

radix

October 2012 Issue

CONTRADICTIONS



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RADIX magazine is produced by the McGill Chaplaincy Services.

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rose petals with images of Saint Theresa made by nuns  
photo: Jennifer Hamilton

# editorial

JOSIAH KLASSEN

I've been thinking about roots lately. You might know that *radix* is Latin for 'root.' I've been thinking about my own metaphorical roots, and what it means to have them. It's a simple image, and therefore powerful. But it's a complex image, too, and that invites reflection.

Roots are beneath the surface most of the time. In the dark, in the ground, alone is where they function best. There they can absorb nutrients and water. They leave the photosynthesis for the leaves. When we talk about roots, we usually mean our past, our heritage, our traditions. But roots are a present reality as well: they are what we currently

draw life from. Where are we putting our new roots now, we may ask. Where do I get fed from, spiritually, emotionally, physically, intellectually?

But roots are hidden, and we often take them for granted, looking only at the shapes of trunks, at the beauty of the leaves, at the web of branches and the interplay of light and shadows falling onto a wooded lawn. The roots are underneath, and if we are trees, we depend on them. An awareness of our roots can therefore be valuable.

This awareness of our roots is what *Radix* is about. Roots invite us to ask ourselves where we draw life from, and why. They invite us to learn from others' roots, especially as those others share their experiences and thoughts with us. Most of all, they invite us to grow, to seek out deeper ground, and to appreciate the wealth of resources we are all planted in. If you're willing, let's do that, both alone and together.



# complementary nature of religions

VIOLA CHEN

How did organized religion, a body of institutions aimed to relate humanity to spirituality, to peace and to love, grow to ring bells of hatred, arrogance and conflict? For centuries, emphasis has been placed on contradictory ideologies among religions, and this emphasis has resulted in varying degrees of aggression: from backyard disputes to international wars. But if we inspect religious systems with open minds, we are in fact able to find many complementary aspects between them.

First, all religions are fundamentally grounded in the commitment to truth. The things we consider to be true and the methods we take to seek truth may differ. The truth that we identify with can be subjective or objective, relative or absolute. Nonetheless, our passionate, dedicated and, some may argue, naive pursuits of truth unite us in a very human way. We all hold truth in high regard; whether we live by truth or submit to falsehood and ignorance is a matter of great importance. Despite the

inherent differences that exist within religions, the longing for truth ultimately binds all religious systems with purpose and meaning.

Furthermore, religion acts as a key for humans to access a spiritual realm - a dimension that exceeds the boundaries of earthly reality. Undoubtedly, the interpretations of such a spiritual realm vary across religions. Every religious system claims a unique identity of God; the figure of God can adopt the form of a supernatural being, a human, an object or a general concept. Differences in interpretations of the spiritual realm can be a reflection of personal experiences, social interactions and cultural environments. But belief in a spiritual realm, along with its ability to satiate our spiritual hunger, persists in all religions.

In addition, every religious institution provides its members with a moral code of conduct. These moral codes contain behavioral expectations and obligations, outlining the difference between

what we can do and what we ought to do. Associated with the moral code is the concept of justice and the ways in which justice can be achieved. Notions of reward and punishment can be rooted in structured forms, such as the dwellings of heaven and hell, or in broader principles, such as the concept of karma. We believe we must administer these moral codes, in both worldly and spiritual domains, in order to live as righteous individuals.

The entities present in the physical world cannot fully satiate our hunger for truth, and so we search for something else. We

venture into a spiritual realm - whatever form that realm may assume for us individually - so we can find answers to our questions. We allow moral codes of conduct to govern our lives, so we can attain spiritual fulfillment and live virtuously as human beings.

In modern society, relationships between religions tend to revolve around disagreement and conflict. But in actuality, complementary ideals lie at the heart of religion. And, at the end of the day, we are all connected in more ways than we would care to admit.

