The Ear is published three times a year by the publications group of Gallery Gachet. Submissions are welcome: the deadline for the April 2010 issue is February 28. Email theear@gachet.org with your submission. The theme for the next issue is “Then and Now.” We will not publish work that violates the human rights of others.

Contributors

Editorial and Design
Karen Ward (Lead), Bonitto, Gillian Cole, Lara Fitzgerald, Bernadine Fox, Robert Gardiner, Michelle Kopczyk, Quin Martins, Bruce Bryon Ray.

On the Cover
Detail from “Modern Medicine,” by Peter Lojewski. Design by Mairin Deery.

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Gallery Gachet
Gallery Gachet is a collectively run arts exhibition, studio, and presentation space located in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside Community. Gallery Gachet is unique in Canada: we provide professional artists marginalized by his or her mental health illness, trauma, or abuse experience with opportunities to exhibit, curate, perform, teach, and develop leadership skills. Members are supported in their goals for developing sustainable arts practices and careers, while contributing to the artist-run centre.

Through the display of avant-garde art (outsider, contemporary and community-engaged) and public discourse events, we aim to eliminate stigma related to issues around mental health. We believe art is a means for survival, self-expression and health. The Ear’s mandate is to provide a vehicle for marginalized artists to publish their work. Visit our website (gachet.org) for our Basis of Unity and more information about our programs.

Collective Members

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Jack Kerouac wrote a poem about walking down the street one day and being able to see right through the sidewalk. The poem went on to describe how, to him, this proved that reality was nothing more than an illusion. Sure, it is likely that he was high at the time but his experience was still real. As an angst-filled teenager, I was having similar experiences. The fact that I recall this poem, read so long ago, demonstrates the impression it made and the underlying effect it had on my perception of life since then.

The theme of this issue of The Ear, Atypical Perspectives, is a celebration of work that looks at reality from an alternative perception. We debated using “fucked up” perceptions but political correctness won out. Whatever your preferred language, we hope you enjoy this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together for you. Our next issue’s theme is “Then and Now.” We can’t wait to see what our readership will submit!

– Quin Martins

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Once everyone had gone underground again, I thought seriously about moving to the island. The ways in which we'd failed pressed upon me hourly, the power of the super-state too much yet again. Dangle a 50% sale in the face of an ardent militant, and even I'd think, well, I could use some socks.

Is that just it? The television ads for cars (Professional Driver. Closed course. Do not attempt.) are just soooo compelling. It’s the official SUV of the Olympics, you know. As are little dogs which are so cute and always get in the way on the barricades. You know? At the time, I thought the watercannons were laced with psychoactive drugs, and everyone said I was being paranoid, but have you noticed how everyone’s eyes have that glazed look? Like they’ve been drugged to think that nothing ever happened. Or could.

What happened in May 1968 in France could happen anywhere. Students and workers joined up and shut the place down. The orchestra went on strike, the soccer team. Everyone had a grievance, my favourite is “Down with Boredom!” The government and the opposition, after all just two sides of the same establishment coin, panicked since it seemed everyone stopped acknowledging their authority. Oh, and there were riots. A student died.

For some reason, they don’t teach about this in class. Better to spread doctrines of Progress and Nation and all that shit. Keep any discussion of the sixties to music and drugs, please. As my elder comrade on the bus tells me, it was also a lot of fun. I know! Shut up! We’re still getting the gas!

And the mess. Maybe I’ll buy in: start a business selling t-shirts on the internet. I can sell failure.¹ Sure, it’s sick. Robots on exercycles, tied to televisions, row on row. I’ve seen it, I’ve seen the people hypnotically obeying: wake work consume watch sleep. Canadians can’t do revolutions, the hockey season is too long, and they don’t care enough about anything else. I forget where I heard that – probably the CBC. Or I made it up.

It’s my idealism that is the problem, in the end. I want people to give a shit, to refuse to bear witness to the suffering of their fellow citizens, and demand that their government do something or just get out. I’m tired of stupid politics that go nowhere. I want too much, it seems.

During the Paris Commune of 1871, the people famously brought

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down the Column Vendôme, widely seen as a symbol of Imperial power. After the Commune was crushed, the government put the column right back up, like it had never happened. Numbers, as ever, are disputed, but in the final, bloody week, between ten and fifty thousand people were killed.

