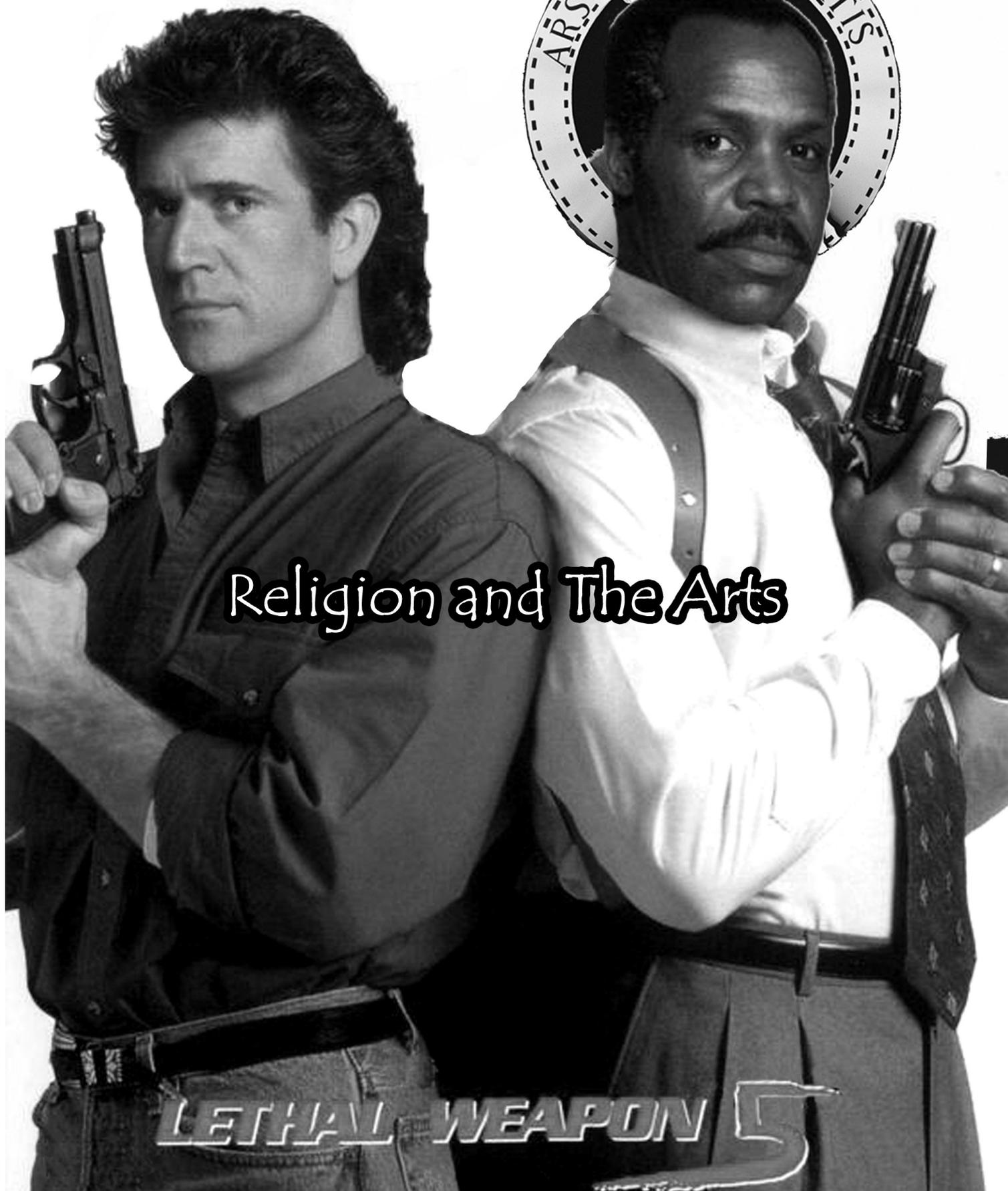


# Radix

March 2004



## Religion and The Arts

LETHAL WEAPON 5

# Editor's Message

Welcome to the "Religion and the Arts" issue of the Radix. Down through history, the relationship between art and religion (and the controversial definitions thereof) has sometimes been highly symbiotic. Sometimes, however, the two have opposed each other vehemently – even bloodily. On one end of the spectrum are devout sects who attempt to lead entire lives completely free from the tempting "evils" of art, including musical instruments, literature, and the visual arts. On the other end are people like my husband (an artist) who, when I asked him if he had any opinion on Religion and the Arts, said, "What's the difference?" For him, the act of creating, whether it is a song, a sculpture, or a piece of writing is so identical to worship and so central to what it means to have the "image of God" within him that he sees the separation of art and religion as not only negative, but impossible!

