editorial
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“the bottom line: “I believe if you keep your faith, you keep your trust, you keep
In this confused and inefficient world, our systems of power often fail the individual. Empowerment can be found in expression and spirituality, but larger structural issues will remain until those in power commit to rectifying past injustices and current inequity.

Gaps of trust shaped by political histories of religion impart the notion of the ‘other’. These manifest themselves in discriminatory laws against religious identities, attacks on holy structures and lands, and inter-personal hate. What we forget is that these conflicts are most often the product of political dispute, not religious essence. May we evoke our humanity to help us overcome these falsehoods of hate, that have for so long been spoon-fed by power, and work to overcome the failures of these systems.

The systems of power in place at McGill have failed women for years. Protected by their tenure and by an administration’s willing ignorance, professors who prey upon students face no meaningful consequences for the harm they cause. These relationships are not based on willing consent between two equals; our professors have an inherent power over us that transcends the grades on our transcripts. These men are our bosses, our role models, and our allies in professional communities we hope to be a part of. So when professional relationships become predatory, more than just our reputations are at stake; we risk our futures, our lives. Yet McGill has no policy to protect us from student-teacher relationships, nor even to acknowledge their harm. It has no punitive measures in place for professors who prey upon students, taking advantage of our trust. The failures in the systems of power here at McGill must be acknowledged and rectified.

What can we do when those with authority continually fail us? What message is conveyed by our administration, which has remained silent amongst these allegations? And what is there to do when an institution fails to protect its own?

How can we trust?

The cover design was created by Michaely “Meek the Freak” Annis, an artist from Calgary, Alberta. She hates professionalism and loves bears, but never wants to meet one. You can find her on Instagram at @michacantdraw.

With light and love.

Katharine & Mackenzie
Co-editors

The right attitude, if you’re grateful, you’ll see God open up new doors.” - Joel
in conversation with Richard Bernier: a Catholic perspective

Q: What brought you to studying religion?
A: My first love academically was philosophy, and that remains very dear to me. Over time, I also developed an interest in theological questions. The nice thing in theology is that you can do a tremendous amount of philosophy in that. The two, historically, are quite closely connected. It’s a field that allows you to explore philosophy to your heart’s content, and then also allows you to bring in elements that wouldn’t be as common in a classic philosophical program of study.

Q: In keeping with the theme of this edition of Radix, what is your definition of trust?
A: Trust is the feeling that one’s well-being is safe with another. It’s not a very complicated definition, but that’s how I define it.

Q: Why do you think religion is important in modern society?
A: It’s important for at least two reasons. Religious questions and religious identity are important to so many people, however they may define themselves with reference to it, so if we’re going to adequately engage with one another as human beings, religion is an important part of that. In short, religion is a way of understanding people as they understand themselves. Second, I would say religions are not just a personal commitment, but are often a commitment at the heart of a community. Religion connects a person synchronically and diachronically – across space and across time to fellow members of a community and to people who have come before, and that is a connection that can be positive, negative, complicated… but it’s definitely a connection and part of what shapes a person’s practices and values.

Q: How can we incorporate our notions of trust into our daily practices, and especially in our institutional interactions?
A: I think trust, more than almost any other trait, has to be earned. And it’s not earned by credentials, and it’s not earned by words, and it’s not earned by resolutions, it’s earned by actions. We trust another when we realize they can be trusted. So I think the imperative, if wholesome and flourishing human relationships have to be based on trust, is that each person has to make it their responsibility to earn the trust of those around them, and to reject anything that would be a betrayal of trust, or harm that confidence I spoke of earlier – that my well-being is safe with this person. So I think the temptation can be to think that we can short-circuit important things

“Trust is the feeling that one’s well-being is safe with another.”

Osteen • “Love all, trust a few, do wrong to none.” - William Shakespeare • “Trust
like trust if I just have enough credentials, or the right diplomas on the wall, or the right letters after my name, or have done the right studies, or use the right mission statement, then everything’s taken care of: trust is established. But that’s not the case; that’s not how we trust one another. We trust one another when we discover that my well-being is safe with that person. And it’s tentative because we don’t want to trust others too much, we learn to be cautious and guarded, so again, it’s something that has to be earned. And it’s normal if I approach someone I don’t know, for them to be cautious or hesitant, and I can’t expect them to just trust me because I say they should; I need to earn that trust, and the sense that their well-being is safe with me.

Q: What does Catholicism teach about trust?
A: Where I see trust having a place in the Catholic faith is that faith can just be adherence to a set of beliefs, but then it’s an idea. Faith that is just a set of beliefs remains no more than an idea. But if I genuinely believe that God cares for humanity, then that takes it a step further than merely affirming it, and it becomes trusting that my well-being is safe with God. So it’s as much true in one’s relationship with God as it is in one’s relationship with other human beings. In a Catholic context, for instance, faith, with time, can become something more than just a proposition, it can become the confidence that God is looking after people, that God cares about people, and that the welfare of human beings is important to God. It doesn’t happen overnight, and it’s okay that it doesn’t happen overnight, because one has to – I would hesitate to phrase it as “God has to earn out trust” – but that it’s normal to have that same hesitancy, to not be sure that God is looking out for me. That’s a normal reaction. Faith evolves into trust when we realize that it has a solid foundation.