History’s important. So we failed, but we can’t forget. Marx explained to me that we make our own history, but we have to remember that we live in history too, that the traditions of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living (1851). And it does. You can see how painful it is if you take a moment to look around. An alert, open, and healthy mind is a hard thing to find, and even harder to keep.

So we failed. If I seek refuge in the People’s Republic of Bowen Island, we may yet try again. I’ll continue to live as if I were just pretending to, like the failures of old, transported far out of France, having relatively quiet revolutions, chaos only in their minds, endlessly turning nightmares, straining at invisible straitjackets. Did it never happen here? Really? I wonder. It may just be me.

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As a consumer driven organization, ARA is specifically dedicated to advocate and support individuals with mental health issues. We provide a safe, comfortable, non-judgmental atmosphere to provide the necessary services for your needs. While we offer advocacy & intervention, we also promote self-empowerment! Self-referrals accepted.

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**BECOME A HYPNO-DJ**

The morning of September 11th 2001, I was asleep with my radio tuned to a news station (having the radio on helps me to fall asleep). It so happens that on that now infamous morning, the news station was broadcasting live the attacks on the World Trade Centre. When I awoke, fresh in my mind was the memory of a dream I had that a b limp was trying to dock at the tip of the Empire State Building. I sat there for a moment trying to make sense of what was happening. Could it be that the radio transmission had influenced my dream?

It was this question that led to my studies in Hypno-DJ’ing, and through my studies I have come to understand my experience that morning. I have since developed a 3-hour training session that will teach you how to use audio stimuli to influence dreams. For only $1995 you too can be trained in the art of Hypno-DJ’ing!

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**Quin M. Martins**

Registered Hypno-DJ

“Break Free!”

604 715-5049
“Leviathan maketh a path to shine after him; 
One would think the deep to be hoary.”
– Job 41:32

When S saw the building – three stories high, he was aware of an indelible mist rising before the vision. It drifted through the grounds and made it seem almost like an apparition. Two uniformed men opened the cage at the back of the bus. He stepped out into the light – squinting his eyes. Both legs were chained and he was wearing a dirty grey shirt and pants. They unlocked the manacles and led him cautiously toward the ancient wooden doors. As they entered, an inquisitive guard firmly guided him into a room with green chairs. As he waited there he heard them whisper beyond a closed door. He paused to get his bearings.

The walls were a pastel, yellow-white. A spartan atmosphere was intimated – just a table and three chairs, and a bookcase full of texts. His gaze lingered there but saw no titles of interest. He could feel a ponderous and oppressive feeling. This was an old building. It was a place of voices – real and imagined. The halls he had seen were dark and gloomy. Outside in the mist was a pastoral landscape with neatly groomed grounds. Still this was a lie for inside – all was desolation.

He could smell the scent of decay. The wood in the walls was rotten and the floor was buckled – as all old floors are. Also he swore he could breathe in the essence of medication and their chemicals. It was a sickly sweet haze. The sense was of a wound that had festered and gave off its sour bitterness – like the shore of a sea where dead seaweed lay and saltwater wafted in the wind. This was a thing that was palpable, he almost fainted from the feeling of it. So this was to be his home. He felt the fear of the unknown. He had entered a cave into the darkness of the Earth. It was there he felt the damp walls and the feeling of a terrible weight. Then the door opened.

A man with a hooked nose gestured to him. He was brought into another room. They questioned him for a half hour. Most of the questions were to do with his perceptions. “Did he know what day it was?” “Did he know his own name...etc?” They made him take off his clothes and shower. The water was cold and he shivered. They then made him put on a dirty yellow pair of pajamas. They took his belongings and put them in a locker. He was led through those dark hallways (“This is hell,” he thought, “or at least Purgatory”). Soon he was brought to the third floor and left to fend for himself.

The first impression he had was of quietness. In that dimly lighted place he stood – hesitant and uncertain. His life was bordered by walls and there were three rooms. The first was a kitchen, the second was the television room and the third was the smoking room. He walked into the last one – opening the glass and metal door. Several pairs of eyes looked at him – quizzi-cally. Soon their interest waned and he was ignored. He bummed a cigarette off a tall man and sat down. This room was full of a blue haze – of smoke and sunlight. The windows generously showed the effulgent grounds.