In this issue, McGill students express a variety of viewpoints on where art and religion meet ... or collide. One collision of the past that may, in some ways, have proved fortunate is the one between Islam and the making of images. Due to a strong desire to avoid idol worship, the prohibition of image-making in Islam has given rise to some of the most breathtaking calligraphy and poetry in the world. The dandelion of human creativity found a way to flourish through a crack in the sidewalk of prohibition!

I think that if a dichotomy *must* be drawn up between religion on the one hand and "art" on the other, it needn't be a good-versus-bad division where one is forced to choose a side. I see religion and the arts as *yin* and *yang* expressions of the relationship between humanity and Divinity. I'm reminded of the imagery of the English poet, printmaker, and visionary, William Blake. His "Songs of Innocence" and "Songs of Experience" do not depict the holy *versus* the profane. They rather depict the holiness of God *and* the profanity of God, accepting the mystery that images of the dangerous and uncontrollable tiger are as apt for the Divine as are images of the pure and gentle lamb. If organized religion (in its better moments) represents the lamb of time-honoured tradition and trusted orthodoxy, then the



Tiger of dissent and prophecy. The (effective) priests, monks, rabbis, and Scripture-interpreters in our society are those who hand down the sacred from what is old. The (effective) artists, musicians, poets, and authors in our society proclaim the sacred from what is new. Of course, these differing perspectives lead to cataclysmic clashes sometimes!

The art-religion clash in most recent North American memory might be Andres Serrano's 1989 series of photographs of a crucifix suspended in urine (pictured here). Naturally, shock and indignation quickly spread, and not only within Christian churches. Yet, Serrano maintains to this day that his work raised legitimate theological questions, such as why a bodily fluid was less respectful a medium than some of the harsh photographic emulsions and paints, if it produced the desired visual effect. (The images, viewed in colour, were admittedly gorgeous!) One of his points was that if the God of Genesis created everything (and pronounced it "very good"), and was immanent in every atom of creation as Christian doctrine teaches, then the reasons viewers were annoyed by the urine were other than Christian reasons. Of course, not all devotees were persuaded. Sceptics remain convinced that, if post-modern art has any message at all, it is simply to shock.

My father-in-law, at our recent trip to the National Gallery in Ottawa, shared my great admiration for the Group of Seven. However, my attempts to convince him of the value of less "accessible" pieces such as "Voice of Fire" and some of the cubist paintings met with his recurring comment: "Art' is in the eye of the beholder!"

That said, I hope your eye enjoys beholding this issue, from our "Passionate" film reviews to our call for the "Art of Food" on McGill campuses! As always, we invite your responses and submissions to [radix@yours.com](mailto:radix@yours.com).

~ Sara Parks Ricker, editor

We are: Sara Parks Ricker editor and layout & Esha Bhandari Hindu rep & Loren Carle Protestant rep & Rachel Charlop-Powers Jewish and Religious Studies rep & Laura Gallo agnostic rep & Nina Kim Catholic rep & Bruno Mastronardi Pagan rep & Indi Samarajiva cover design and Buddhist rep & Rabia Tahir Muslim rep & YOU if you don't see your faith perspective represented!!!

*Radix* is by McGill students for McGill students, so the **views expressed are those of our contributors** and are not (necessarily) shared by McGill Chaplaincy Services or its

We're proud to be printing on **recycled paper**. Unless you have a *Radix* collection (which would be kind of neat), please double the recycling by handing this newsletter on to a friend.

"Hey, farmer farmer! Put away that DDT now. Give me spots on my apples, but leave me the birds and the bees ... Please!"  
~ Joni Mitchell

#### Submission Guidelines:

We welcome student articles, art, reviews, responses, photos, comics, and poetry. (Artwork must be accessible in black-and-white or grayscale.) Article length is usually about **500 words**. Submissions may be edited for length and style. Contributors retain copyright, but *Radix* retains the right to reprint submissions in our (eventual) online archives.

April's *Radix* theme is "**Religion and Scholarship.**"

Any thoughts on the marriage (or divorce) of the church and the academy? Any thoughts on the relationship between our spirits and our brains?

All faith perspectives are welcome.

Submit art and articles to

[radix@yours.com](mailto:radix@yours.com)

Submission deadline: **March 30th**

## Film Screening:

“Women and Men Unglued”

Could the 21st century be the age when the sexes go their separate ways?

This film takes an uncensored look at single urban Gen Xers in a time when gender, marriage, and singleness are on the brink of major change.

Director/writer Katherine Gilday won critical acclaim for *The Famine Within* and has written many other successful documentary films.