Q: Do you think there’s an integral human duty to base our relationships in trust?
A: Maybe it’s making it a cliché, but human beings are relational. There can be no relationships, no society, maybe there can be a transaction, without trust. There’s no trust involved in transactions involving, say, a widget and a five-dollar bill. But if society is to be anything more than a transaction, if it’s to be a flourishing of the human spirit, then it’s impossible without the building and the earning of trust.
I chugged a 500mL box of milk in front of the church in Santa Fe, Veraguas.  
We woke at six in the pitch black void  
Then the chirping began.  
In Don Jacinto’s backyard lay an orange mantle of fallen mandarins.  
We fetched three and went our hopeful way  
And now we waited for you by the steps.  

Where do you take us, Candido?  
Through the boggy, gnarly slopes  
I slipped and tumbled, sweaty and afraid.  
Pictured my snapping of the nape  
Against glistening rock steps  
But followed you all the same.  

Nearly lost my boot crossing the creek  
The water was way high and gushing those days;  
Two girls had drowned on their way to school.  
May they rest in peace and may you be blessed, Cristina  
You reminded us that the river was for play too.  

You fed us sardines and broth  
As we watched for the full moon  
When she came through she said hi and we revered her  
We revelled in her  
And she was primetime that night.  

I thought I had come to help  
But now it feels all too obtuse.  
I’m just thankful that you kept me alive.
Trusting is hard, and when you do it, sometimes you end up being disappointed and blaming yourself for your choice. Trusting is even harder when you realize that disappointments often come from actions made with the best intentions. It’s the existence of simple, peaceful things, like the light reflecting in calm waters, that allows me to make a serene connection with our planet, and feel like a child embraced by Mother Earth’s arms. In that moment, I think that things will go well, eventually. And I find the courage to trust again.

Photograph by Kendra Finlay, who seeks to freeze moments in order to relive them, if only for a little while.

Alice Damiano is a PhD student in Renewable Resources, Economics for the Anthropocene project (https://e4a-net.org/), with interests in human-Earth relationships and climate change.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God;
In my stubborn steps
Silhouettes and puddles met
And firelight loved dancers loving
Remember when we drank spirits on the statue steps?
Running to catch or running from time, I don’t know.
But I can still hear our laughter above the sound of passing cars.

And here’s the thing:
I don’t believe in tarot much anymore.
I’m not exactly sure what is my religion.
Sometimes when I look in people’s eyes I don’t feel theirs looking back at me.

But I believe in that moment.
That place we were.
A lot of stories crossing over.

And when I feel alone
When I don’t trust the world to love me right.
I close my eyes and I know.
I know I go back there.
I really do.

trust also in me.” - Jesus Christ • “A lie can travel halfway around the world while
reflection
usually
you let yourself in
to a door you swore you would paint
to arms you said needed tattoos
to a pattern
starting with your shoes

Dear
dripping onto a recently-vacuumed mat
like a body out of water
on the hottest summer day
where one can feel their childhood
baking back into existence
against a flower of light
that closes too soon
the jean coat is next
weeping onto the floor
from an overcast day
with clouds that missed the earth
and the gas between them
speaking about the beginnings of a universe
with nothing more than breath
the cat purrs through your legs
the walls move a little closer to a hug
your bag is placed in your room
dressed with pictures of us
smiling
you brush your teeth
for have you seen the city
deep
the filth is everywhere
you move like a thought
back into the room
and
your bra is taken off
your shirt is switched
you look at yourself in the mirror
toes touching
numb and naked
wondering what it will be like
tomorrow
where one day
after too many days
we will reach it
when you have found another one
there
laying in your bed
asking you what is taking you
so long at the door
watching you undress
asking
what you are looking at
i am right here
love
i am

Kacper Niburski is a twin who is convinced he would make a good triplet. Don’t ask his brother, though.

Haneen Eldiri is a U2 Psychology Student.
Photograph by Mackenzie Roop.

The truth is putting on its shoes.” - Charles Spurgeon • “The best way to find out if
One January when I was six, Daddy (who in my memory is always graying at the temples, though that surely came later) made me put on my snow pants, thread the string joining my mittens through the sleeves of my coat, put that on, then my boots and hat, and packed me into the car to go for Special Time. Mommy and Daddy both worked a lot and most days after school Mrs. Lorimer watched me at her place, which wasn’t much fun (she didn’t even have t.v.), so I had Special Time twice a month, once with Mommy and once with Daddy. We would go somewhere fun like the zoo or the movies and then out for dinner, and if it was Special Time with Daddy we’d get ice cream after.

“Put your hat on,” Daddy said getting into car as he saw I’d taken it off and put it on the seat between my legs. I liked my hat; I’d gotten it that Christmas and even though it wasn’t a toy it was a good present. It was furry and had flaps that came down over my ears or could be tied up at the top if I wanted. I put it on and Daddy started the car.

“Where do you want to go, Snow Princess?” Daddy asked. He called me that when I wore my hat.

“How about … Centre Island?”

“It’s too far, and we’d have to wait for the ferry. How about High Park?” I said “Okay”, though not as excited by the idea. I’d been once, and we’d seen animals and I played on a playground that was a wooden castle, but there were no rides.

I slouched down until I could only see telephone poles and wires and street-lights out the window and sometimes the tops of buildings or trees. When there were only treetops and no buildings or phone wires, that meant we’d reached the park. Daddy pulled the car into a parking lot beside a restaurant with an outdoor patio that was closed now due to the snow.

“They have a tree inside, remember?” Daddy said.

“Can we get hot chocolate?”