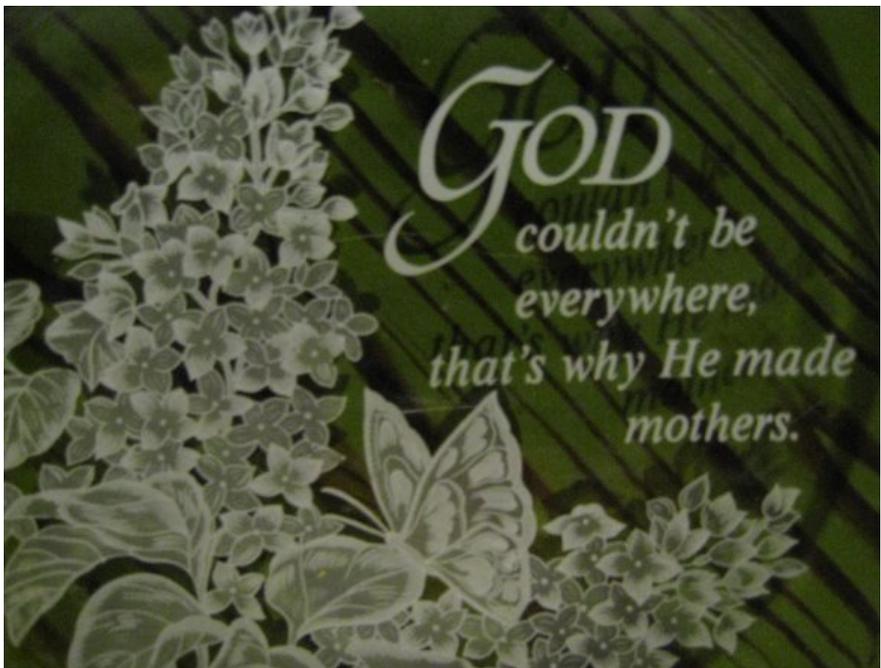


photo: Jennifer Hamilton

# smoke in the shadows

CONOR MCCARTHY

Smoke rises in the shadow  
of an iron and concrete crucifix  
standing above the troubled cityscape  
beyond which, the river  
borders the meaningful and the meaningless  
teeming with traces and tales of times  
long gone by  
like the smoke on the air  
passing in and out of clouds  
between lightless strips  
drifting on the grassy bed  
lingering for its time in the sun  
then passing into the ultimate one  
becoming another piece of the eternal infrastructure  
timeless and worthless  
forgotten yet necessary  
for the unlikely tree of infinite phenomena  
that follows with  
branches spreading like light.



photo: Cate Anthony

As the smoke is carried away  
a being becomes somewhere below  
pried by latex talons  
to be walled into a world of want  
to be ruled by a watch  
to be watched by a ruler  
to desperately seek his own scrap of paradise  
to shuffle about in unforgiving monotone  
with eyes searching the horizon  
with soul searching the one  
torn between goods and good times  
perpetually participating  
gradually gaining wisdom  
observing wandering ants  
and wondering  
who watches us?

As the last of the smoke dissolves into day  
it makes way for what follows  
as days stumble past  
everything falls into its latest place  
we race around  
in fear of missing out  
of what might never be  
and never was  
all work could be so easily forgot  
all the fire starting  
line drawing  
innovation  
subjugation  
emancipation  
could cease to be  
and the universe wouldn't notice  
like smoke in the shadow  
of an iron and concrete crucifix.

# unwelcome emotions

AYA SALAH

There is nothing more frustrating  
Than knowing how you should feel  
But yet a flow of total opposite  
Emotions seems more real

You know what is required:  
Put in your all, rely on Allah  
Do your best toward success  
Then smile and put your mind to rest.  
Theoretically, hopefully,  
Ideally so  
Sounds easy, no?

But for some reason your heart whispers “uh-oh”  
You think, “I know better,  
I won’t let this be”–  
Still, unwelcome emotions  
Create a new reality

So instead you get agitated  
You get stressed out and uptight  
As if stuck in a dark cave,  
With no light in sight.

You know that you should feel assured  
Assured, grateful and blessed  
But you’ll feel angry at the world  
And angrier at yourself for failing the test

And you *know* that you’re failing  
For the test is to be patient  
But since impatience is where you’re at  
Your level of progress remains flat

So you feel guilty for feeling ungrateful  
Then deny those feelings all the same  
You’d prefer to complain about your situation  
Than change the rules of the game.

How many times will you hear,  
“Have faith, this is just a test!  
So long as you hold tight to that rope  
The outcomes will surely be the best!”

And so, you try to be patient,  
You try (and try and try) to be strong  
But for all your efforts, it's only when it's over  
You realize that God was there all along.

And shame overwhelms you  
How could you forget?  
Your heart knew it somehow  
But your actions showed neglect.

You knew there was a Being  
Much stronger than you  
You knew there was a Being  
Much wiser than you.

A Being who drew a map  
Of your life before you existed  
Who solved all your problems  
Before you could have resisted.

And now that it's over  
It's like you see the light  
You were wrongly directed  
Yet now the negativity takes flight.

You smile and laugh in pleasure  
Proud of handling it so well  
Until you fall into another pit-hole  
And the negativity is back to dwell.

When will we learn to change our mindsets?  
To realize each day and hour is simply another test?  
That the easier path is not always the right one?  
Convictions shouldn't change when the easy times are gone.