The screening will take place Wednesday, March 24th at 6:30 PM in room 151 of the Bronfman building.

A panel discussion by McGill chaplains and students will follow.

This event is free for all students.

# The Art of Food

The printing press is convenient ... but the quality of calligraphy has sure gone downhill. The photograph was a fabulous invention ... but representational painting took a major dive. The photographic developer saves a heck of a lot of time ... but hardly anyone knows the subtleties of hand-processing anymore. The monolithic company about to take over all food services at McGill might be cheaper, but...

Contracting out all on-campus cafeteria services to a single provider (in other words, creating a monopoly) is pretty obviously going to eliminate concern for such things as diversity, health, vegan options, environmental concerns, creativity, and competition. What other kinds of things will such a contract jeopardize? Muslim communal meals after Ramadan fast, IVCF hot cocoa at the bookstore, student fundraising initiatives like the Newman Centre's samosa sales, refreshments at student events, the Rabbit Hole Café, the Midnight Kitchen, the Organic Food Coop, etc, etc, etc!

Luckily, “CAFS” (Coalition for Food Services on Campus) has formed. This umbrella group links several student organizations, threatened cafeteria operators, various faculties, and anyone else interested in retaining freedom of choice about what we eat.

Our society has already moved so far from the artistry and care that once went into the making and enjoyment of food. MUST the trend continue here at McGill? Email [cafsquestions@mcgilleus.ca](mailto:cafsquestions@mcgilleus.ca) if you'd like to help prevent the death of the art of food at McGill.

*~ a concerned student who happens to think that both art and religion have little positive to say about big-business monopolies*

# It's All Christian Music

I'm a singer-songwriter and recently recorded my first CD with 12 original songs on it. The CD is a combination of (Christian) religious material and secular material. I find I can sing my “Christian” songs to people within my religious community quite easily, whereas I try to present solely my secular material to those individuals whose religious beliefs I don't know or who would not share my own. I also tend to restrict my secular songs to officially secular venues and groups. For example, I played songs about love and emotions at a Hindu festival, *Divali*, this past fall, but I played songs with Bible verses in them at the Newman Catholic Student Centre's coffee house this winter.

Does this versatility make me a better Christian? I'm not sure. In a way, people who buy my CD and listen to all of the tracks at least once are exposed to both the Christian and secular material. This could be a way of “evangelising” or promoting interfaith dialogue as a listener enters into my Christian worldview through my songs. On the other hand, Christians listening to my more secular songs may find that I do not always carry their Christian expectations into each area of my life. For example one of my songs, “The Panther,” is a description of how I felt trapped “like a panther in a cage” on first moving to Montreal four years ago. It speaks to the wild, passionate heart that I felt was more easily expressible in the country hometown I moved from. At times I think the angst suggested in the song can be defined as both emotional and sexual in nature. Sometimes, Christians prefer to remain quiet about sexual feelings in order to not tempt themselves to sin by suggestiveness, so I feel more inclined to play material that will not be controversial to the audience at hand.

“Ring the bells that still can ring.  
Forget your perfect offering.  
There is a crack in everything.  
That's how the light gets in.”

~ Leonard Cohen, Anthem

I am also conscious of not offending secular audiences. An example of this is a political song about prostitution that is on my CD. I categorize it as Christian as I am confident that most Christian audiences would agree with me on the content, even if the topic might raise some eyebrows. I have refrained from playing it at more inclusive events as I take a definite stance in the song, encouraging street-workers to find a better way of life even if they feel trapped in the system of supply and demand of sexual favours. I know there are many people who believe that prostitution is as good a life's business as any other and provides much-needed wages to the people in the industry. To avoid confrontation and disagreement, I haven't attempted to play this song, “The Corner,” for a non-Christian crowd. However, I am not sure whether I can continue to compartmentalize my songs so easily. For me, *all* my songs speak to my religious faith as I struggle to confront *every* issue in my life from a Christian stance. In this way, even the most mundane topic becomes a question of where my God is working within the situation. I feel the need to negotiate the so-called “secular” areas of life - such as sexual desire and rejection - with the Christian ideals of sexual purity and holiness. Just as I aspire to goodness but often fail, I think my Christian and secular music describes both my ideals and temptations.

~ Jessica Worden

Jessica is a U3 Arts student majoring in Canadian History and minoring in World Religions.



# Sufism, Islam, and Art

Dear Radix,

The article I am submitting is about Sufism. Sufi poetry is the closest thing to art that Islam has, but it is a wonderful and beautiful thing. I first became interested in Sufism about a year ago and I would like for people to know more about this spiritual aspect of Islam, especially today when so many lies are written about our religion.

