

SYNCH RONIZED CHAOS.

**ART + LIT + CULTURE + SCIENCE + TRAVEL.
DELIVERED MONTHLY.**

August 2010

FROM THE EDITORS.

We are pleased to present the August issue of *Synchronized Chaos*, which features a host of insightful, creative work from an eclectic collection of artists, writers, poets and visual artists.

August's theme can be broadly interpreted as perspective: this month's contributors draw on their unique perspectives—as visual artists, gardeners, writers, poets, philosophers, and cultural historians. Interpretation and perspective are integral parts of the human existence; our capacity for understanding nuances in our daily life leads to multilayered, complex inferences that shape the way we view the world.

Anthony May's art explores our cultural history, and the structures we build to leave a legacy and cope with mortality. (We've featured his artwork on the cover of the PDF edition.) **Ernest Williamson's** pieces use colour and direction to provide an impression of movement and activity; they give a sense of something or someone from a different perspective. **Marion De Sousa's** "Gardener's Lament" story describes common garden weeds in several ways, and describes a kind of long-term heroic engagement with the weeds, with characteristic gentle humour. **Simon Charlton**, in a prose poetry excerpt from *The Distance of Dreams*, illustrates the persistence of grief and separation through descriptive stream of consciousness. Many other contributions round this out, including a brief review of the Pocket Opera's production of *La Vie Parisienne*, as well as a review of Tanya Egan Gibson's *How to Buy a Love of Reading*.

Happy reading!

Cristina Deptula, Creative Facilitator *and*
Finn Gardiner, Associate Editor
Synchronized Chaos Magazine

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the art of ANTHONY MAY





Anthony May's art is multifaceted, intelligently conceived work, with references to mortality, religion, and humanity through colourful, dynamic brushstrokes and exacting attention to detail and the communicative process of art. We at Synchronized Chaos are privileged to be able to display his work in this month's issue.



Although May's artwork is largely abstract, images that suggest representational artwork do exist. In his *Green Arches* piece (above), he creates a highly simplified representation of architectural features that remind one of Middle Eastern architecture, with a touch of Gustav Klimt.

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

"A process is taking place. We are mortal. We will pass on. What then?"



The creative work I have been doing in the last 5 years has centered almost solely around this narrative. It is rich territory for me, as it allows so many areas for exploration.

Religion, its strange amalgamation of diversity and sameness, versus science, with its ability to pry sensible solutions from seemingly impossible questions. I am intrigued by the colossal structures and stories humans have constructed through the ages with hopes of minimizing the distance between earth and the heavens, many having been assembled through great sacrifice and pain in order to make a difference on what Carl Sagan has called 'a mote of dust, suspended in a sunbeam.'

(continued on next page)

Painting and collage have been the most logical way for me to explore and confront what it is to be human and therefore, mortal. I enjoy working with materials that have lived their own lives in one distinct capacity, retired, and have come together in support of another cause.

As a whole, I want my work to read as an account, much in the way a diary or sketchbook chronicles the ongoing saga of what it is to be human.”

—Anthony May



SELECTIONS FROM 'THE DISTANCE OF DREAMS'

BY SIMON CHARLTON

each sensation becomes another memory...sepia tints of clocks...hands of time
grooved into stillness...

they shall be tender regrets that in the slow hours...when the dawn cracks the
sky into the saddest smile...will become the shadows of suffocation...
ghost partners in a weary dance...

where the weave of memory is a sustaining melancholy...

the drift of grey veils across a late summer sky...

fading moments of time...

where imagination cradles a self-created doubt that gnaws into the silence of
the dead hours...carving new paths into the wilderness...
to know the ideal is to feel our memories in a single weave...a pulse of creation
all the more beautiful for its fragility...

this is the enchantment that I embrace...a trembling flame in the cupped
sorrow of my hands...

the wound of inevitable separation...

this the moment of the weave's collapse when the illumination fades to a dust
drawn smile of terminal regret...it is the moment when the heart folds in upon
itself and is lost...the shedding of hopes accompanied by the silent scream...the
hour of rocks and ashes...dust and the faded tracings of tears...a
terrible rain...