May God keep us steadfast  
In action and in deed  
And in healthy emotions  
On which our hearts may feed

Because man, let me tell you  
And I'm sure you know it, too:  
There is nothing more frustrating  
Than knowing how you should feel  
But yet a flow of total opposite  
Emotions seems more real.

# mcgill event: inherit the wind

ANNABEL R.

*Inherit the Wind* is a theatrical depiction of the Scopes Monkey trial: set in the 1920s in Tennessee, the play depicts the story of a small-town teacher on trial for reading from *The Origin of Species* during his high school biology class. Two major political figures come to hash out this pivotal creationist and evolution debate.

While set nearly a century ago, the conflict of the play is far from dated. Scientific theories such as biological evolution and the chemical origins of life still face resistance from certain religious groups across North America, especially in the southern U.S. Just this year, the Tennessee Senate approved the so-called “monkey bill”, that promotes creationism in science classrooms. While it is no longer illegal to teach evolution in public schools, the validity of evolution still remains controversial.

The play itself presents a very one-sided representation of the trial, in favor of evolution (the play was actually written in the 50s as a commentary against the

ensorious climate of McCarthyism). In this production, I have tried to “even the playing fields”, by casting the pro-religion prosecutor as a warm, sympathetic woman. I hope that the play can help start a discussion in the McGill community regarding an issue which is still very relevant.

To address this issue more directly, I am organizing an Open Panel Discussion: several members from Power to Change (formerly Campus for Christ), who are all currently Science students, are going to come and discuss their reservations about evolution. In addition, several biology students who are advocates of the theory will be present to ask educated questions. I urge anyone passionate about this issue to attend - contribute by asking questions of your own, or simply come to watch the discussion unfold.

The play goes up at 8PM in Players Theatre (Morrice Hall Room 17), and runs November 14-24. The open panel discussion will be held at 6:30PM in the English Lounge (Basement of Arts Building), on October 24th.