This is an article I found on the net, which I thought explained Sufism very well, and also a poem by Rumi, the famous Persian Sufi poet. I'm sorry it's such a small contribution (you know how it is with the midterms right after spring break).

I would also like to thank Rabia for all she does on the Radix as Muslim rep. We need more people like her at McGill!

~ Jouman El-Asmar



"No, I would not give you false hope on this strange and mournful day, but the mother and child reunion is only a motion away." ~ Paul Simon

## Introduction to Sufism: Islamic Mysticism

The pursuit of truth is a quest pursued no matter how difficult the path. For the most important truths, the way may be arduous indeed.

*Tasawouf*, or Sufism, is the esoteric school of Islam founded on the pursuit of spiritual truth as a definite goal to attain: the truth of understanding reality as it truly is, and so achieving "*ma'arefat*" (knowledge). In Sufism, when we speak of understanding or cognition, we refer to a self-understanding that leads to understanding of the Divine. This very logical principle is based on a typically succinct saying of Prophet Mohammed: "Whoever knows oneself, knows one's Lord."

The origins of Sufism can be traced to the heart of Islam in the time of the Prophet, whose teachings attracted a group of scholars who came to be called "*ahle suffe*," the People of Suffe, from their practice of sitting at the platform of the mosque of the Prophet in Medina. There they engaged in discussions concerning the reality of Being. Then, in search of an inner path, they devoted themselves to spiritual purification and meditation.

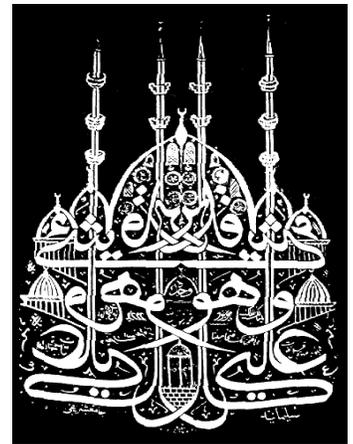
The "*ahle suffe*" believed that it was a unique human privilege to be able to find a way to understand the Divine. As the cognitive tools of ordinary mental logic are limited in their ability to comprehend such an all-embracing subject, discussions based on language alone cannot open the door to understanding Divine reality. Instead, such a path of understanding necessitates spiritual striving, the understanding and the knowledge of the heart, in its quest to realize the existence of the Divine. Such an approach separates Sufis from philosophers, and indeed from any other group of scholars whose knowledge is founded upon traditions, words, assumptions, and the imagination instead of the actual and direct understanding of all that exists. Thus the path of Sufis was separate from that of traditional Muslim understanding. They became the people of the "*tariqh*," or "the way;" their particular goal was to understand and introduce the *esoteric* aspect of Islam, as opposed to its *exoteric* public elements.

The principles of Sufism are based on the teachings of the Qur'an and the instructions of the Prophet. To a Sufi there is no gulf of separation between all of Being, the Creator, and His creations. That the multitude cannot perceive this fundamental unity is the result of the impurity of "nafs" (ego) and the limitations of the material tools that mankind possesses. If humans were free from the limitations of matter, then they would surely witness this immense and eternal unity of Being. But there is a chance for us to ascend to such a level of understanding, a pathway through purification and meditation. When one's heart is purified, the manifestations of the Divine are reflected in the mirror of the heart. Only then may one ascend from the level of our material nature to the level of the true human being.

Since all the principles that underlie the instructions of Sufis are based on the Qur'an, it is difficult to relate Sufism to any religion outside of Islam. Yet the search for truer understanding and abstract knowledge of reality is a universal quest. As long as humanity endures, the search for such understanding will continue. History shows that every nation and religion has its own ways of expressing this universal spiritual quest.

~ (This article, submitted by Jouman El-Asmar, is an abridged version of an article written by Seyedeh Dr. Nahid Angha. See it in full form in the online journal "Sufism: An Inquiry" at <http://sufismjournal.org>.)

Samples of Arabic calligraphy:



# Redefining Art and Idolatry

Islam is often criticized for being a religion that is opposed to art. Being brought up in Pakistan, a country founded on the basis of religion, I have come across many strange ideologies. I have come across people who cover every picture in the room when they pray, those who strictly ban music and television in their house, and others who have cable at home and are up to date with countless soaps. Once, an old man who was visiting saw statues in our house, and said that we should not have them, as it was “*haram*” (prohibited by religion). So where is art in Islam, and are people who refuse to have televisions and listen to music correct?