After a few months of this he became inured to life inside this hospital. Caught in the routine of the days he became jaded and indifferent. He would play chess with the fat man or listen to the men complain in the smoke room. He was overcome with all the faces and would often distract himself by sitting in the bathroom by the tub. Despite this he was now one of the citizens
of this exclusive club. Sometimes there were card games at the table. Men would share jokes at the expense of the less fortunate ones. Those who were out of their minds would sit in the corner and talk to themselves endlessly. One of them would make gestures as if he was eating something. S never asked questions and was content to walk the halls from one side to the other.

It was then that things became a similitude of a dream. He started to suspect that all this had a purpose. There was a dark design behind things. What seemed chaotic at first soon hid a pattern of immense proportions. He saw the doctors and the nurses at work and wondered if they were more than what they seemed. At the same time he became aware that there were certain patients he did not recognize. All this hid an awful truth – a thing without a name. He tried hard to understand, but it was beyond him. Sometimes he caught someone looking at him with more than just familiarity.

He was also aware of a feeling – of complete disease. On the yellow walls he saw various spots. Little patches of darkness like stains. If he looked closely he saw they were uncrusted with a strange sort of white material. They were like a sort of fungus. They came off if you scratched them – little flecks of glass-like white. He felt the stench of death here in this place – like vines of promiscuous madness – of a smoke-like vapour you cannot see. The glass of the windows was inscrutable – stained with dust and grime. The floor was pitiful – linoleum that once was blue but now of a shade of greyish fish-like scales. These were coming off in layers of ash-like crumbs.

One time when he was playing chess with the fat man, he felt like he was being watched. He turned to look and saw a man with wavy red hair. He focused his eyes and fixed them on the stranger. “Must be a new patient,” he thought to himself. After this he was more intent on how many men lived in this environment. It seemed there were more of them every day. Men he did not recognize – faces white and intent like ghosts, would walk through the ward. What were once twenty men were now much more.

He was falling into a trap – of delirium and anxiety. He had thought the hospital had voices in it – but he soon sensed there was so much more. The days passed and he no longer contended with it – but gave himself to the nightmare. He started to believe that the hospital was a living thing – made out of the many souls who had passed through its doors. It was a borderline between the living and the dead. But more than that (and this was monstrous) it was willful and desirous of more souls. The doctors and the nurses were working from its commands. They studied him. And in this place he could hear a voice at the bottom of all the other voices.

And the inmates multiplied. He sat in the bathroom by the tub and talked to a man. This man lay in the water and leaned his head against the porcelain wall. He was long and gaunt with piercing eyes. He muttered quietly so that S could hardly hear him. They talked about dreams and how they would often encroach upon the living. The man read a poem he had written from memory. It was very beautiful. S complimented him and commented on its rhyme and diction. The man looked at him, then lowered his head under the water. Soon S saw that the water was empty and he’d been talking to a spectre.

He heard that voice call as if from the bottom of the sea. It spoke in an ancient tongue – of a time of primal memory. He could hear the inhuman words intoning
like a bell – he didn't understand at first then woke up with a shiver. He'd been sleeping. Going to the bathroom he splashed cold water on his face. Now he knew for sure that he was ensnared in a dream. Drawn in where he could never escape.

He sat in the smoking room, gazing in the mist. He was distracted by the curtains on the window. He imagined a face shaped by the folds and patterns. He had often done this as a child – seeing forms in the clouds. Now he stared at the features, eyes, nose and mouth. He had the impression that it was looking at him – then the spell passed. He had a sense of being caught in the fabric – looking back at himself as the sun filtered through the curtains.

He saw the men who had been trapped in the walls and lived there – held in the rooms and corridors with nothing left of themselves but a pale trace of consciousness. No more than smoke now – nothing left but a watery wisp of memory. Names now forgotten – lives held tightly by a hand of a master – and who was this master? This was a God worshipped by his unaware followers. This was a dark God who demanded complete loyalty.

And then it finally came full circle. It was late at night – perhaps three in the morning. He was sleeping but then awoke with a start. He was in a dorm with ten other men. The beds were stuck together in rows. The room was dark and the men snored – but there was another noise. A shuffling like something was dragging against the floor – he lay with his face in the pillow and listened. He heard a scratching that seemed to come from beneath his bed. He raised his head and followed the sound from underneath him to the other side. Daring to look behind him towards the dorm door, he saw a silhouette.