“Maybe later.” He made me put my hat on again and made sure my coat was done up, then took our skates out of the trunk and held my hand and we went down a path with a railing, moving carefully because it was steep and slippery. At the bottom was a small lake called Grenadier Pond (Daddy had

“you can trust somebody is to trust them.” - Ernest Hemingway • “The trust of the
sung a song called “The British Grenadiers” when we were here before) and on the other side, past the highway where you could see cars going by really fast, Daddy said there was Lake Ontario. We walked by groups of people and families out with their kids until we got to a quiet spot by the pond where a woman wearing the exact same hat as me stood looking out over the ice.

She turned as we approached, smiling at Daddy and at me even wider. She was prettier than Mommy, with straight blonde hair that came down onto her coat from under her hat (her flaps were tied up; mine were down). Her eyes were clear light blue and her mouth was a bit wider than most people’s but it made her smile show her teeth, which were perfect.

I hung back by a bench while Daddy went over to her and said something; then he brought her over.

“Hey Gwen,” he said. “This lady’s looking for people to skate with.”

The woman held out her hand for me to shake. I did, quickly, then went over to stand beside Daddy. The woman was watching me. I nudged Daddy’s leg and he bent down. “What’s wrong?”

“She’s the Snow Queen,” I whispered, thinking of a story Daddy once told me.

“What?” asked the woman.

“She says you’re the Snow Queen,” Daddy said, like it was a joke. The woman waited, still smiling. “Like the fairy tale, you know, Hans Christian Andersen? It’s perfect, because she’s my Snow Princess. You two can be winter royalty together.”

Then Daddy sat me on the bench and took my boots off and put my skates on my feet. The woman sat beside me to put on her own skates. “Do you want me to tie your laces?” she asked, and Daddy switched places and the woman did my laces into a double bow. Then we went out onto the ice.

I had first learned to skate when I was four, but we only went a few times each year (mostly Nathan Philip’s Square at Christmas and New Year’s) so I wasn’t very good and the ice on the pond wasn’t smooth like a normal skating rink, it had little bumps or dips all over the place and it would have been easy for me to fall. So I held onto Daddy’s glove for support while the woman skated beside me, a bit farther off. “Try on your own for a bit,” Daddy said. “You’re a big girl now,” he added when I hesitated. “I’m sure you can do it.”

I let go of his glove but kept my fingers within reach of his and skated.

innocent is the liar’s most useful tool.” - Stephen King • “To be trusted is a great-
alongside him. I wobbled a bit but after a while I pulled my hand away from
his an inch and then he moved farther away; he skated faster, heading up to
where the pond narrowed. Seeing him leave, I panicked and stuck my arms
out for balance while my feet almost fell out from under me, but the woman
cought hold of my hand.
I looked up at her – she was looking back at me, still smiling. “It’s fun, isn’t
it?” she said, raising her voice slightly over the wind and the sounds of our
blades cutting into the ice. I nodded and we kept skating for a bit. Then I
tugged her hand so she’d bend down. “I’m cold,” I heard myself saying.
“Steve,” she called out, and Daddy came back from the other side of the
pond; I don’t know why he’d gone over there instead of skating beside us.
“Gwen says she’s cold.”
“Already?” Daddy said to her, then to me, “You aren’t just trying to get hot
chocolate, are you?”
“No,” I said, chattering my teeth and shivering and making a noise that
wasn’t really “brrr” but was kind of like that.
“All right” said Daddy, then “Is that okay?” to the woman, who nodded
and smiled again, and we skated to the bank. Daddy took my skates off and
helped the woman pull off hers, then did his, and we all put our boots back
on (you could leave them unattended and they’d still be there when you
came back, Daddy said, not like Central Park in New York) and walked back
up to the restaurant.

It did have a tree inside, its trunk growing up from the counter and branches
with red autumn leaves stretching along the ceiling to hang over us. There
was a line at the counter with lots of parents and children waiting to get
drinks and snacks. I explained that even though I really had been cold and
wasn’t just pretending, hot chocolate would help warm me up and make me
ready to go back out again sooner. Daddy looked annoyed, but the woman
laughed and said she’d get it for me. After she and Daddy argued about who
would pay (but not like Daddy argued with Mommy; they were both grin-
ning) we lined up and all got warm drinks, but Daddy wouldn’t let me get a
cookie.

We sat at a table close to the tree, Daddy sitting beside me and the woman
sitting across from him. I tried to drink my hot chocolate but it was too hot
to drink right away, although Daddy was drinking his coffee and the woman
was sipping her apple cider.
“I have to pee,” I said. Daddy got up.

“er compliment than being loved.” - George MacDonald • “For every good reason
“I can take her,” the woman offered.
“I can go by myself,” I said, pointing to the entrance to the washroom, which I could see from our table. “It’s not New York.”
Daddy laughed at this and asked me if I was sure I’d be okay. I nodded and he helped undo the zipper on my snow pants so I could get them off the rest of the way by myself. Then I walked past the line-up and into the washroom. Even though it was winter, it had the same kind of damp smell public toilets have in the summer when you’re on vacation and stop along the highway. There were a few women and girls milling around, going in or out of toilet stalls or washing their hands in the sink or looking at themselves in the mirror while they fixed their hair. I found an empty stall and I had to flush the toilet because there was already someone’s pee in there, then I took off my snow pants and hung them on the hook on the back of the door that I could barely reach, then sat down to pee. I left it there, figuring it was fair if someone else did it to me, and went to the sink to wash my hands but I didn’t dry them because they only had those dryers that blow air.