Statues, I agree, are not allowed in Islam, but that is ONLY if you worship them. Statues have been worshipped, and still are, and I do not mean to offend such a practice. I am merely saying that, in Islam, it is not allowed. Therefore, statues were not meant to be kept in the house if they were worshipped. Statues are allowed for any other purpose and over-exaggerating this fact by not keeping them as decorations is just a form of extremism.

I find that Islam has, in the eyes of many, become a religion of strict and un-human rules. There are people who will call music “*haram*”- WHY? There are people who will not put up paintings in the house, yet they will put up names of god written in Arabic calligraphy? Is there a difference?

I find Islam to be a religion that is full of music and other art forms. The Qur’an is read in what some might call a musical fashion. I find that when I hear the “*azan*” it is almost like a song. The Qur’an is also read like a poem.

Isn’t hanging the name of “Allah” in calligraphic writing or a verse of the Qur’an on the wall equivalent to a famous painting by Van Gogh? It might not look the same apparently, but isn’t the idea the same: having some form of meaningful decoration? So why do people refuse to hang up pictures in their houses and yet put up beautifully written names of God?

I also find praying is a kind of art. To pray in Islam, you have to follow a certain set of movements and there is a certain pattern that must be followed. Having to pray five times a day is a form of discipline, which is like meditation. During Hajj, there are thousands of people who will bow and rise at the same point in time. That is an art in itself.

Yet, people still regard Islam as a religion that is not open to arts. Why, when every aspect of this religion is linked to one form of art or another?

Islam is so often misinterpreted and, sadly, these incorrect views are the ones known to the general public. Islam is a religion full of art in various forms ... just not the obvious forms we think of when we first hear the word “art.”

~ Rabia Khan



“I see your true colors shining through. I see your true colors and that’s why I love you, so don’t be afraid to let them show. Your true colors are beautiful, like a rainbow.” ~ Cyndi Lauper

## The Progress of Man

First he appeared in the realm inanimate;  
Thence came into the world of plants and lived  
The plant-life many a year, nor called to mind  
What he had been; then took the onward way  
To animal existence, and once more  
Remembers naught of that life vegetive,  
Save when he feels himself moved with desire  
Towards it in the season of sweet flowers,  
As babes that seek the breast and know not why.  
Again the wise Creator whom thou knowest  
Uplifted him from animality  
To Man’s estate; and so from realm to realm  
Advancing, he became intelligent,  
Cunning and keen of wit, as he is now.  
No memory of his past abides with him,  
And from his present soul he shall be changed.  
Though he is fallen asleep, God will not leave him  
In this forgetfulness. Awakened, he  
Will laugh to think what troublous dreams he had.  
And wonder how his happy state of being  
He could forget, and not perceive that all  
Those pains and sorrows were the effect of sleep  
And guile and vain illusion. So this world  
Seems lasting, though ’tis but the sleepers’ dream;  
Who, when the appointed Day shall dawn, escapes  
From dark imaginings that haunted him,  
And turns with laughter on his phantom griefs  
When he beholds his everlasting home.

~ Jalaluddin Rumi  
13<sup>th</sup> c. Islamic Sufi and Poet  
Translated by R. A. Nicholson

For more on the life of Rumi and his poetry, please visit  
<http://www.khamush.com/life.html>

# "The Passion:" Two Student Film Reviews

If anything is known from the Bible it is the story of the capture and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. And now, you can experience it with all the magic and glamour that Hollywood has to offer for a couple of bucks, thanks to the great work of Mel Gibson!!! But let me sum up the story as it was portrayed by Mel Gibson: Jesus shivers in an olive garden; Jesus gets beaten and condemned to death by his own people; Jesus gets beaten with various sticks and whips with nasty, rusty spikes in them by a bunch of Romans until he looks like a walking swell of meat; Jesus carries the cross, falling down and rolling around in dust and sand, while being



beaten some more; Jesus, or whatever is left of him, is being crucified and getting whatever part of his body that was still covered in skin ripped open;

the resurrection of Jesus. All the gore, the blood, and the close-ups of Jesus' ribs that we can see because those whips with those nasty spikes tore away most of his skin may very well be historically correct but, in my opinion, take away from the true meaning of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection: love and forgiveness. Instead, this film leaves the audience disgusted at the physical abuse that Jesus takes, making one wonder just how fellow humans can inflict such things upon each other. The only truly moving moments were due to Marie: it is heartbreaking to watch a mother, broken by her incapability to help her own child while horrible things are done to him. Thus, the only spirituality that I did manage to squeeze out of that film was due to her. Much debate exists about this film, as art religious in nature has always been criticized. After all, it is a very personal account of a relationship between an individual and a great unknown that one cannot grasp. Gibson himself came under attack, but refuted all criticism by saying that the making of this film was a highly religious experience for him. The point remains that he tripled his investment into the making of this film by the first

week that it was out in movie theatres. Therefore, it remains up to the audience to judge for itself the value of this one expression of Christian fervour.