At first it was indistinct, and then he saw the face. The scent of rotting wood rushed into his face – he almost fainted from the smell. He saw a form of bestial hunger – the nose (or muzzle) was distorted. The mouth was jagged like the splinters of a trunk. Moss covered the head with veins of discolored bark like a crust on the skin. But the eyes – oh the eyes! They were two holes full of darkness. He sensed a black of endless night – two voids that were blacker than any abyss or hell. Deep into them he stared and felt himself falling. The monster than made the sound of whistling.

At first it sounded like a keening and then became a wind blowing. He could feel the coldest winter – a place of desolate lands. He heard the sound of a piper making his tune. The stars above were alien and he could not recognize their patterns. As this terrible wind blew – he was aware of a land of dark, black hills.

He now knew the truth – of what the hospital was. It was a gateway to other places – both real and unreal. This was where souls were taken away by the guardian of worlds. He was the avenging angel and any who were unfortunate enough to know him – were stolen and taken to this land of whispering shadows – this was his kingdom. He was the God of vengeance – for those who wasted their lives – those who did not live to the fullness of their years.

Now S was taken to the side-room and left there. His eyes were far away and gleamed white and pale. They looked like hunted eyes – they moved about. The doctors questioned him but he would not answer. He would stare without seeing them. He was in another world. They tried different combinations of pills but nothing worked. He was now lost to the world. He just looked out the window sometimes and other times he lay on the floor. He would tremble and speak to himself saying the same thing over and over. “Daddy, don’t turn out the light. Daddy, please don’t turn out the light.”
Congratulations to Gallery Gachet on publishing the first edition of The Ear!

The staff of Intersections look forward to many, many more.

Introducing GREY TO GREEN
An Intersections Media Project

A public art project undertaken by Intersections Media “GREY TO GREEN” is a unique introduction of community arts into an unlikely city space: a parking lot and back alley in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver.

Grey to Green’s 2010 renewal plan for the lot and alleyway at 150 E. Cordova Street includes:

An “art fence” project that will transform a parking lot fence into a canvas for local artists to display their work.

A wall mural project for the back of the building at 319 Main Street.

Locally run events such as outdoor movie nights, live performances and art showings to be held in the parking lot on Sundays.

To learn more about how your organization can utilize the renewed lot for your event please e-mail us at info@intersectionsmedia.com

Intersections would like to thank The City of Vancouver, District 319 Theatre, The William Vince Foundation, Terrafirm Enterprises and T. Moscone & Bros. for their support of the Grey to Green project.

Intersections Media

Intersections Media is a non-profit, skills development program that works with youth facing multiple barriers to employment. Intersections uses film production and arts projects as a means of involving participants in project based learning, which harnesses creativity and educational capacity while teaching communication, interpersonal and time management skills.

For more information please visit www.wvfoundation.com
Tuesday
or “I Went Crazy and All I Got Was This Lousy Poem”
(originally titled April Fool’s Eve; written from hospital, March 31st, 1999)
by C. Clarke

Catastrophic synapses
crashing through glass:
hurled unfurling through
fire-chimed air,
gravity spinning love-knots
into my hair

threw off my helmet
and found
I could breathe on the Sun

In the still of old misery
blood spoiled to wine;
in the steel-trap of history, the
Earth’s fate is mine—
run to hide in my chakras: I climb their bright vine

chewed through snared reality, now I am finally
free

Camelot shining in my
unclenched hand:
you pressed a five-dollar bill there and then
turned to sand…

desert shape moaning
its dark moon rising

at last

* * *

Now idling quiet
in lightless cradles: patient
lashed pill-to-pillow, my
bones landing ill one by one

your eyes were like sun through water so love ly
i’m sorry:
saw down to your
murky ocean floor
everything touched by the madness made holy

i’d never seen your hands shake before

Thin now and aching in pale Easter hues
in glittering dunes now: mirages
aren’t true
loneliness slowly this
stark relief:
chain-link fence against sky and trees shy with new leaf
a cigarette trembling against glowing grief

spider dumbstruck amongst ruined
webs of belief

under that winking moon…
Blue Angel
Sharon Burns
Some Pertinent Questions

by Delazzra

Where does the mind go when it goes? when it is no longer here focused on the tasks at hand capable of guiding the life it represents with awareness and intelligence

How does the familiar become strange the daily routine barely negotiable? As ability declines does the mind reject or just lose interest?