As I made my way out of the washroom carrying my snow pants, I saw through the line of customers that the woman was sitting where I had been, and she and Daddy were leaning in close whispering to one another. I hung back by the washrooms, watching them. Daddy said something into the woman’s ear, then she laughed and kissed him, not just on the cheek but on the lips, and I thought: Who is she to be kissing my Daddy? Why would she want to? Why would he let her?

I came through the line-up and they saw me and the woman stood up. “I was keeping your seat warm,” she said, moving back to hers. I sat down without saying anything; Daddy gave me a weird look, like he was trying to read my mind, but then gave up and went back to chatting with her. I tried to finish my hot chocolate but didn’t really want it anymore and put the cup down on the table only half finished.

“All set?” Daddy asked, not even mentioning that I hadn’t drank it all. I handed him my snow pants and he helped me put them on again, zipping them up at the back where I couldn’t reach. Then we went outside. “What do you want to do now?” Daddy asked, but I wasn’t sure if he was asking me or the woman.
“Would you like to go skating some more?” the woman asked. I shook my head.

there is to lie, there is a better reason to tell the truth.” - Bo Bennett • “The love of
“We’ve got the toboggans in the trunk,” Daddy said, and I shrugged, so we went back to the car and got them – one of those red plastic sheets with holes for handles that you can never stay on, and a wooden one shaped like a proper sled with seats for two people and a rope that was supposed to steer but did nothing. Daddy carried this and I carried the red sheet over to the top of the hill overlooking the pond. It was full of other kids and teenagers sliding down, some without toboggans at all; it looked fast and scary and fun. Daddy went down with me the first time on the two-seater sled, and then I went by myself a few times, sometimes falling off but sometimes staying on right to the end. “Can I go?” asked the woman when I’d come back up, dragging the sled by its string.

“Okay,” I said and put the sled down and the woman sat in the rear seat, tucking her coat beneath her. I sat down between her legs and she pushed off; we hung on the edge for a second, then picked up speed all at once and went barreling down the hill faster than when I’d been on my own like we were flying and I looked at the snow zooming past moving as fast as the pavement outside a car window and I hoped we wouldn’t crash or tip over but we didn’t and I leaned back into the woman and her warmth and the softness of her coat made me feel safe.

We stayed on the hill until four, when it was time to go so we could get home before dark. The woman had her own car, and when we said goodbye, Daddy asked if I’d like to play with her again. I said “Yes!” and after putting me in the car he talked with her some more; maybe about the next time she could come and play, I thought.

Daddy got into the car and put on a Solid Gold Classics tape he’d bought at the gas station. He didn’t say anything for a while, just hummed along to the music. About halfway home, when we were stopped for a red light, he turned to me.

“Did you have fun?”

“Yes,” I said.

“Did you like the Snow Queen?”

“Yes,” I said again, leaning back in my seat.

“We can see her again some time – would you like that?” he asked, but I felt tired and didn’t answer. “I love you so much,” he said, then went back to driving.

When we got home I sat on the floor in the hallway and wouldn’t take off my snow suit, so Mommy had to come and struggle with me to get it off.

“What’s wrong,” Mommy asked when I wouldn’t cooperate. “Wasn’t it fun?”

a dog is a pure thing. He gives you a trust which is total. You must not betray it.”
“She’s just tired,” Daddy said. “We had a great time.”
“Where did you go?” asked Mommy.
“To High Park,” I said. “We saw the Snow Queen, and she has blonde hair and a hat like mine.”
“It was a game we were playing,” Daddy said. “She was the Snow Princess, so we made up a Queen.”

“We didn’t make her up,” I insisted. “She was there.”
Daddy smiled and winked at Mommy when he thought I wasn’t looking. She finished taking my things off and went back into the kitchen to continue making dinner, and I stayed on the floor wondering why my Daddy would pretend I was lying.

The above photograph was taken by Chloe Dolgin, a U2 student in Cultural Studies whose mission is to care about the tiniest things that mean the hugest amount.

- Michel Houellebecq • “Never trust anyone who doesn’t drink coffee.” - AJ Lee
The above photograph was taken by Mackenzie Roop.

“I’m not upset that you lied to me, I’m upset that from now on I can’t believe
I am at a Quaker meeting. My limbs are motionless but my eyes dart around, spying on the expressions of people whose eyes are closed, wondering if they feel sleepy – if they’re maybe secretly napping. I listen to the sounds of rustling leaves, construction, and cars – I attempt to fix my gaze on a specific clump of leaves outside the window, but my eyelids grow heavy, and I revert to darting them around. Oh dear. I need to get this right – need to figure out how to do this right – before the hour is over. How much time is left? Is there still enough time to get it right?

I am at a Gnostic meeting. I have no idea what this place is. All I know is, a Halloween skeleton is staring straight at me.

"Focus on your nose... now focus on your mouth... now your neck... your shoulders... stomach..."

“I am aware that…” ...that my neck feels unpleasantly stretched when I focus on it. That a skeleton is spying on me. That I need to remember all these Gnostic pearls of wisdom so that I can scribble them down afterwards. Okay. Let’s review. Thoughts as passing clouds. Experiential knowledge. Divine immanent but trapped. Meditation as communion. I observe that I think, therefore I am more than the I that thinks. Thoughts as passing clouds. Passing…

I am in the Birks chapel, attempting to keep the tips of my thumbs ever-so-slightly brushing, to keep my eyes ‘softly’ focused on the grey stone floor. Should I buy french fries at lunch? What did the professor mean by shiny empathy? Should I tweak my winter semester schedule? Did I say hi loudly enough? If we don’t fix our minds on anything, and just let all our thoughts pass like clouds, will awareness of God pass too?