it is like stumbling half-blind through darkened alleyways slick with rain...

haunted by the smeared yellow light of the moon...it is like staring with
terminal disbelief into the heart of desire and
remembering the days lost to sensation...the giddy need to claim
another climax...

the prickling cold sweat memories of withdrawal...

moments in time plucked piecemeal from the weave of memory...

old wounds reopened...

alleyways vanish and the rain ceases as illusion falls away...the idle mind's
distortion is a bleaching of colours into absence...it screams
transformed into silence...

final secrets...

always beyond reach...

it is an ending I suppose...or at the very least a sigh...a shrug of disconsolate
shoulders...a dispassionate surrender...

a signing off into silence and other worlds...but there is something that
remains...something unutterable...something unnameable...something finally
unknown...I may catch a scurrying glimpse in the corner of a sleep-smeared
eye...a blue shifting murmur like smoke from forgotten fires...

and here I know again the hour of our tragic unbecoming...the terrible sadness
clouding the ecstatic yet fearful depths of your eyes...the desperate
hunger of your lips that in seeking purchase upon the shape of my name found
only silence...

like the drifting of the moon across a cloudless sky...

but these are mere tricks of the light...

distant stars fading...the **vanishing moment** of sea-washed
footprints on strange shores...

it is now the exhaustion and surrender...when awareness fades into absence...

ghost fragments drifting...the crumbling of shadows when the **merciless**
dawn creeps through unprotected glass...the echoing of dead voices
on broken phones...

the frayed edges of vision...the stranger still scurrying in the corner of a sleep-
smeared eye...the **blue murmur** and refracted light...

but this is not enough...no matter the depths we plunge in attempting to
recover the hollow heart of lost time...no matter the stars we cradle obsessively
in the **fragile sanctuary of our hands**...no matter the names we scratch
into tainted flesh or the dreams we breathe from corrupted lungs...for no
memory can ever become sensation...

only the distance remains...the distance of dreams.

SIMON J. CHARLTON was (maturely) educated at Closereach House, Plymouth and Harris Manchester College, Oxford University. He is currently employed as a Carer/PA. Favoured writers include Par Lagerkvist, Jorge Luis Borges, Pablo Neruda and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. His works are published in Great Works, Clockwise Cat, Equinox, Angelic Dynamo, Inclement, Spine. Simon Charlton is reachable at simonjcharlton@hotmail.com and please credit the www.greatworks.org.uk website where Charlton's complete work is currently published.

AAAAAGHHHHH! They are the bane of my existence! Put on this earth to frustrate and bedevil us. I have declared a personal war against them. They have invaded my yard, wreaking havoc on my outdoor hobby, selected to calm and clear my head.

Although they allow me to vent any hostility upon them, they always return for more, as if to erode my patience. I am willing to bet they existed since Adam and Eve frolicked in the Garden of Eden and I'm guessing they will survive, along with the cockroaches, long after mankind is extinct.

Their common names are frequently used as forms of expression in our language. Some have medicinal purposes, others added to food as a garnish. Yet others are toxic and can decimate a rancher's pocketbook by killing livestock or overwhelm a farmer's crops.

