaves*:

> Dear Mailer
> don't ever fuck with me
> or come up to me
> and punch my gut (1-4)

This is precisely the threat in "The Dazed Steer." Cohen declares that he is "armed and mad" (6) and that if Mailer were to make him suffer, the retaliation would be harsh: "I will k—l you / and your entire family" (10-11). By implying that Layton needs someone to defend him, Cohen asserts that he is more powerful than his mentor. Because the poem begins in epistolary form, however, Cohen also suggests that he is not in the vicinity — and is nine years too late to help! Cohen's over-reaction is less shocking than parodic of Layton's machismo; it corroborates the assertion by Glass that "a virile masculinity bordering on caricature became central to the public image of celebrity authors" (18) in America. (I would extend this claim to Canada, though mainly in relation to poets, as I have explained above.) As if suggesting that Layton's caricature of himself in "The Dazed Steer" did not go far enough in character-

izing celebrity, Cohen acknowledges that Mailer might "humiliat[e]" (8) him; he expresses weakness, not aggression. Although Cohen seems to treat violence as if it were holy or unspeakable, by eliding the word *kill* he also implies that he is not so bold.

In responding to *The Energy of Slaves*, Layton worried that its expression of weakness might have been only a performance. Although writers customarily inscribe copies of their books for other people, Layton rather audaciously inscribed Cohen's copy of *The Energy of Slaves* to Cohen himself, insinuating surrogate authorship, though his advice was generous. He wrote, "what alone matters are the memorable words you leave behind. For power in these one must have the strength to be weak. . . . One must somehow — for talent, for immortality — name the strength (courage?) to be weak in one's own way" (qtd. in Nadel 188, 304). He implies that poems can turn weakness into strength, memorable words, and immortality. Although he had revealed weakness in his "own way" — even in his Nietzschean poems of the 1950s — and despite his pessimism, Layton's vitality had suggested an optimism; he had probably never anticipated a drama of self-destructiveness as extended or distressing as *The Energy of Slaves*.

The book supplants love poems with grotesque anti-poems that seem to suggest a new historical age had begun — one that debases poetry. In "The poems don't love us anymore," the speaker says that he sees poems "half-rotten half-born . . . / lying down in their jelly / to make love with the tooth of a saw" (18-22). The poems, he suggests, are aborted fetuses that were discarded by their unloving parents (authors); these fetuses "don't want to love us [and] / . . . don't want to be poems" (2-3). Apparently disgusted with "all the flabby liars / of the Aquarian Age" (35-36) in "How we loved you," Cohen suggests that the Aquarian-Age culture of peace and love is naïve. Thus, in "You tore your shirt," the speaker stares at someone's injured breast or exposed heart, and says,

> I put my hand
> on what I saw
> I drew it back
> It was a claw (5-8)

The poem concludes by suggesting that the poet is a dangerous animal, kept in a cage by those he had wounded.

Ironically, Cohen might have been inspired in "You tore your shirt"

by a feedback loop that came from himself through Layton. In Layton's *Nail Polish* (1971), "I Can Sleep Beside My Lady" is dedicated "After Leonard Cohen" and is a pastiche of style and imagery from Cohen's poems such as "The Sparrows," "Lovers," "Give me back my fingerprints," and "Ballad." In "I Can Sleep Beside My Lady," Layton appropriates Cohen's distinctive confessional mode to suggest that the speaker is a wolf-man (like Cohen's "claw[ed]" man above) whose "lady" was "mutilated" (1) while he was "marooned in the movies" (9) with "rabbis and angels" (26). The poem implies that violent consequences and "lonel[iness]" (34) will follow the loss of religion ("rabbis") to popular culture ("the movies"). Layton also implies that the speaker is complicit in the violence against her: "I who might have saved her / was hungry for the whisper / of her matted hair" (16-18). Although "I Can Sleep Beside My Lady" does little to anticipate Cohen's future styles, it correctly predicts that Cohen's disappearance into the theatres of popular culture would have dire consequences. Layton intuited that Cohen would blame himself for the alienation and loss of love that coincided with his focus on popular culture and his own celebrity; later, Cohen's "The Price of This Book" would confirm Layton's hunch.