Okay. I’ll take the first half hour to figure all this out. Then, once it’s all resolved, I’ll be able to let it all pass… dissolve… fly away… and spend the last half hour in meditative peace.

No.

I must jump… I must surrender all answers, all plans, all solutions… I must submit to the uncertain, the unsettled, the unresolved. I must step off a cliff, trusting that nothing will fall apart… that I won’t be left with chaos, disorientation, a black hole, a crumbled mess, but instead a glint of peace.
The fluidity of my world;
    I wake and sleep
And in between I live.
Fluctuating up and down,
    Vibrating fast and slow,
The frequencies of my essence flow.

The mind wanders in a distant paradise
    Far, far to the west.
The hands are writing from the moon
And he is so far that he cannot see
    The truth of the words penned.

With no connections, the threads lie alone;
It takes a master craftsman to weave them together.
Over the next and crossed back to the former;
    A complicated mixing, an ordered chaos.

Will you ever understand?
    Ah, that is the question.
The answer lies within.
    Esotericism knows all perception.

They say that when one listens to all sound
That the truths of the universe will be revealed.
    Ha, people will believe anything these days.
Just yesterday I heard someone say the earth was created by this massive explo-
sion of matter.
    What is matter anyway?

Today, when I was at the store, someone approached and asked if I wanted
    Christ to pardon me of all my sins.
Gurus everywhere preaching their stories and paths towards Truth.
    My mind can’t keep track.
    What is Truth anyway?

I walk along the path that I set for myself
    I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.
It sounds easy but it’s not.
    Fancies and trivialities consume thought and
Lead to precious time wasted.

dust.” - J.M. Barrie • “Have enough courage to trust love one more time and al-
Walk the way of the Way.
Return back to the original Path, to the basest of the base.
Return back to the primordial composition of the universe.

Trust.
Who to trust?
When all is one and one is all,
Does it matter?
Trust.
Focus your being
On being
And trust
In you
And trust
In this Way.
Trust.

Keep vibrating on my friend.

*Jonah is a third year medical student who lives in blissful ignorance and hopes to share his learnings with others.*

ways one more time.” - Maya Angelou • “It was a mistake,’ you said. But the cruel
PART I.

A pilgrimage above the cityscape,
t’where chaos forms illusive waterfall.
We searched for Meaning (our naïve mistake)
and sought to find it in the stars to fall.
In fleeting moments, we almost forgot
The Solipsistic Law: our foe, our war.

Much wine and time and silence passed (though fraught) …
then forthwith I beheld my Meteor!
Deaf, dumb and blind yet inching ever nigh,
as stolid as it’d been since I was born,
my memories and hopes would make it writhe,
yet to our fate it would again return…
It landed ‘pon my brow; I did succumb
and wept, as if “untimely,” I’d become

PART II.

a paradox of swelling adipose,
in dull dispute with gray rhytidal lay’rs.
Eventually, edentulated bones
would barely grasp my relocated hairs.
I close my eyes; we interdigitate,
confused and scared and lost in frantic thought.
It marches on to cruelly penetrate
the Lonely Fortress “I”… the echoes stop!
It floats through where I thought my Self to be,
neither inflicting nor enduring harm.
And all this time, I’d suffered needlessly,
but fear gave way to trust and then to calm…
Beyond the walls, in brilliant light, we gather
where we were torn, incompletely, from each other.

Lucas finds Meaning in battling against Entropy, Solipsism,
and the Illusion of the Self.

thing was, it felt like the mistake was mine, for trusting you.” - David Levithan •
The above photograph was taken by Katharine Birkness in Florence.

“None of us knows what might happen even the next minute, yet still we go for-
If someone were to read a biography of Andrew Gar, three aspects of his personality would spring from the text. First, Andrew was undeniably an astronomy buff. Second, he was an unhinged individual with bizarre social views. Third, he seemed determined to combine those two aspects of his personality. Of course, Andrew wasn’t notable enough for anyone to write an official biography on him. This was perhaps for the best, as the few times he had appeared in the news, he had not been shown in the most flattering light. They were mostly articles of his attempts to break into NASA headquarters or into astronomical observatories. That time he tried to get close to the president, which only resulted in his getting mercilessly beaten by the Secret Service, was particularly embarrassing. At least in some of his break-ins he had been able to smuggle out a few pieces of equipment which could be used, one way or another, in his project.

Andrew knew, of course, that if he did end up being remembered at all, it would be as a nutcase. And he was fine with that. He knew that in the world of mad people he was... well, not sane, exactly. Perhaps he was insane in a more “realistic” way.

But, as he reminded himself daily, fame was not his goal. And to put it bluntly, he had decided achieving his goal required taking things into his own hands. Certainly that GoFundMe campaign had done nothing for his cause. But he didn’t need them, dammit! They were as crazy and blind to the Truth as everyone else. The device he was furtively carrying in his duffel bag had been expensive, but that had to remain a secret from everyone, even potential funders. As far as they knew, he just liked solar eclipses.