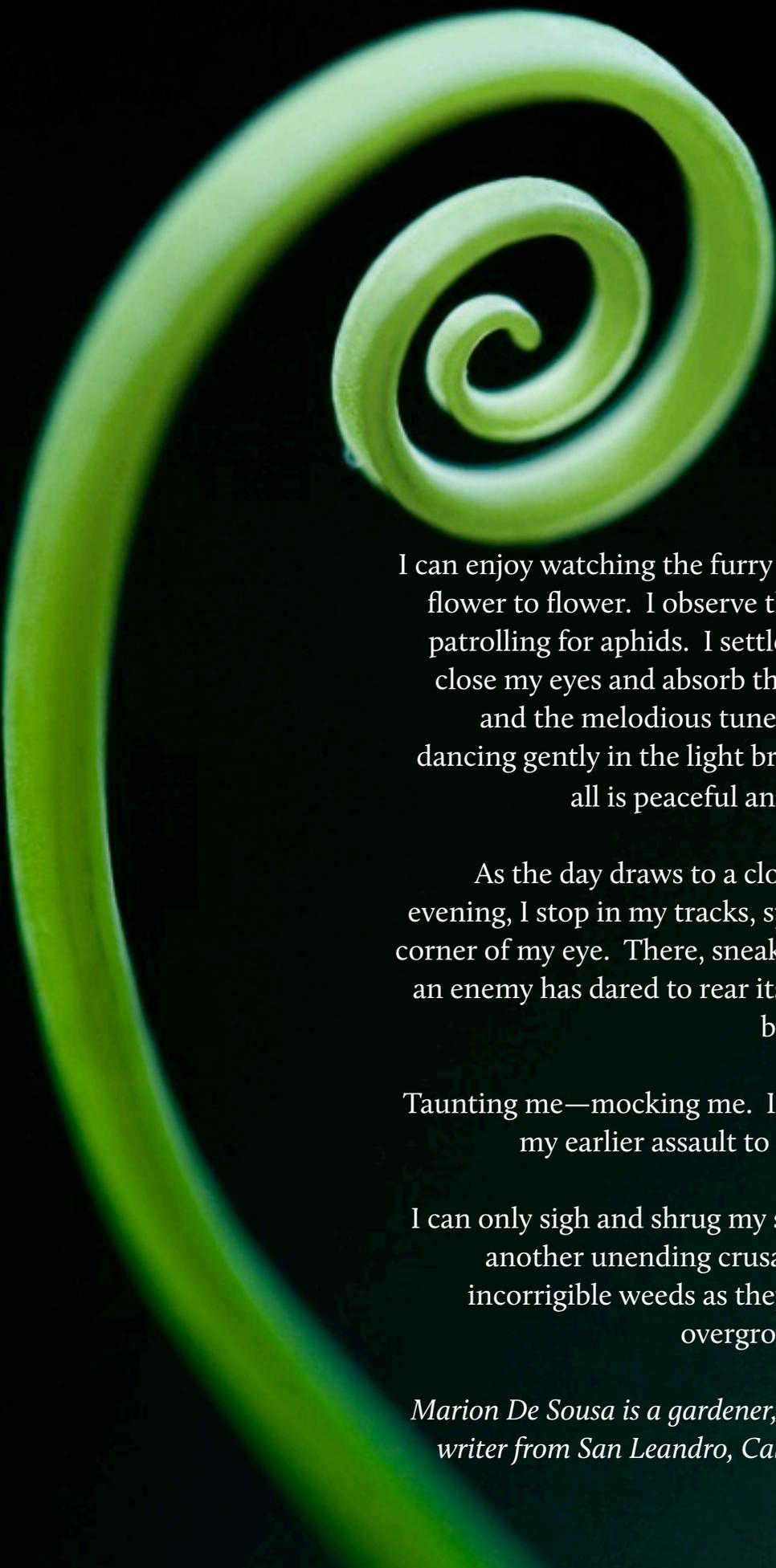
A GARDENER'S LAMENT

marion de sousa

Poisons have been created to eradicate them without effort but I hesitate to use these—I believe our planet has been abused and polluted beyond repair. Tools have been designed to attack them without backbreaking effort, so these are the methods I employ. Of course it is more time consuming, robbing me of coveted rest and relaxation.

These enemies are most prolific. Their seed offspring are spread swiftly through the air by the winds and carried by animals in their coats. Even I am an unwitting and unwilling partner as I carry them unseen in my clothing and shoes. Others expand their onslaught by ways of burrowing and spreading their roots underground, popping up to the surface, assailing my favorite vegetation.

But for this day, I am confident I have temporarily gained the advantage over the endless battle against the intruder trespassing in my garden. My flowers, proving to me their happiness at their freedom from the conflict for sun, water and earth, burst forth into a myriad of colorful bloom.



I can enjoy watching the furry bumblebee slowly buzz from flower to flower. I observe the ladybug doing her job and patrolling for aphids. I settle into my cozy garden bench, close my eyes and absorb the soothing songs of the birds and the melodious tunes playing on my wind chimes dancing gently in the light breeze. Here in my tiny haven, all is peaceful and right in the world, for now.