~ Anastasia Pelikh

*When not watching movies, Anastasia is busy majoring in poli sci and economics.*



She suggests

<http://www.passion-movie.com>  
for further interesting insights.



"I believe in the Kingdom Come when all the colours will bleed into one, but yes - I'm still running. You broke the bonds and you loosed the chains; Carried the Cross of my shame, You know I believe it. But I still haven't found what I'm looking for."

~ U2, The Joshua Tree

Good questions, really: "Do you really believe that one man can carry the sins of the whole world?" "Are you a king?" "What is truth?"

Mel Gibson's *Passion of the Christ* is a much-needed reminder of the suffering of oppressed people. This type of torture happens every day, to this day. The film and the story behind it are a testament to the brutality and hatred of which human beings are capable. This is the story of too many wide-eyed, humble dreamers who dare to embrace the full divinity, authority, and freedom of their humanity, directly in the face of systems and people who would keep them helpless and worthless. It is the story of too many women - mothers, wives, sisters - who fiercely defend the dignity and well-being of entire communities, only to be left vulnerable and powerless by patriarchal and colonial social structures. In too many societies, women without fathers, husbands, or sons are treated as worthless; hence Jesus' protective words to his mother and best friend, "Woman, behold your son; Son, behold your mother." The *Passion* is also the story of one of those same dreamers, who showed that love, hope, and unrelenting dedication to truth and beauty are worth defending at the expense of comfortable and efficient systems, and at the cost of one's own life. The story of Jesus testifies that these are ultimately more powerful than any human cruelty; that they are the true marks of human power and nobility, and come as a result of fierce inner struggle. "If you love only those who love you, what reward is there in that?" "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." The sins of the whole world are not something abstract. They are the cruelty and horror faced head-on by Jeshua Nazareths, and so many others like him.

*The Passion of the Christ*, as a film, must be understood within the tradition of Catholic devotional art. It is clearly structured on the meditative traditions of dramatised passion-narratives, the Stations of the Cross, terrifyingly graphic depictions of the crucifixion, and *Pietà* (depictions of Mary mourning over the corpse of her son). The film is rich with symbolism. As a cradle Protestant, I'm not as aware of all the symbolic subtleties

as I would like to be. However, as one who knows the story intimately as it appears in the texts, there is plenty of imagery that sticks in the mind to be pondered. This continuity with tradition is both the film's strength and its weakness. While, on the whole, it is fairly successful in its attempt to be historical and life-like, at times it degenerates into sappy religious kitsch. From this point of view, the English subtitles are quite disappointingly sanctimonious, drawing directly on rather outdated translations of the Bible. Most of the music, with some exceptions, is similarly disappointing.

One narrative technique I particularly liked in the *Passion* was that of flashbacks triggered by image associations. At various points, a particular detail of the brutal circumstances is transcended and transformed by a reference to a similar image or occurrence in another part of the story outside the passion narrative. For example, the sandal of a soldier who is flogging Jesus becomes a reminder of Jesus' washing of his disciples' feet, or the hill on which he is crucified shifts to the famous "sermon on the mount."

For those who would dismiss or condemn this film as anti-Jewish, let me remind you that the main character is a peasant-class Rabbi, being gleefully and brutally mocked, tortured and killed by the soldiers of a white supremacist government, having been handed over to them by collaborationist religious leaders and a puppet monarch too attached to their colonially-backed comfort and power. Mention must also be made of the dissenting voices in Jesus' defence among the priestly judicial apparatus. Problems of casting aside (and they remain very real), the moment of truth for this issue in the film comes with the forcing of another Jewish (and probably black, historically) peasant to help Jesus carry his cross. The soldier doing the forcing derisively orders the man, "Go on, Jew." The bond that then develops between Jesus and this man as they make their gruesome way is one of the most interesting and powerful character developments of the whole film.

All of that said, it must be continually admitted that this story has been grossly misused, not only by

Christians, to justify the persecution of Jewish people. The story of Jesus is a profoundly Jewish one, but the scandal of his betrayal and execution by the powers that be of his own society is one of human, global proportions. There is no monopoly on suffering. In far too many circumstances, real criminals (dare I say terrorists?) such as Barrabbas are set loose, while truly prophetic sons and daughters of G\*d, whose love for life and those around them transcends social and political taboos, are those who suffer. Sometimes, as well, prophetic action must risk blasphemy in order to accomplish its aim. Is the blasphemy against G\*d, or against those who think they own G\*d? We must also remember that the Romans were bloody savages, and that the Roman Empire is the legacy claimed by far too many histories of so-called civilisation. Christianity is fundamentally at odds with imperialist ambitions, and its appropriations by imperial powers throughout its history remain among the gravest travesties of its truth.