In 1978, Layton's and Cohen's new books shared a structural similarity. In Layton's "Thoughts on Titling My Next Book 'Bravo, Layton'" from *The Covenant* (1978), he writes a poem that he had essentially written many times before. It is a self-congratulatory attack on all the inferior people who will one day realize his magnificence; however, the poem is also highly ironic. He caps the self-parody by claiming, "I'm too stupendously great / to have any / rival poets" (19-21), but he admits that the only way he can now earn accolades is by embedding self-congratulation in a book title that others would have to read aloud. Without the giveaway of the joke in the title, the poem could be mistaken for many others that Layton wrote after the early 1960s.

The following poem in *The Covenant* is "Review of 'Bravo, Layton,'" which criticizes the previous poem and its hypothetical book in comic anticipation of his reviewers' reactions. The hypothetical reviewers catalogue all of Layton's flaws (except the difficult subject of his sexism) and call him a "vastly over-rated author" (16). After some debate, the reviewers wonder whether they should "call only for 'Two Boos for Layton'" (35), and in the final lines, they seem to hope "that we've left in our readers' ears / the sound of only one hand clapping" (40-41). The

reviewers appear to believe that they have been too critical of Layton, and so they moderate their "Two Boos" (or more) with a parody of endorsement, "one hand clapping."

Ending with a silly reference to the best-known Buddhist koan ("What is the sound of only one hand clapping?"), Layton alludes to Cohen (*koan* sounds like *Cohen*) and his monastic Buddhist training, which also has a notable role in *Death of a Lady's Man* (1978). Although *The Covenant* and *Death of a Lady's Man* were both published in 1978, Cohen had submitted his manuscript to his publisher in 1976 as *My Life in Art* and, to Jack McClelland's consternation, had continued to revise it (Nadel 219-21). Layton might have seen the revised manuscript or heard from Cohen about its structure; unfortunately, neither Layton nor Cohen tended to date their manuscripts, so establishing a definite chronological relationship between the texts of the two men is likely to remain impossible in this case. In its revised version, *Death of a Lady's Man* has commentaries (written by a fictional editor) that are similar to "Review of 'Bravo, Layton,'" thereby suggesting the possibility that Layton — now rather post-celebrity — developed a willingness to critique himself more plainly than usual in response to *Death of a Lady's Man*.

Two prose poems in that book reveal Cohen's sense of identity at the time of his symbolic retirement from celebrity. In "The Price of This Book," the author appears to be trying to prevent or stop the fusion of his public and private selves by appealing to the reader: "I am ashamed to ask for your money. Not that you have not paid more for less. You have. You do. But I need it to keep my different lives apart. Otherwise I will be crushed when they join, and I will end my life in art, which a terror will not let me do" (168). If the "terror" is the same one that Layton's "Portrait of a Genius" predicted Cohen would face (see above), it is the fear of death — a fear that might prevent celebrity from "crush[ing]" the literary longevity of a "life in art." By selling "this book," he gains readers (not fans of his music); he hopes to gain a literary recognition that will outlast his celebrity. Cohen's role as *poet* — such an unlikely vehicle for celebrity — is paramount.

"How to Speak Poetry" also deals with the author's relationship with the audience, which is by now a familiar problem from "A Tall Man Executes a Jig" and other poems by Layton. The speaker of "How to Speak Poetry" addresses a poet in a mediatized world of violent "news-

reels" (196) whose lifestyle on the "stage" (197) starkly contrasts with that of his comparatively underfed and victimized audience. The speaker proposes that the poet is "among the people" (197) and has "nothing to teach" (197) them, but he must also convey his love of "privacy" (197) and end his celebrity.

The speaker, however, takes the role of celebrity and its Zarathustrian pseudo-religious didacticism by trying to teach the poet. The speaker embraces him: "come into my arms. You are the image of my beauty" (199). The implied heredity in the shared "image" and some of the final advice — "Do not be afraid to be weak" (199) — recall Layton and his advice in his aforementioned inscription in *The Energy of Slaves*. But the speaker is not exactly Layton; he might be a Buddhist teacher because he asks and answers a koan: "What is the expression which the age demands? The age demands no expression whatever" (196). The answer confirms Cohen's "anti-poetic" (Ondaatje 43) stance but also affirms the Buddhist tradition of meditative silence. Furthermore, the speaker's mention of "the word butterfly" (196) and "a sunny day or a field of daffodils" (196) seems to allude to a haiku by Soseki Natsume, translated by Harry Behn in *Cricket Songs* (1964): "Butterfly, these words / From my brush are not flowers, / Only their shadows" (1-3). In this haiku, the reader is the naïve butterfly and the poet is a source of light, a teacher. Cohen might have chosen to allude to this haiku for its Japanese connotations, and they might also have reminded him of Layton's images of "butterflies" (28) and "Buddhas" (30) in "The Fertile Muck" (1956). Another reason for this allusion is that the haiku envisions the poet as the sun or its replacement. Just as Layton did in so many of his poems, Cohen associates celestial symbolism with his mentor and seems to transfer that symbolism to his Buddhist master, Roshi, or to himself as both an autodidact and a perpetual student.