# the kite that wouldn't fly

*JEREMY CLARK and JENNIFER HAMILTON*

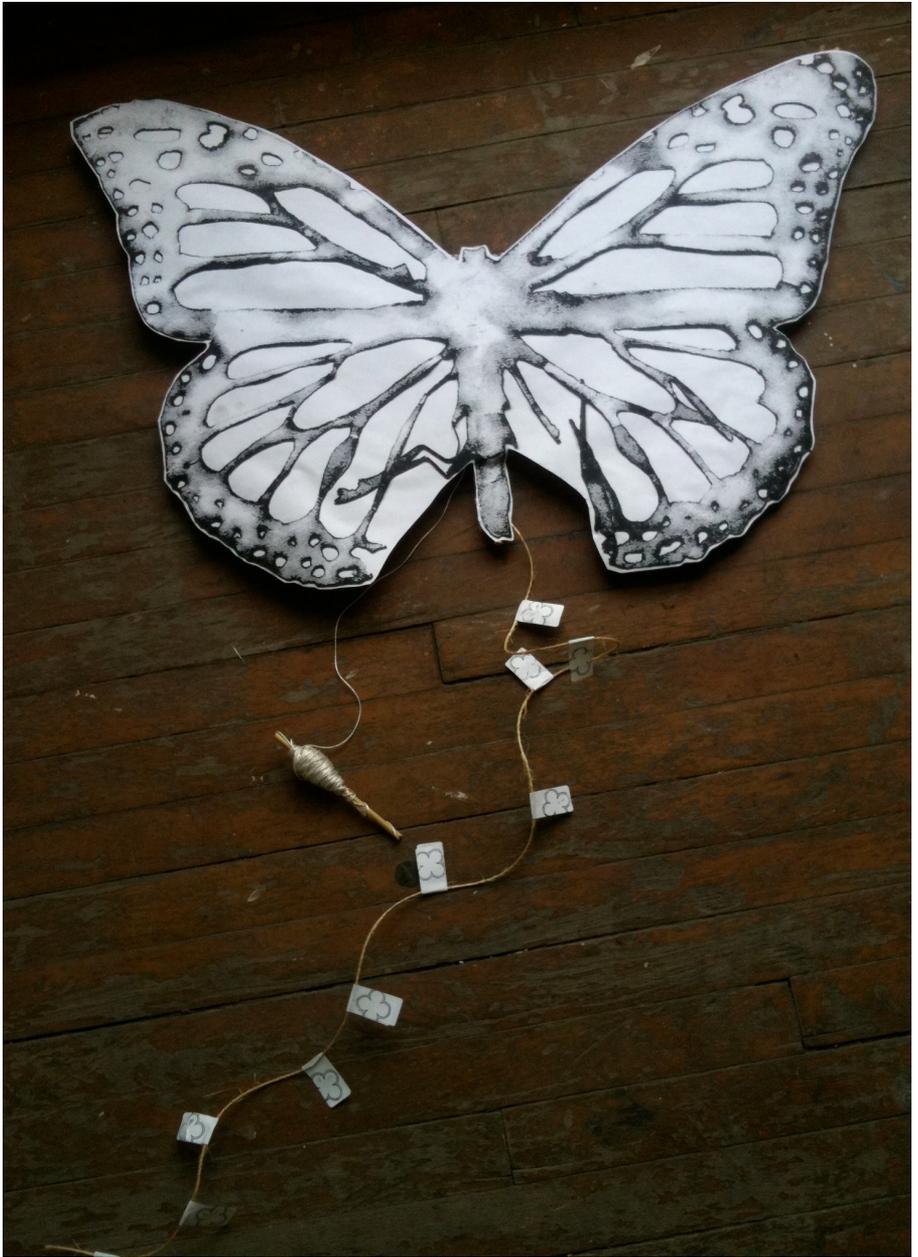


photo: Jennifer Hamilton



butterfly kite test flight failure  
photo: Jeremy Clark





grounded butterfly kites  
photo: Jennifer Hamilton

# contradictions and the chaplaincy

REV. NEIL WHITEHOUSE

Here's a contradiction I invite you to experience: engage with Chaplaincy when you think it's not for you.

What is Chaplaincy anyway? Something for everyone!

You may say, "Prove it!"

Where there is life, there is spirit.

What connects us to each other and to the universe makes being alive joyful – these are often our best moments.

So here's commentary on some recent Chaplaincy activities with an eye towards 'Contradictions'. I hope something in this makes you curious to check out the website and participate, or even suggest new events (we would be very pleased to work with you to see your ideas for spiritual and religious life at McGill come into reality).

What do you think about the aggressively bad film made in the USA depicting the Prophet Mohammed? Or the reactions it triggered when posted globally through Google? Perhaps you would have new answers to these questions if you had visited a North Montreal mosque along with 25 McGill students in September. Muslim Chaplain Salam Elmenyawi gave a presentation on Islam and particularly the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). It included an explanation of PBUH, meaning Peace Be upon Him, that often follows his name as a matter of

respect. That 'other' film was anything but respectful and recalled the sectarian contradictions of bashing another person's religion when your own teaches tolerance and peace towards others.

The life story of Prophet Mohammed is truly remarkable and the changes his teachings brought to the people around him in an extraordinarily short period are even more impressive. Raising the status of women stands out as one example and exposes the corruption of this teaching around the world when Muslim women are not respected. I think now most starkly of Pakistan and Taliban extremists shooting a girl who had stood up for women's education.

Visiting the mosque, hearing the story and observing prayers was a great way to educate and make good relationships across differences: an antidote to sectarian contradictions. (We have another visit to an Orthodox Church on Saturday, October 27th and then to a Sikh Gurdwara in November).

Who you eat with is a big part of life and identity and meeting over food is a feature of Chaplaincy work. Not long ago, it would have been a public statement to find Orthodox, Protestant and Catholic students eating together. Yet no spirit of contradiction was in the air when a group of these students met for lunch with three Christian

Chaplains to realize new friendships and a common faith. A second lunch is planned for November 29th, but you truly don't need to wait that long or have any religious identity to receive good food: The Yellow Door (3625 Aymler) is an independent community organization that Chaplaincy supports with student workers, and it offers very low priced meals on Fridays as well as an emergency food pantry for students. Moreover, the Newman Centre, the location of the Roman Catholic Chaplaincy, 3484 Peel, offers all students cheap soup and bagels lunches each weekday too. If you are Jewish, head to Peel, at 3429, to visit Chabad: "Turn your Friday night into Shabbat at your home away from home," is the slogan for the gathering, meal and prayers (7pm).

One place where contradictions are challenged, explored and celebrated is the new Interfaith Forum SSMU group (iF?). Ten students shared a weekend away at the McGill Gault Nature Reserve, near Mont-Saint-Hilaire. Some were Muslim, others Christian or Jewish or simply spiritual and post-Christian. Talking about values and faith is the routine shape of meetings so there was no holding back during the weekend as conversations unfolded, helped by rock painting, walking a labyrinth, water tasting and climbing Mont-Saint-Hilaire. When darkness came, we returned to primal energy, watching flames of the camp fire and films on The Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca and on The Secret, an exploration of the power of positive thinking. If this respectful but

curious approach to beliefs interests you, then you're welcome to join the iF? club on campus. (interfaith.mcgill@gmail.com).