Do the synapses become tired of routing the same old messages? Does it all begin to seem too much of a strain to bother to pay attention to revolving details, faces, incidents is the strict march of time mainly an annoyance now that the mind has reached its limit

is there a limit to the ordering a mind can do? or is everything just wearing down sequentially does everything the mind has filed away infiltrate other messages and is it that everything incongruent and all that has been repressed becomes lost to the mundane

or could it be that the mind in fact has moved on to a more exalted level and only waits now for the body to relinquish its hold on what it has until now taken for reality.
The opposite of silver is on my tongue

if I could speak a place
she would have said
I would have said
but instead for thirty five years
a bowl of silence stirred golden by love

As if I could explain
why
I sat by her side and
never asked
why she kept faith in her pocket

As if her life never had
Slid unspoken into the burnished furrows of her copper hands
that
birthed and fed
eight
and darned and spooned and lifted in unalloyed quietude,
round meatballs dumplings socks grandbabies
to
smooth cassava school uniforms hurt feelings

while the iron keeps falling
flat hot heavy in clouds of steam

rising before eyes cast down to tasks and
clean square hands if ever idle which was rarer then than now searched beads from her pocket, formed the worn cradle through which they ran quick as hope, no longer clinging heavy to the magnet of her thigh

I have to ask now

before

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Past place
by Afuwa Granger

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J Peachy
Visual Artist
jay.peachy@yahoo.com
jpeachy.carbonmade.com
(two decades ago)

calling home

You must understand

my disappointment

my mother said
her german devoid of other possibilities

my own language
depriving me of all shelter
her honesty rendering me homeless

wondering whether i should applaud her bravado
or let the shallowness of her words echo into emptiness

my schooled brain argues
any dialogue to be better than none
so i push myself forward
through this overseas phone connection heavy with sorrow

each word being danced around
by those not uttered

being placed on a ledge waiting for the fall
each word tilting back & forth into place
like the streaks of her lipstick pressing down on my lips
each hard stroke a rite

You must recognize
the source of my frustration

my mother said
there are lesbians in Italy thin beautiful clad in black leather, hot heels, short skirts no longer skirting the issue
my mother rages
why do you have to stagger like a poor John Wayne imitation

her anger pierces the protective layers of my worn flannel

swoops under the rim of my baseball cap

exposes my scalp thin under my inch-long hair

perhaps one day
my mother did not say letting possibilities drop into lapsed silences

like mine one pubescent Christmas upon receiving a chocolate frog a prince to kiss

my mother said her hope gaining force to waken the princess

i smiled fear circling my heart

(3 months ago)

coming home

my heart circled my fears

You must recognize the source of my frustration

took hold of a happiness so palpable
it crumbled the prescription in my hand so radiant
it smiled from beyond the mirror

30 years of restraint broke through forced slumber the second I stepped into the pharmacy

such relief as my memory reclams each lost point of recognition

my suspect joy of being checked in the washroom legitimate
my smooth draw of the wallet no longer out of place

each injurious “M’am” fading

the barber’s refusal turning into a fleeting moment in time

the hot flashes of anger “she” “lady” “Ms”

no, the hot flashes of anger are still with me in the check-out aisle, the reception desk, the bus terminal

now tempered by guilt not the cute checker’s fault

so used to looking for my self in between words
i suddenly find myself in between body

as i realign
my swagger
my self
my soon
It was the moment just prior to the exact second that Bill’s fingers touched her right breast that was suspended in time. That moment hung there without movement, change, or obvious reason. It was what Emma recalled most about him: not any of the moments after when the warmth and softness of his touch reached through her. No, it was always just that one moment.

Perched conspicuously in Emma’s hands were several of these types of little truths waiting patiently for her to grasp their significance. It was (and she would say, unfortunately) the nature of any truth to just be. Two of these little gems scorched a hole into her skin day after day. No matter how she tried to ignore them, push them away, or transform them into some other more palatable truth, they remained just there. What does one ever do with these bothersome bits? she enquired to seemingly no one in particular. A while back, Emma had spent the better part of a decade confronting a particularly nasty childhood: one she had “forgotten” she had had and one any other sane person would also have chosen to “forget” if choice over such things was freely offered.