By the time of *Death of a Lady's Man* and the late-1970s end of "star-making" (Messenger 944) in Canadian poetry, Layton and Cohen had diverged as poets. Unlike Layton, Cohen wanted to define freedom in terms of brotherhood and not Nietzschean individualism. Layton had adjusted to life after celebrity and was able to deal lightheartedly with his age and declining fame. He was dismissed by some as repetitive and became known for his sexism (as did Cohen, to a lesser extent); these criticisms eventually eclipsed Layton's complexities. As a teacher, Layton's rhetoric was powerful and flexible, but he eventually recog-

nized that "some poets there are who can switch from one form to the other . . . but I'm simply not one of them" (qtd. in Cameron 400); in contrast, Cohen significantly altered his style, form, or genre with every book after *The Spice-Box of Earth*. Ironically, Cohen's relative freedom was the result of his willingness to accept (as Layton could not) a lack of freedom from the public and to reject (in general) the pedantic aspects of pseudo-religiosity. By conceding his limitations more obviously than Layton did, Cohen created possibilities — and, seemingly, a more enduring appeal.

Remarkably, most of the features of the two poets' reciprocal influence appear in their poetic dialogues, which also predict each other's development; their public debate included many implications about the fashioning and consequences of celebrity. In "To I.P.L.," Cohen expressed reservations about the "zarathustrian" didacticism and overplayed machismo that might have alienated Layton from his broader audience. Cohen extended Layton's irony by incorporating these features into his own poetry with an emphasis on the poet's weakness. Always vigilant, Layton seemed to foresee the transfer of his celebrity in "My Eyes Are Wide Open," and implicitly advised Cohen in "For My Sons Max and David" (and, somewhat differently, in "Alexander Trocchi, Novelist") to beware of being stereotyped instead of being genuinely understood. Meanwhile, Cohen acknowledged in "There Are Some Men" that Layton was a great mentor and father-figure; however, Cohen later realized that he needed to develop the "style of freedom" that would liberate him from the fixity and repetition of his "Old Layton's" "automatic laboratory" of poetic composition.

Regardless of criticisms from his symbolic son, Layton remained sympathetic to "Leonardo" and tried to teach him to be prepared for the "terror" of being forgotten in old age. Even in *The Energy of Slaves*, Cohen subtly chided Layton for extending the role of the "young buck" beyond his prime; as a comic but poignant acknowledgment of mutual weakness in "Dear Mailer," Cohen playfully offered to protect Layton when the gravest danger related to Layton's celebrity had passed. For Cohen, however, the danger persisted, and in "I Can Sleep Beside My Lady," Layton intuited that Cohen's embrace of popular culture would tear him from his personal relationships and literalize the martyrdom implied in his pseudo-religious persona. Regardless of whether *Death of a Lady's Man* or "Review of 'Bravo, Layton'" was the first to offer

self-directed commentary, Layton seemed to be challenging Cohen to parody himself without so much angst. Although Cohen was an apt pupil, he never fully learned that lesson.

Cohen's relentless deconstruction of himself in *Death of a Lady's Man* was an implicit rejection of the problematic masculinity (e.g., the role of the "lady's man") and the patriarchal lineage of celebrity that he had accepted largely because of Layton. Although the "line of inheritance" between these poets has been a subject of debate (Ravvin 111), it is unquestionably in evidence in their poetic dialogue. Through that dialogue, Cohen formulated the reasons for his rejection of that lineage — and then cut the line short. As Norman Ravvin observes, Cohen never seemed to choose or attract a figurative heir (120). Instead, Cohen exercised his freedom to choose no one; ironically, his ability to do so was made possible by his skepticism about Layton's Nietzschean religious pretense and its paradoxical you-can-have-it-all freedom. In both senses of the phrase, Cohen *grew out of* the masculinity and the religious pretense of literary celebrity: he developed through that tradition, arguably matured, and then saw that it did not fit — not exactly. His next books are profoundly religious and masculine, but the strain of celebrity is not in them.

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