As the day draws to a close and I head indoors for the evening, I stop in my tracks, spotting something out of the corner of my eye. There, sneaking in between the petunias, an enemy has dared to rear its ugly, green, leafy head from beneath the damp, dark earth.

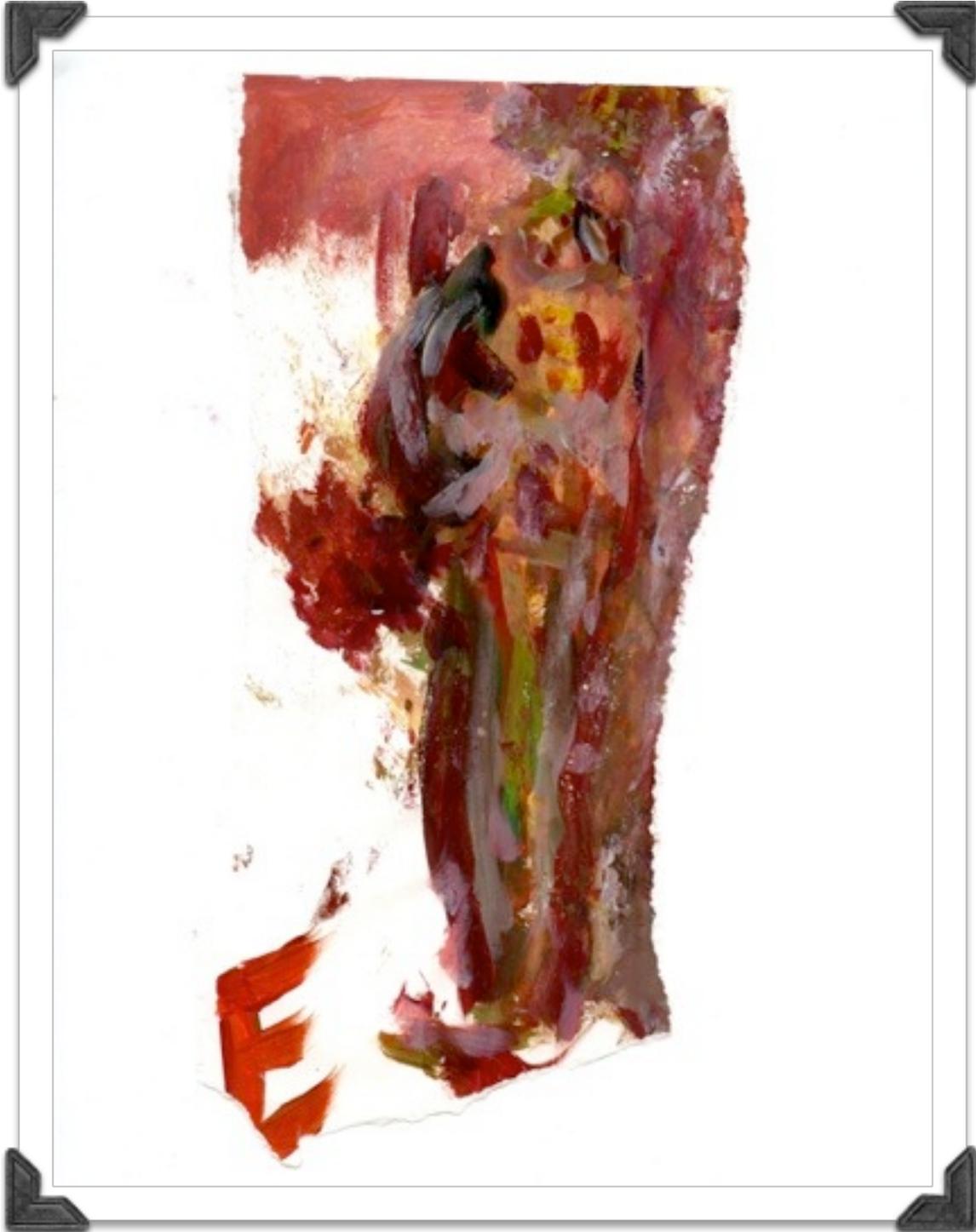
Taunting me—mocking me. It's survival—a victory against my earlier assault to obliterate it from my garden.