The real power of Gibson's film lies not so much in the craft of the dialogue (which is negligible), or the special effects (though these are spectacularly horrific, and provide the main driving force of the action), as in the small but poignant unspoken moments passed secretly between Jesus and various other characters. There are times at which someone looks him in the bruised and bleeding eyes, and sees nothing but love and friendship, and is obviously transformed by that meeting. That, to me, is the power of G\*d: the transformation and transcendence of a moment of suffering into a moment of joy. The power of G\*d germinates in these scarcely noticeable, defiant acts of solidarity.

~ Loren Carle



# The Art of Religion

There is no doubt that, for centuries, religion has been closely related to the Arts. Humans, trying to physically express what they believed in, created masterpieces for us to admire and interpret today. Did religion inspire the Arts because it appeared *before* the Arts, thereby locating itself in a totally different realm? Or did religion have such a strong influence on the Arts because it happened to *be* a form of art itself? After all, the Arts inspire each other. Poets write about sculpture and painters depict architectural masterpieces. It is obvious that all arts are interrelated ... but where is religion's place? Does it influence the Arts from the inside or from the outside?

To answer this question, it is important to define what "the Arts" are, what functions they hold, and what feelings they inspire. A work of art can express a belief, an idea, or simply an emotion. Art can describe reality ... or invent a completely different world. Each style has its own philosophy and its set of defined beliefs. For instance, symmetry, contrast, iambic pentameter, and geometry are just a few examples of "rules" one has to follow if one chooses a certain form of art. Art reflects the social norms and behaviours of its time. In a way, it describes history as it is happening, from an insider perspective. Understanding and following an art requires a certain level of concentration and devotion. Most artists would tell you that their work is beyond common understanding, that it has a purpose, that it describes a way of life. Serious artists often call their art their religion.

So is religion a form of art, or does it simply inspire artists to create? Well, religion generally means believing in a specific ideology, and it does have its philosophy and its specific rules to follow. Religion inspires people to create other works of art. Religion can excite the very same emotions one experiences when he or she reads a fascinating book, or looks at a painting. After all, religion was created by humans and for humans. It was there to give us answers that were unavailable at the time. The Qur'an and the Bible satisfy some as much as "The Origin of the Species" satisfies others.

The arts also have their canon and their spirituality. An artist who has just attained artistic perfection through his or her work might feel a similar euphoria to someone who just finished a

prayer and feels closer to God.

I think religion surely inspires the arts, but not from the outside. Religion *is* an art. It takes special skills to believe in and understand God, just like it takes special skills to paint, sing or build. The idea that religion is an art also explains the fact that many artists have given up their traditional religions and now see their art as their religious outlet, while others use the concept of religion to create art. Just like you can combine music and poetry into a song, you can combine faith and skills to paint masterpieces. It took someone talented, and not only spiritual and faithful, to compose the religious texts we admire today.

Religion is as human as painting or poetry. It is as close and as familiar to us. And - just like art - it can sometimes be misinterpreted, provoking, or illogical. One cannot separate faith from art since both are created to help us understand the universe around us, and both bring truth ... to those who seek it.

~ Natalya Demberg  
is a UI management student.  
"Let each one exercise the art he knows." - Aristophanes



Abstract "Om" by McGill student Seema Jethalal

## Song of Ostara

The dark and cold Winter Eve  
With its frost starting to break,  
The dawning of the Springtime  
Called for Mother Earth to wake.  
The rains came in and washed Her  
All of Nature starts to grow,  
Now is when the Maiden Reigns  
And Her blessings overflow.

Now, Muse, sing of Her Glory  
That we may learn Her way.  
Aurora's chariot rushing in  
Now ushers in the day,  
The bright and awesome Sunlight  
Has returned to us in full,  
Having grown into a Man  
From His birth on Holy Yule.

The day and night are equal  
Showing balance in all life,  
The season's drawing nearer  
When God takes Her as His wife,  
But today we're celebrating  
The innocence and Youth,  
The Light and Dark are partners  
Knowing purity and truth.

Ostara is the season  
That the wheel of life has wound,  
We celebrate this Springtime  
We have gathered Circle round,  
We ask the God and Goddess  
Bless your faithful at this feast,  
Touch us with Your Divinity  
As it rises from the East.