Have you found yourself like a fish out of water this semester? University life has such contradictions every day. So I took a goldfish to meet Faculty and students, to launch the OIKOS project: an invitation to inter-disciplinary conversations about the hopes for a flourishing earth, taking the greek word oikos, meaning house or household. The three disciplines of economics, ecology and ecumenism are all derived from oikos. Probably you know something about one of these, but each can make a contribution to the other and needs to, as we face the challenges of sharing a hopeful global future. The project is unfolding and if this briefest of descriptions interests you then get in touch. You can also invite the OIKOS project to your SSMU group, course, faculty or residence!

Finally, in the busyness of student life, some were indulging in the contradiction of being completely still, with Buddhist meditation on Friday mornings in Birks Building or walking meditation on a labyrinth on main field or in SSMU Building on Tuesday afternoons.

I think Chaplaincy is full of beneficial contradictions – don't you agree?

Rev. Neil Whitehouse, Ecumenical Chaplain and Interim Director, McGill Chaplaincy.  
[www.mcgill.ca/students/chaplaincy](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/chaplaincy)

# poem

BRIGITTE NAGGAR

I imagine it's something like,  
for every year I've lived  
I take two or three steps  
all over myself.

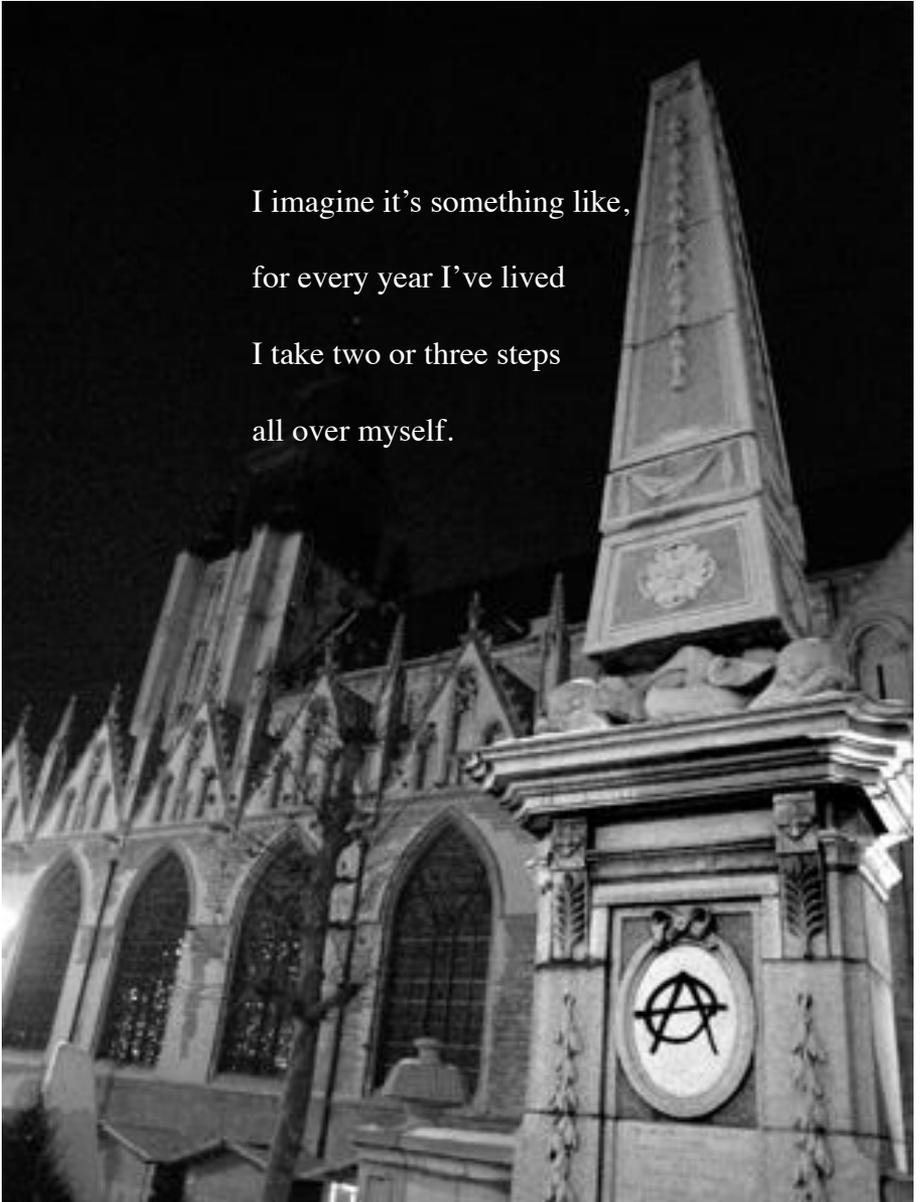


photo: Jennifer Hamilton

# traveller (pilgrim-song)

*JOSIAH KLASSEN*

I am a traveller looking to be good.  
I am a lone soul walking down a bleak road...  
I am a traveller looking to be good.