I can only sigh and shrug my shoulders. Tomorrow begins another unending crusade against the relentless and incorrigible weeds as they continue their campaign to overgrow my little garden sanctuary.

Marion De Sousa is a gardener, rescue dog lover, and suspense writer from San Leandro, California. She may be reached at dariushorse@att.net.

the art of

ERNEST WILLIAMSON



'big kid'



'reaching for the sun'



'the brilliant dancer'



'soul of a mannequin'



'brushed by the wind'

ARTIST'S BIOGRAPHY

Ernest Williamson III has published poetry and visual art in over 275 national and international online and print journals. He is a self-taught pianist, singer, and painter. His poetry has been nominated three times for the Best of the Net Anthology (<http://www.sundresspublications.com/>). The poems which were nominated for the Best of the Net Anthology are as follows: "The Jazz of Old Wine", "The Symbol of Abiotic Needs", & "The Misfortune of Shallow Sight". He holds the B.A. and the M.A. in English/Creative Writing/Literature from the University of Memphis. Ernest, an English professor at Essex County College, has taught English at New Jersey City University and tutored students in English and mathematics at Seton Hall University. Professor Williamson, who is (ABD), is also finishing up his Ph.D. at Seton Hall University in the field of Higher Education Leadership. He is also a member of The International High IQ Society based in New York City, and he is a "Chess Master" with an internet rating in the range of 2200+. Currently he is rated 2204.

REFORM CALIFORNIA'S PRISON BOARDS: IT'S TIME TO FREE THOSE PRISONERS WHO NO LONGER BELONG IN JAIL!

JANE DOROTIK, CALIFORNIA INMATE

Most of us believe the Parole Board commissioners have a very serious job in determining who should stay in prison and who should be released. After all, the burden of public safety would seem to lie squarely on their shoulders. If a prisoner can't, after years of incarceration, prove to these commissioners they are not a menace to public safety, then maybe they shouldn't be released.

My guess is this is what the public generally thinks...and who can blame them?

So I want to offer you a different side of the story, based on actual cases, real women I see going before the Board, hoping against hope to be granted their freedom after years and years of incarceration. And yes, I have an inherent bias – I am an insider, a prisoner who tells the story from this side of the fence (or razor wire in this case.) Although I have not gone before the Board myself – I am a relatively new lifer – I see and feel all the fear, the guilt, the remorse and tenuous hope each woman goes through in preparation for the hearings. The painful emotional roller-coaster a lifer and his or her family experiences each time they appear before the Board is one part of it.

The incredible waste of taxpayers' money to keep someone in prison who no longer belongs there is another part of it. Next comes the court battles a lifer must access to gain their rightful freedom – the filings, the legal fees, the hearings, the district attorneys and public defenders – again, all usually at taxpayers' expense. These add up to incredible amounts of money, in the hundreds of millions, all to accomplish what the Parole Board should have done in the first place.

The first thing to understand is how inept, arbitrary and dysfunctional the Board is in arriving at their truly important decision of who should go and who should stay. Well, basically they have a one-track mind: Release no one! They are politicized to the extreme in that they, and the Governor, are carefully mindful of the very vocal (as well as generously contributing) victims' rights groups. These groups are, in turn, largely funded by the powerful guards' union who obviously has a vested interest in keeping everyone in prison, especially lifers, because lifers make prisons easier to manage. And lest we forget, one in five prisoners is a lifer in California's bloated corrupt prison system, stuffed to almost 200 percent capacity with 170,000 prisoners.

The Parole Board Commissioners' actual rate of suitability findings, someone whom they deem suitable for release, is around five percent. But even this minuscule release rate is misleading because the Governor reverses about 75% of these suitability findings. So the actual release rate is closer to 1% of those lifers who go before the Board, having already served their prescribed terms.