Bill had triggered something from back then: something old, musty, painful and unwanted. Perhaps had she not been swept up in that emotional crisis, she would have seen this other little truth coming and stepped out of its way. She presumed she had control and assured herself that the veracity of it would be eventually exposed to be baseless. Therefore, she questioned, why give this little thing any room at all? She was sure scrutiny under a mental microscope would magnify its real agenda into clarity. Surely, it was some unmet childhood need. It always was... yes? Yes, Emma contentedly thought. She chose to stay quiet and wait it out. Then one day it burned an allegorical hole clean through her hand.

Overwhelmed, Emma felt this .... what? What was that feeling? What the hell has happened to me? she demanded to know to those that be. Why him? Why does this frighten me so? Emma dared not define the “this” and no answers were coughed up from behind the veils of her brain. All that was apparent was that damn little truth staring up at her: waiting.

Bill was in the active stages of grief over the death of his partner. His warnings were on the tip of her brain at all times: don’t get close, don’t feel, and don’t need. She had heard each one and, given her own recent break-up, she wholeheartedly agreed. So, what use does this particular truth, which you have yet to speak of, have? she heard someone yammering around in her brain, It is meaningless. It has no value, no currency, and surely no place in what you do with him. Emma needed him to be a pleasant diversion from the difficulties that currently surrounded her. She thought back to his beautiful nipples that stood erect and those fingers that gently stroked her skin. Yes, indeed he was an easy distraction. But he had nothing to give and she felt empty when she thought of him, So, how can this be? How can this be true when there...
Emma yelped as she began metaphorically separating internal threads from the mess in her head: multi-coloured, multi-sized threads; yarns of every colour; wool from many animals; bailer twine from hay bales; and shoelaces? Shoelaces?

So, a little bit of this truth? Being with him had changed for Emma. She had begun to look forward to and wanted to see him and that had her emotionally wilting with horror, Surely I don’t have to tell him any of this. Do I?

Do I?

Maybe, some other voice replied but it was so faint and far away that Emma missed that it had been said at all. In fact, for many years now, she had been ignoring the incessant parade of disconnected words, statements, thoughts and feelings that went on inside. That was all about to change.

Across the room Beethoven’s Ave Maria heaved silence aside and slammed into her like a shock wave ripping through the stratosphere yanking at buried emotions. Emma swung around stumbling to turn it off but only managed to collapse into a sobbing heap. Memories flooded her. On her knees, loss ate her up like fire consumes air. Ancient sorrow tore through her as if she was cheesecloth. She wondered if this was the moment she would ultimately break into a million, unusable pieces. Her hand muffled the strange noises coming out of her throat. Her right leg bounced nervously up and down like a spring out of whack moving her body in unison: back and forth; up and down; in and out; inhale and exhale.

Emma turned to ask those inside, Jesus, will I ever be OK? Can you die from remembering shit? But, the incessant activity inside had now gone quiet. The lack of response was infuriating. Anger pulled her to her feet. Why won’t you answer me? Where the fuck are all of you when I need you? Emma just felt empty. Did I suddenly become not multiple when I wasn’t paying attention? I am aware of you talking in there. I know you are there. Why am I always out here by my fucking self? Get out here! Damn You All! You complicate my life. You make bad decisions, vomit up memories, do stuff and then leave me out here holding the fucking bag. I don’t want to do this anymore you assholes! It hurts way too much. Damn you, she yelped and Damn you, she whimpered.

This may all sound a bit strange. But you see, what most didn’t know was that Emma’s childhood had required more than the usual, available forms of coping skills. When abused, some children can runaway or tell a parent or teacher. Some have a friend or two with whom they can confide. Some find alcohol quite young and use it to numb what they can’t stop. Some become bullies or worse, self-destructive. But some kids, like Emma, were too young to run, had unsafe parents, had no teachers that would believe and were too geographically isolated to develop confidants. For those like her, there was only one coping mechanism that worked. She left the abuse and the ‘one’ it happened to ‘over there’ and did not think about it. Well, not until it was safe, someone murmured.