Stumbler said to the pilgrim bled,  
Why do you want to be good?

I am a traveller looking to be good.  
I am a pilgrim stuck in a pilgrimage,  
I am a traveller looking to be good.

Nietzsche said that God is dead:  
Good and bad are in your head.

I am a traveller looking to be good.  
I cannot say why, only that I should.  
I am a traveller looking to be good.

I am a traveller looking to be good.





photo: Cate Anthony

### **Ancient Wisdom Lies At Your Feet**

Try walking meditation using a labyrinth on campus. For times and locations visit: Labyrinth McGill on Facebook or [www.mcgill.ca/students/chaplaincy](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/chaplaincy)  
It's free! Just bring yourself. McGill Ecumenical Chaplaincy

### **Zen Meditation**

Starting September 19, 2012 until December 12, 2012

Every Wednesday 1:00pm - 2:00 pm. 12:45pm Instruction for newcomers. Discussion, Q&A at 1:50pm.

Instructor: Myokyo Zengetsu

Location: McGill Chaplaincy Services, Brown Student Services Building, 3600 McTavish Street, Suite 4400

For more info: Call 514-398-4104 or e-mail [chaplaincy@mcgill.ca](mailto:chaplaincy@mcgill.ca)

### **The Muslim Students Association of McGill**

We offer: weekly study circles, free Islamic educational materials, Ramadan services, lectures/conferences, and a library (Shatner building, room 430)  
3460 McTavish Street, Rm. 14

### **Newman Centre**

3484 Peel St, 398-4106  
[newmancentre@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:newmancentre@mail.mcgill.ca)  
[www.newmancentre.org](http://www.newmancentre.org)

Did you know that Roman Catholic Mass is held conveniently on campus several times per week?

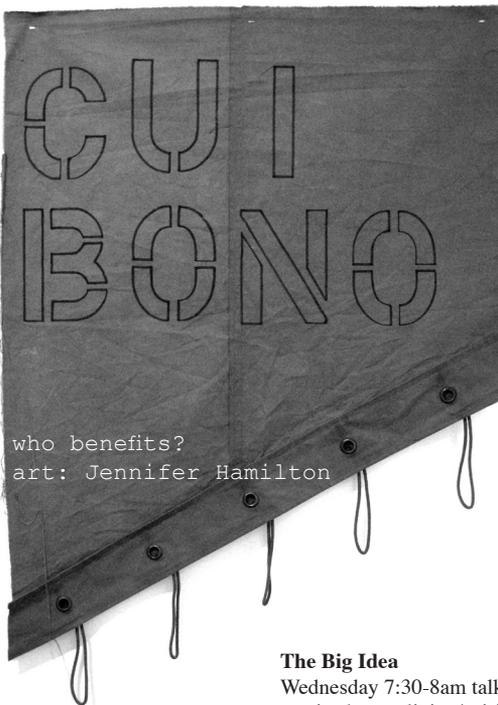
### **Share a Hot Vegan Lunch at the Rabbit Hole Café,**

a collective vegetarian kitchen  
3625 Aylmer, downstairs  
Fridays, 1-4 pm  
Donations of \$3.50 or a non-perishable food item are appreciated.  
[www.yellowdoor.org](http://www.yellowdoor.org)

### **Montreal Diocesan Theological College**

3475 University Ave.  
Daily Christian worship -- all are welcome!  
Morning Prayer, Mon. - Thurs.: 8:00 am  
Evening Prayer, Mon. - Thurs.: 4:30 pm

## *FREE ADS FOR SPIRITUAL & SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUPS!*



**GhettoShul.com**  
House of Prayer

### **McGill Student Parents' Network**

The MSPN provides support to McGill students who are parents. Regularly we offer free of charge to McGill students: in-home babysitting, support group meetings, study sessions for parents with babysitting for children. Interested families should contact the MSPN.

### **Prayer Breakfast**

If you'd like to get centered in God before the day begins, join us for prayer and breakfast (provided).  
Wednesdays 7:45-8:30 am.  
Birks Student Lounge.  
Jill Foster, Presbyterian.