He looked around suspiciously as he lugged the bag to a better location in the park. He needed a spot that was elevated compared to most of the surrounding area. A good vantage point was crucial. The park was pretty packed already, so navigating through the crowd was no easy task.
“Excuse me,” he muttered as he squeezed between two women, accidentally hitting one of them with his raised elbow.

“No worries!” replied one of the women with a grin. The other woman also had a wide smile on her face.

“Fools,” he muttered to himself.

He knew what their cheerful attitudes were all about. They were all vibing on the energy of the event. Their good moods were directly the result of being part of this “historic” event, hanging out with a bunch of people who were also here to celebrate the eclipse. Their sense of worth was validated by the fact that they weren’t alone right now. They felt part of something bigger and that tends to put people in a good mood.

Andrew knew better, of course. He knew that was a false and fleeting sense that blinded people to the Truth. It even made them ignore that they were making themselves targets for attacks. Any extremist with a little skill could smuggle a weapon into this event and wreak havoc in such a packed crowd of people. The event organizers had probably foreseen this, so several security guards were milling around, keeping an eye out. This was bad news for him. He clutched his duffle bag tighter to his body as he passed within inches of a man, nearly hitting him on the head.

Of course, Andrew knew, the people in this crowd were just representative of a larger issue. Namely, crowds of humans, with their feelings of camaraderie and togetherness, simply could not be trusted. If history has taught us anything, it has shown, again and again, that people will commit atrocities while extolling the value of camaraderie and friendship. Hell, they’ll even do it in the name of “loving their community,” as long as they get to define what their “community” actually is.

So, displays of togetherness and social bonding did not reassure him. This had not always been the case, of course. He had once been as blind as these people. He had had faith in his fellow humans, and hope that they would come together and make the world a better place. Education, health care, equality: they had all seemed attainable back then. All that was needed was for people to come together and put in the necessary effort. But people coming together had not achieved this failing to trust everybody, and to trust nobody.” - English Proverb • “Trust, but
and they had even made life on this planet worse for current and future generations. They hadn’t even been able to cure his wife, despite all the effort and resources at their disposal.

But Andrew had come to learn the Truth. Human beings, despite being given multiple chances to prove themselves worthy, had failed miserably. Humanity was simply incapable of solving these issues. This called for radical action.

The sky had been getting darker for a while and eclipse totality was going to occur in just a few minutes. So Andrew knew that he had to get to work or he would miss his chance. He plunked his duffle bag down and took a deep breath to psych himself up for the task ahead.

The culmination of his personal crusade was at hand. He had realized early on that he would have to assemble the device on the spot. Smuggling it here already assembled would have been impossible. But he had trained himself for this moment.

“If you act like this is no big deal, if you exude confidence, no one will question what you are doing,” he kept telling himself. He did know that, while he was far from famous, people might recognize him as the criminal they considered him to be. At least the eclipse-viewing glasses he was wearing helped somewhat in obscuring his face.

He started taking the mechanical components out of his bag and, making sure to avoid eye contact, started putting them together. He thought he noticed a man nearby glance at him a few times, but he kept at it regardless. There was no turning back now. He kept the nozzle and trigger for the last step and once he had screwed them in, he held his breath, waiting for the moment to strike. But no one around him said anything: they were all looking upwards, waiting for the moment of eclipse totality. Someone started yelling out a countdown and others joined in.

“57, 56, 55,”

“Come on, get there already,” Andrew thought. His hand had now moved down to the trigger mechanism.

“30, 29, 28,”

“Hurry up,” he screamed internally. He was surprised at how little his hands were shaking.

verify.” - Ronald Reagan • “We are dying from overthinking. We are slowly killing
The man who had glanced over before suddenly spoke up. “Hey, what exactly is that thing?”

“17, 16, 15,”

“Don’t worry about it, it’ll all be over soon,” Andrew snapped at the man without thinking.

“9, 8, 7,”

“Hey, is that a gun?” the man asked.

“5, 4, 3”

“Hey,” the man shouted, “This guy’s got a gun!”

“Totality!” the crowd shouted in unison, as they looked up intently at the sun, gasping and muttering in wonderment.

Andrew pointed the device and prepared to pull the trigger. Before he could, he felt the weight of the man as he lunged at him. This knocked him on his side, his eclipse-viewing glasses flying off his face. As he hit the ground, he saw that a security guard was rushing towards them. Andrew hesitated for only a moment and then, with all the force he could muster, bit down hard on the arm of his assailant. “Sorry,” Andrew muttered as he spit out some blood, “But I’ve got a job to do.”

Ignoring the man’s screams, he shoved him aside and rushed back to his device. Grabbing hold of the trigger, Andrew swung the nozzle towards the sun. Unfortunately, his struggle with the man, who was currently howling in pain from his injury, had shifted the device slightly, so Andrew had to calibrate it again. This meant staring directly at the eclipse. “They say staring at an eclipse can cause permanent eyesight damage,” he thought briefly, “But I’ve seen enough of this wretched civilization to cover a lifetime.”

And just as the security guard laid a hand on Andrew, he pulled the trigger and a series of colorful lights emanated from the nozzle of the device.

“All right,” Andrew said, turning to face the security guard, “Now you can beat the shit out of me.”

But the security guard just dragged him away from the device and asked him what it was. Meanwhile, a second security guard was looking through his duffel bag.
“So, what is this thing? Is it a weapon?” the guard asked. Andrew, who had stopped struggling, as there was no longer a point, shook his head. “It is salvation. Well, not our salvation, but salvation in general. It’s a message to the stars, to any intelligent beings that are out there in the universe.”

