



The Mourning of John Lennon

By *Anthony Elliott*

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The Mourning of John Lennon By Anthony Elliott

Loss and mourning loom over John Lennon's life and legacy. Since his tragic death in 1980, he has embodied our culture's feelings of loss; he has become an object of mourning, of fantasy, of desire. Lennon himself created an aesthetic vocabulary for dealing with loss, pain, and loneliness that is unparalleled in modern times. His personal crises reflect core dimensions of modern social experience, in particular transformations affecting sexuality, masculinity, identity, and fatherhood. In this provocative account, Anthony Elliott places Lennon's life and career in its social context, examining the ways the ex-Beatle has come to symbolize an entire culture's struggle to mourn.

Elliott interweaves broad-ranging discussions of celebrity, pop music, politics, feminism, psychoanalysis, and postmodernism with in-depth analyses of Lennon's life and art. Beginning with a brilliant reading of Albert Goldman's bestselling biography, he moves to the loneliness and pain of Lennon's childhood, developing a powerful analysis of songs such as "Strawberry Fields Forever" and "I Am the Walrus." From "Help" to "Mother" to "I'm Losing You," he contends that a consistent exploration of pain and loss in the wider emotional and political world is evident in the body of Lennon's works.

Elliott explores the complex, contradictory role of love in Lennon's life, with a particular focus on the themes of guilt and grief, sexuality and desire. He gives careful attention to Lennon's personal relationships—from his marriage to Cynthia Powell to his extraordinary romance with Yoko Ono. Elliott also offers a fresh consideration of Lennon's commitment to radical politics and world peace; a detailed account of his withdrawal from public life and his time as a house-husband in the late 1970s; and an examination of the postmodern, hi-tech "reunion" of The Beatles in 1994, in which John Lennon magically returned from the dead for the recording of "Free as a Bird" and "Real Love."

By exploring the ways we remember Lennon—from the endless repackaging of his music to the more serious reappraisals of his significance in contemporary culture—we come to see this modern icon, as well as ourselves, in a new and different light.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Ambivalence in John Lennon's life and work is a primary theme in Elliott's self-described "metabiography," but it also applies to the author's attempt to "uncover some of the implications Lennon's assault on the ideology of celebrity carries for our personal and political lives." Elliott, a political scientist at the University of Melbourne and author of *Psychoanalytic Theory: An Introduction* (Blackwell, 1994), uses psychoanalytic, cultural, and critical theory to examine the way Lennon melded his music, politics, and view of celebrity. Elliott develops some insightful discussions, but obscure writing, some factual errors, and a reliance on secondary source material undermine his authority. Discussion of Lennon's intimate relationships are consciously limited to key women in his life, but it is hard to consider any treatment of his losses complete without an examination of the death of original Beatle Stuart Sutcliffe. Well intentioned but ultimately an optional purchase. ALloyd Jansen, Stockton-San Joaquin Cty. P.L., CA
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From the Inside Flap

"*The Mourning of John Lennon* is the deepest and most thoughtful book on popular culture and the culture of celebrity to appear in a long time. It explores Lennon's emotional and artistic complexity with rare insight and intelligence. Desire and fear, freedom and pain, irony and nostalgia, rebellion and loss are analyzed not only in Lennon's life and work, but also in the generation that grew up with him."—Jon Wiener, author of *Come Together*

"John Lennon's death has left an appreciation of loss. Yet, through Elliott's book, we recover a powerful sense of those qualities—honesty and idealism, irreverence and excitement—that Lennon represented while he was alive. It's a story we should take heart from."—Paul Du Noyer, author of *We All Shine On*

From the Back Cover

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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