### **International Students!**

Are you freezing?  
Lightly used coats, clothing, shoes, and boots are available free of charge to International Students. Stop by Chaplaincy Services.

### **The Big Idea**

Wednesday 7:30-8am talk and music about religion/spirituality on CKUT 90.3 FM and @ [bigideackut.blogspot.com](http://bigideackut.blogspot.com)

### **Volunteers Needed!**

The Yellow Door Elderly Project is seeking volunteers to work with seniors living in and around the McGill Ghetto. No major time commitment 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 514-845-2600 ext. 0. The Yellow Door / La Porte Jaune

### **Orthodox Christian Fellowship**

Are you an Orthodox Christian, or interested in Orthodoxy? Come out to our weekly meetings in the Claude Ryan Library in the Newman Centre (3484 Peel, 3rd floor) at 6-7:30pm every Thursday for discussion with a great group facilitated by an Orthodox priest. Otherwise, join us for a potluck, event or monastery trip!  
[mcgillstudentsoef@gmail.com](mailto:mcgillstudentsoef@gmail.com)

# lyrics: expectations

*RADU PARVALESCU*

Why do I need,  
To do both A and B,  
Do the this and the that,  
And get all of it pat.

Do the one, and the six,  
And the eight and the ten,  
I can't ever try it all over again.

It's shot past my ear,  
And it's all very clear,  
That nothing means nothing,  
And nothing for all,  
I'm doing as daddy in his turn was told:

“Go get good grades,  
Money, comfort will come,  
Independently strong,  
Earning interest income.”

And now we're all rich,  
'Cause we got all our As,  
We forgot how/when to question,  
The more that we made.

So now my dear son,  
Come crawling in cold cash,  
Cherish your dreams,  
'Fore they're all turned to ash.

Pouring from your mouth and eyes,  
Like from mine,  
As my father taught,  
So I crush you in kind.

Oh expectations!

From his head to my brain,  
Now it all seems the same,  
Who am I?  
What I was,  
When not wearing the gloves,  
That deal with the debit,  
That's turned into credit,  
(I) Can't do it alone,  
But why, oh why these conditions?

# bar talk

CATE ANTHONY

A Short Glimpse Into the Inner Thoughts of a 20 Year Old Theology Major Out With Her Friends On a Friday Night.

[The scene is set: a bar full of young university students dancing to a DJ's fine mix of the Top 40 Hits. The atmosphere is one of general merriment and debauchery. We see a young woman standing by the bar, drink in hand. She is approached by an acquaintance, a young man. A brief conversation ensues.]

Young Man: So, what's a theology major like you doing at a party like this?

Young Woman: Um - [Well clearly I am trying to party, that's why I'm here... wait, is he subtly judging me? Is that an undercurrent of judgment I detect? What, does he think I should be at home praying all night just because I want

to be a priest? That's like saying that a businessman should never stop business-ing... well, maybe not... Oh, maybe he has a point. Should I be at home praying? What would my bishop think? What would Jesus do? Can they not let me be a priest one day because I'm at this party right now? Is God watching this? Oh, Jesus, I hope not - Oh! Sorry, sorry, I didn't mean to take Your name in vain, sorry... but seriously, are You watching? Is this ok? Are you mad that I had that shot of tequila? Wait, what am I

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[experience@maisondelamitie.ca](mailto:experience@maisondelamitie.ca)



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(514) 843-4356

maison  
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# OIKOS Project –what's life worth to you?