By this point, some of the event organizers had rushed over to see what the commotion was about. The second security guard had pulled out a notebook from the duffle bag. Andrew motioned with his hand.

“The message is on the first page, in case you’re interested. It’s not in English, of course, but pass it here and I can translate it.”

The guard passed him the notebook and Andrew, in as solemn a voice as he could muster, read the message: “To any intelligent life forms that may receive this message: I am communicating on behalf of humanity and I offer a desperate plea to your people. Human beings were given opportunity after opportunity, along with ample time, to solve our many problems, including warfare, poverty and disease, but we have failed at every turn. Perhaps it is how we are constructed or perhaps it is an inevitable facet of the social structures we insist on maintaining. We have been taught to have faith in our abilities, to trust that we can solve these issues. But time and again, we have failed and will continue to fail. There is no hope for us.

“By the time you get this message, humanity may have vanished, but injustice and suffering are plagues that will reach all civilizations, including yours. It is now your responsibility to solve those problems. I wish I could give you advice on how to do this, but human beings have never even come close to solving them. So all I can really say is this: good luck, and try to avoid becoming overconfident in your abilities. I hope you do better than us. You certainly could not do worse.

P.S. If you are ever contacted by human beings after receiving this message, ignore their advice, as it will just make things worse for you.”

There was a moment of silence, no one really knowing how to respond, although Andrew was sure one of the guards muttered the word ‘nut-case’ as he dragged him away. One of the event organizers, an astronomer, walked up to Andrew, a quizzical look on his face.

“So, you felt a solar eclipse was the best time to send this message?” he asked.

the human mind anyway. It’s a death trap.” - Anthony Hopkins • “Never be afraid
“Yes,” Andrew replied weakly. “It also had to be at this location. A large open space, away from city lights.” Oddly enough, he felt exhausted, rather than the sense of elation he had assumed he would feel after successfully completing his mission.

The astronomer nodded. “It’s just that, looking at your device, I don’t think it has any chance of reaching another civilization. You seem to have cobbled together several parts of telescopes, but I don’t see how it would ever achieve what you are hoping for.” “Yes,” Andrew replied, “I looked at as much background research as I could when I was constructing it and much of what I read suggested this would not be a working communication device.”

The astronomer leaned in a little closer. “Um, then why did you build it?” he asked.

Andrew turned to him, his eyes showing how weary he felt. “Well,” he answered, “you have to have faith in something, don’t you?”
Nilufar Mokhtarian is a U2 Psychology student. Through the lens, nature’s embodiment of human vulnerability is captured.
where love resides

Steve Paolitto

the place in your heart for me
was an old, weak wooden shed with no lock
the place in my heart for you
was a three-acre estate in a gated community

easy to break in, and easy for others to break in
i was cold at night. i did not enjoy the other’s company
however i made sure to bring pillows. pillows are warm
it was when you invited the others in and they started
to use my pillows, i realized
the foundations of this shed were not as solid as they seemed
the roof risks coming off at any minute and exposing the slum
the barky walls peel away to reveal a thinness reflective of my
hair
after the stress i have felt being in this rickety structure for so
long

i think i will sleep somewhere else tonight
it’s calling for rain; i have an empty three-acre estate waiting

Steve Paolito (Instagram: @stevespoetry), writes about themes on: life, death, science, love, hate, introspection, self-empowerment, sex, virtue, the environment, optimism, pessimism, nature, art. Heart broken after three years of deep commitment. Studying at the U2 level in Agricultural Economics.

if you trust too much, but you will live in torment if you don’t trust enough.”
In narrow streets and cobbled paths, moonlight danced with shadow. With each step, each measured breath, the darkness spread withal. Then came fear, held close within, that makes one stand, grow taller as if a glance could enhance one’s power, wit or brav’ry. It cannot: that first explosion shook me to my core. Smoke blocked my sight of poor scarred stone as cars cried out with fright. Alas, if I’d’ve known the bomb was naught but New Years tidings, I wouldn’t now be plagued by how this mind responds to endings: The fear did fade, my measured brain spoke: “Hush, t’will soon be over;” And to the end, like an old friend, sighed, “Oh, it’s you again.”

Christmas season – return to faith
Return to sender, pray a moment or two
So this is Christmas, do they know?
The real meaning – salvation
I am not worthy to tie his sandal
(You are not willing?)
Save the world climate change
It doesn’t feel like Christmas unless there is snow

Feed the world /All I want for Christmas is you
Middle Eastern family trying to get away
The refugee equation
The family running for 2000 years
They say we should follow a star
Not a rock star a star heavenward
The heavens we can no longer see too much light in our cities

Are the holy days over?
What could the world give? 3 Kings
Some loonies incense sticks and aqua velva?

- Frank Crane • “Seize the day, and put the least possible trust in tomorrow.” -
Katharine Birkness is a U2 Cognitive Science student who enjoys playing guitar, traveling, and pretending to be vegetarian. The dream is to spend the days cutting up brains. Katharine also took the above photograph.

Jeffrey Mackie is an internationally published and translated poet living in Montreal, Canada. He also does a regular literary feature on CKUT radio in Montreal.

Horace • “Never trust a man, who when left alone with a tea cosy... Doesn’t try
The above photograph was taken by Katharine Birkness in Bagnoregio, Italy.