Emma had always lived this way. Life literally came and went. Feelings could be shut down in milliseconds.
Faster than you could say Jack Rabbit, someone added. Memories could be compressed into little bits of paper and stuffed away into mental boxes. Physical sensations could be barred from hitting the skin’s surface or the brain’s cognition. Depending on what it was and how it fit around (or in) her, she had some measure of control by simply concentrating (or not). There were those days when she felt “off” and others when her clothes didn’t fit quite right. However, she could focus on one task (absolutely) to the exclusion of all else (so, work was a breeze). Recalling certain events, at times, had to be requested and then detailed memories came from a variety of perspectives. Growing up she did not understand this as being multiple or “dissociative identities.” It was just life: her life. Since therapy had ended she had gone on, leaving the professional jargon of multiple personalities behind. Years went by. As life, work, and children invaded, that label evolved into just another fact that was known only by her long-term friends and, sometimes, Emma honestly forgot. Unbelievable? The power of dissociation along with time to bury knowledge beneath whole years of other experiences allows for anything when it comes to the wondrous, dissociative human brain.

Emma was highly functional. Her life was not in chaos and she didn’t “lose time.” She used dissociation to make her life work better. Emma frankly preferred that most people didn’t know this about her. She didn’t miss the inevitable barrage of, “Whom am I speaking to now?” “Have I talked to some of them?” “How many personalities do you have?” “What are their names?” or “Did you integrate?” Even some well-meaning professionals saw those who were multiple as broken. That incited an internal rage within her, Give me a break! Although outwardly a smile at the offending person would form on Emma’s face, an all too-familiar-rant would start inside, How incredibly busted do you think we are to have gotten this far in our fucked-up life without being locked up for being nuts or some whacked-out criminal? It was a legitimate question given that by the time she was three feet tall, they (as in the internal dissociative group) had survived more than most adults ever would in an entire lifetime.

And, some therapist is going to save us! They give us teddy bears and tea parties. Do they have any idea exactly how many thoughts we can think at one time or how many details we can gather and retain in a split second? We can control medication going through our bodies, the pain we feel, and our heart rates in a blink. Our memory recall includes not just visual, auditory and olfactory details but vocal inflections, subtle hand and eye movements which can be compared in milliseconds to what was said and done an hour ago, a day ago, a week ago, or even a year ago. So, WHO is really incapable here?

Emma was certain her dissociative abilities must factor into all her relationships. Those she knew best had interacted unknowingly with someone else not specifically her. How was she supposed to introduce the topic of dissociation without causing fear that she would suddenly turn into a Sybil-type-crazy-person or some pop-culture-created axe-wielding-murderer-with-split-personalities? Entertainment! Our childhood trauma amounted to their entertainment! There was just too much between, “Oh, by the way, did I tell you I am multiple?” and the hours of conversation it would take for the average person to make the paradigm shift to understand the nature of dissociation. Emma thought of telling Bill and shuddered. Feeling her stultification, someone stepped forward inside to stand close to her. Emma found it comforting to internally hang out with another whom she literally shared her life and reality.

Eventually to her self/ves, Emma did acknowledge her feelings for Bill. However, she would never utter those words out loud and, quickly thereafter, stopped seeing him altogether. Childhood pain had once again torn her life up and although she could espouse ad nauseam how dissociation had saved her along with
the advantages of being multiple ... secretly, she still hated it. All she wanted was to slide in somewhere in society and just be normal. Instead she was and always would be ‘other.’ Building the bridge between the singular/linear reality of normal folks (like Bill’s) to the plural/lateral of hers continued to baffle her. She recommenced working with inside folks to fine tune the external life until it worked like a smooth machine. And yet, she continued to censor and edit her pronouns (we/I, us/me, our/my, theirs/mine) and few would ever know just how many there were of her. Thingamajigs: patient little truths that will not be out-waited. What Emma recognized here was that, ultimately, the truths we need are not those that we announce to the world, but those we need to hold close inside without looking away, letting go, or ignoring. What we need most is to be honest with ourself/ves. The world...well, it will just have to wait.
Dec 4 - Jan 3 | Opening: Friday Dec 4, 6-9 pm
Lisa Walker | Migration Patterns
Adanac Park Lodge | Forget Me Not: Art and Creativity

Jan 3 - Jan 28 | Wed - Sun, 12-6 pm
Open Studio + Art Sale

Feb 5 - Feb 28 | Opening: Friday Feb 5, 7-10 pm
Gachet’s Collective Group Exhibition | A Collective Response