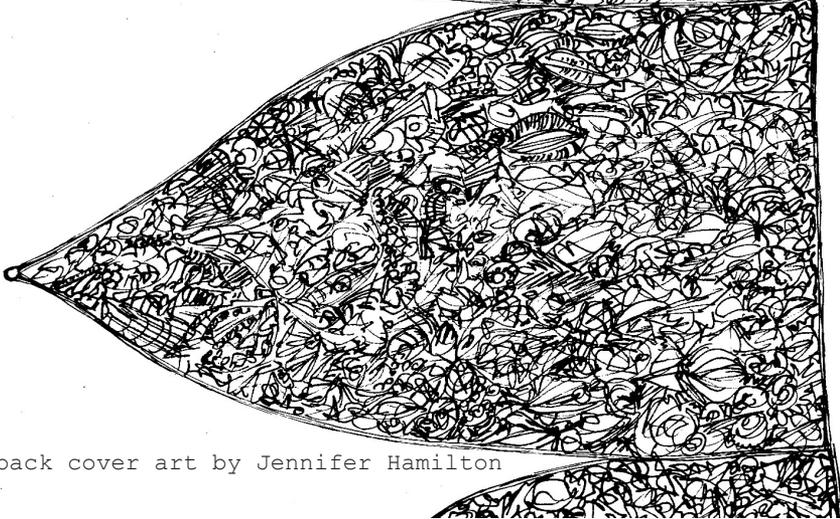
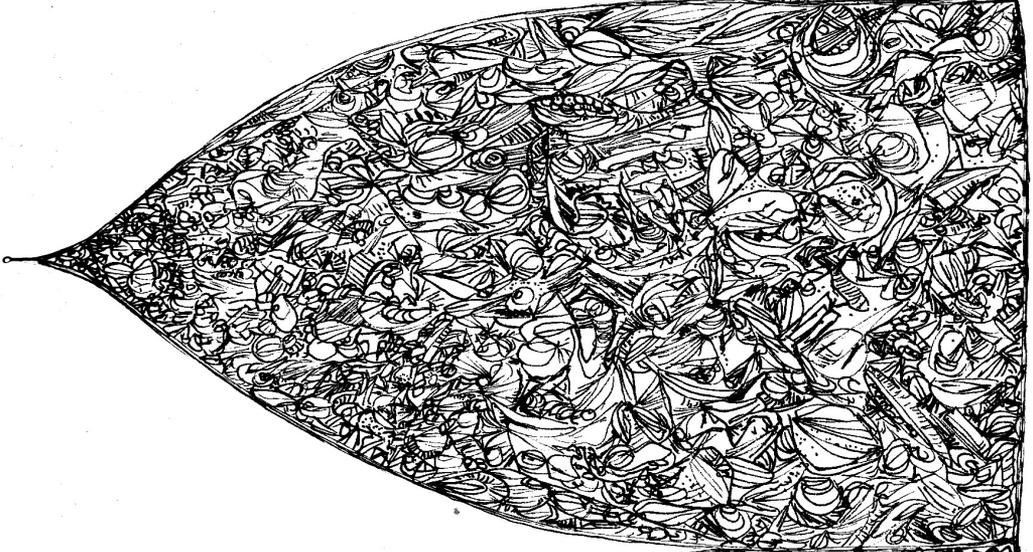
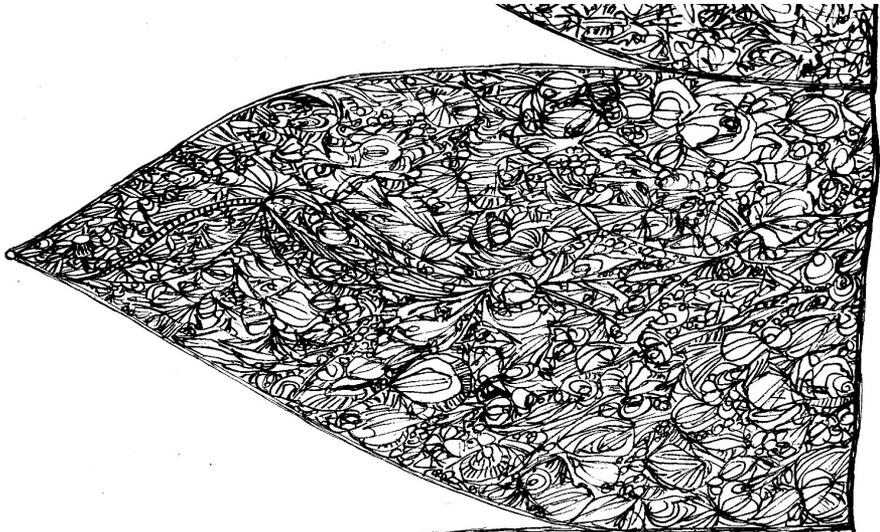


Economy – Ecology – Ecumenism

Join the conversations!  
neil.whitehouse@mcgill.ca  
McGill Ecumenical Chaplain

saying? Of course God isn't mad at you, Cate, don't be absurd, God loves you and doesn't want you to give up experiencing this life just because you want to be a priest (What about the ascetics on top of their pillars in the desert? They gave stuff up - what, not good enough for you?). No, stop! I mean really, you can't help people if you've no idea what situations like this feel like. Well-rounded people make

well-rounded priests - that is the worst mantra I've ever said to myself - ugh, this is silly! Calm down. If this guy thinks you can't be at a party because you feel called to the priesthood, then you'll just have to tell him otherwise, contradict the stereotype, be yourself, all of that - and for goodness' sake answer his question or this pause will get awkward - ] Uh, just trying to have a good time, I guess.



front & back cover art by Jennifer Hamilton