“it on.” - Billy Connolly • “Me, I’m dishonest, and you can always trust a dishonest
He left on a Sunday,
Nobody saw it coming
Except maybe from my most inner fears,
He left nothing behind, not even a note.

No words could describe the abandonment
we felt
The pain in the heart
Or the tears in our eyes.

I died a little that day too
And now all I can do is pray
And hope to see you in my dreams.
I am lost without you.

I lay awake for hours at night
Wondering if I will ever be able to
trust in life again,
Trust in anyone, or anything.

My anxiety and existential questions
devour me
"Why keep going?"

My depression craves for my attention
too, and won't allow me to
get out of bed, eat, or even read.

I am stuck with a burden so heavy
Sometimes I would rather cut my veins wide open, or jump out of my balcony
And yet I feel so empty all the time.

The thought that everything I have, love and treasure,
Could disappear just like this
Also made me realize I should enjoy every moment and seize every opportunity.

I just want to make you proud
And one day we will be reunited.

I have learned to trust in destiny.
It is easier to believe that everything happens for a reason.
Nothing makes fucking sense otherwise.

Sarah Fontier is a U2 student majoring in political science. She has developed a weird passion for memes and is quite a fan of poetry, literature and art in general.

man to be dishonest. Honestly, it’s the honest ones you have to watch out for.” -
Weekly Zen Meditation
Every Friday morning, from 8:15 to 9:15, MORSL Buddhist chaplain, Zengetsu Myokyo, offers Zen meditation in the Birks Chapel [3520 University Street, 2nd floor]. Please plan to arrive a few minutes early as one is unable to join after 8:15.

Orthodox Christian Students
Join our twice-monthly student meeting, Orthodox Christian Fellowship! We also have monastery visits, picnics, and movie nights. Contact McGill’s Orthodox chaplain, Father Ihor for details: ikutash@gmail.com.

Uncover McGill
January 15-20th, 2018. Uncover McGill is a weeklong invitation to explore topics of faith and answers to life’s biggest questions with us.

God in the midst of hardships: A Muslim, Jewish, and Christian discussion.
Tuesday, January 16th, Leacock 132

Winter Coats Needed!
Donations of clean winter coats in good condition are desperately needed for the Winter Coat Project. Smaller donations can be dropped off at MORSL (3495 rue University) Mon-Fri 10am-4pm and large bags of donations can be dropped off at the Newman Centre, 3484 Peel Street, 10am-2pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Please mark all bags clearly as “Winter Coat Project” and drop them in the Newman lobby via the lower entrance.

The McGill Office of Religious and Spiritual Life (MORSL)
MORSL, a proud member of McGill Student Services, is located on the second floor of the Presbyterian college (3495 rue University). Please feel free to stop by our Meditation/Prayer Room any weekday from 10:00am to 4:00pm! You’ll find a full-spectrum light therapy lamp, CD’s for guided relaxation, a serene space with floor pillows and meditation stools, and some suggestions on how to meditate in different traditions. Take time for some serenity! Stay connected with MORSL on Twitter @SpiritualMcGill or like us on Facebook: fb.com/morsl

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McGill Protestant Christian Chaplaincy
3475 Rue University. A multi-denominational centre for community, service, worship, and pastoral care. We have midweek worship and lunch, Wednesday night Bible studies and supper, monthly contemporary bilingual worship, and retreats. Please visit www.mcgillprotestant.ca or email Chaplain Jean-Daniel at jd@mcgillprotestant.ca to learn how to connect.

Mid-Week Quaker Meditation
During the academic year, the Montreal Mid-Week Quaker Meeting meets every Wednesday, 17:30-18:30, at McGill’s Newman Centre, 3484 Peel Street in the Ryan Library (2nd floor, end of the hall). For the rest of the year (summer and winter breaks and exam periods), keep an eye on our Facebook group (https://www.facebook.com/groups/mlmidweek/) as the location may change from week to week.

My Neighbour’s Faith Series
This series of monthly visits to Montreal’s places of worship provides a guided experience with various world religions being practiced in Montreal. Email morsl@mcgill.ca to join the mailing list.

Local Gnostic Community Meetings
The Holy Grail Narthex is a study group of the Apostolic Johannite Church. We gather for fellowship, study, discussion, ritual, and generally uplifting times. Please feel free to get in touch with our lay leader, Jonathan Stewart, at holygrail@johannite.org or at 514-437-2948 for further information, to get details on upcoming meetings, or if you just want to chat.

Newman Centre
Newman Catholic Centre, 3484 Peel Street, is a home away from home for Catholic Students. Visit www.newmancentre.org to find out more about this centre for Catholic spiritual, social, and intellectual life on campus!

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McGill Interfaith Students’ Council (MISC)
Are you passionate about promoting interfaith dialogue on campus? Join MISC to have a chance to work with faith groups and promote inter-community dialogue and religious diversity! Work on the Council to make collaborative events like the Annual Interfaith Day happen and advance religious literacy and harmony on campus. For more information, contact: jonahwiner18@gmail.com

The Jewish Community at McGill
Visit www.hillel.ca, www.chabadmcgill.com, and ghettoshul.com for information on shabbat meals, holiday celebrations, educational programming, and fun social activities!

- D. Elton Trueblood • “Love all, trust a few, do wrong to none.” - W. Shakespeare
WILL

Radix McGill Student Spirituality Magazine
Due January 21st 2018
radix@mail.mcgill.ca

Poems
Stories
Reviews
Photos
Paintings
Drawings
Opinions
Articles

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