We all come from the Goddess  
And to Her we shall return,  
To live in peace and harmony  
Through balance we must learn,  
So may the Circle now be open  
And unbroken ever remain,  
With these words we end our song:  
Merry Meet & Merry Meet Again!

This song was written by Pyrrhidae Epirus  
[http://www.jackowitch.com/craftsong\\_Ostara.html](http://www.jackowitch.com/craftsong_Ostara.html)

~Submitted by Bruno Mastronardi,  
President of the McGill Pagan Association



*Come in from the cold!*  
Share a **HOT VEGAN LUNCH** at the  
**RABBIT HOLE CAFÉ**

3625 Aylmer, downstairs  
Fridays, 12:30-2:00pm  
Donations of \$1  
or 1 non-perishable food item  
are appreciated.



**EMERGENCY FOOD SUPPORT**  
also available at  
**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**  
3625 Aylmer, 2nd floor  
Fridays 1-5 pm  
For more info  
call 398-4886 or email  
foodforthought@yellowdoor.org



## McGill Student Parents' Network

and Chaplaincy Service  
offer support to  
students who are parents:  
informal childcare, babysitting, tutoring  
and friendly visits to households.  
Also monthly support group meetings  
with activities for kids & social events.  
Interested families please contact:  
Phone: 514-398-4104  
Email: simonetca@yahoo.com



"You can get anything you want  
at Alice's Restaurant." ~ Arlo Guthrie

## Sikh Chaplaincy Open Meeting



Social get-togethers for Sikh students  
Newman Centre, 3484 Peel  
Contact Manjit Singh, Sikh Chaplain  
at lo.man@sympatico.ca  
697-3527

## "Lunch and Learn"

Free bagels and discussion!

Monday 12:30: controversial issues with Rabbi Jackman  
Thursday 1:30: weekly Torah Portion with Rabbi Plaskow



3460 Stanley Street (Hillel library)  
Contact Rabbi Jackman for chat, questions,  
or learning Jewish texts.  
845-9171  
email rabbi@hillel.ca

## Alternative Vespers

"Creative Worship in Music and Word"

March 28 Montreal Diocesan College  
3573 University  
4:00 pm

Musical Director Loren Carle,  
student in the McGill Faculty of Music  
Phone 398-4104

Light vegetarian food following

*Treat yourself to some  
live music!*

## New Earth Voices end of year concert

Saturday, April 3rd at 3 PM  
at the diocesan  
convocation hall  
(corner of University & Milton)

Call McGill Chaplaincy for info:  
398-4104

## The McGill Pagan Association will be holding a movie screening

6:00 PM on March 23rd  
in the Lev Buckman conference room of  
the Shatner building.  
We'll be showing a documentary  
about topics in Paganism.  
Afterwards, there will be an equi-  
nox ritual in the club lounge. Eve-

## The Yellow Door... Volunteers needed!

The Yellow Door Elderly Project is  
seeking volunteers to work with  
seniors living in and around the  
McGill Ghetto. No major time com-  
mitment required—flexible hours,  
just a couple of hours per month!  
Great opportunity to contribute to  
community spirit ...

If you would like to become a Yellow  
Door volunteer, call (514)398-6243  
or email:  
elderlyproject@hotmail.com

McGill Ecumenical Chaplaincy's

## St. Martha's in the Basement



*Good food for Body  
and Soul*

Please share our Bible Study, Worship  
and a Simple Vegetarian Supper  
Wednesdays at 6 pm  
in the basement of the United Theo-  
logical College (3521 University)  
call Gwenda Wells for more info:  
398-4104

## Newman Centre

3484 Peel St, 398-4106,  
newmancentre@mcgill.ca  
www.newmancentre.org



Roman Catholic Mass:

- Tuesday through Friday 4pm
- Saturday 5pm
- Sunday 11am
- (Saturday mass is followed by a commu-  
nity supper for only \$3.50)

The Muslim Students Association of  
McGill  
is pleased to announce  
that Muslim students at McGill  
can perform their five daily prayers in the  
**prayer room**  
located at Peterson Hall  
3460 McTavish Street, Rm 14.  
Visitors from other faiths are always welcome.

## Student Nights at St. John's

Students, faculty and staff are welcome  
at monthly student nights

~

For more information, call Helmut at the  
Lutheran Chaplaincy: 398-4104

or

St. John's Lutheran Church:

844-6297

helmut.saabas@sympatico.ca

## Dinner & Discussions for gay and lesbian young adults (18 to 35)

"exploring our faith from our perspective"  
every 1st & 3rd Tuesday of the month  
7PM  
at Christ Church Cathedral

For info, contact Rev. Joyce Sanchez  
843-6577

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