I'll leave alone the fact that the US incarceration rate is almost five times greater than any other civilized nation. I'll not mention the fact that US sentences are many times longer than other nations' for the same crimes. Instead I'll give you a few examples of actual cases, women I've known right here at CIW.

Louise is 70 years old and has been locked away for 32 years, but she was originally sentenced to seven years to life. She has recently been found suitable for parole again by the Board. The Governor has reversed her previous parole suitability findings by citing boiler plate rationale for the reversal: "the especially callous nature of her crime." Louise has always done her part, gaining vocational certificates and laudatory chronos (awards for positive behavior.) She has participated in self-help groups to gain insight into herself and to learn how to become a benefit to her community. She steered clear of the darker side of prison life; she was what we would call a poster child for rehabilitation.

If the parole board had reviewed her fairly, putting politics aside and evaluating her according to the written regulations, her earliest possible release date was in 1984. Yet here we are in 2010 with Louise still fighting for her freedom, fully 26 years later.

To gain her release, she had to file a Writ against the Parole Board in the courts. She had to obtain pro-bono legal representation from the USC Post Conviction Project. She had to wait for many years. But Louise's story finally did have a just and successful outcome – Louise left prison a few days ago and is now living at a transitional re-entry house to help her reintegrate into the world she was locked away from 32 years ago.

Let's see how much the taxpayers have spent to keep Louise in prison for the 26 years beyond her minimum release date. On average, the state spends \$49,000 per person per year to keep a person under 55 incarcerated. After the person turns 55, the average cost per year is \$138,000 per inmate. So, taxpayers have spent 2.6 million dollars to keep Louise behind bars 26 years beyond her minimum release date.

Or let's look at Helen's story. Helen was 86 years old when she died alone and unnoticed last year. Helen was convicted of conspiracy to commit murder – and actually what she did was transport some money for her son without knowledge of what the money was intended for, but the prosecutor didn't see it that way. No one died, no one was even injured. In fact, no crime actually happened – it was all conspiracy theory. But Helen was shipped off to prison with a life sentence. Helen's kidneys were failing for the last several years of her life and she was taken out twice weekly, hands and feet shackled and a guard on each side of her, for dialysis treatment. So the cost of keeping Helen in prison was close to a million dollars a year because of all the extra guards for the frequent medical trips out for dialysis.

When Helen had served her term, she too went before the Board hoping for release, but the Board found her to be a risk to public safety because she 'didn't have firm employment plans.' That's what the Board actually cited in her hearing transcripts as the rationale for parole denial...at age 85!

How could Helen be deemed a risk when she couldn't even walk 30 yards without stopping to catch her breath? The real risk to public safety is the money siphoned away from education and social supports to fund this bloated and abusive prison system.

Can you imagine million could Helen's \$6+ day care so after school be diverted from medical clinics, underprivileged,	“The real risk to public safety is the money siphoned away from education and social supports to fund this bloated and abusive prison system.”	what Louise's \$26 have funded? Or million? Subsidized mothers could work, programs so kids can gang involvement, aid to the and much more!
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But no, we as a society allow the prison system to suck up all the state's resources under the guise of public safety. What safety have we achieved by keeping Louise or Helen incarcerated? As one journalist put it, are they going to scale the razor wire and assault someone with their walkers?

Most lifers would give almost anything to be given a chance to become a credit to society, paying taxes instead of eating up those precious tax dollars.

At a time when California is raising tuition fees again and again and pricing most of our youth out of an education, at a time when California is slashing

social supports for the poor and disadvantaged, shouldn't taxpayers demand that legislators fix the dysfunctional Parole Board?

A start would be to follow the codes that govern the appointment of Parole Board Commissioners making sure that the composition of the Board represents a cross section of the community (psychologists, retired judges, etc.) instead of the law enforcement people Schwarzenegger continues to appoint. The current Board is one hundred percent law enforcement.

Another step would be to again follow the law – the Penal Code requires that a release date be set once the base term has been served. So it would seem reasonable to expect at least a 50 percent suitability finding rather than the current five percent rate.

Finally, remove the Governor's review process of the Parole Board findings (an oversight that was instituted in 1988 for political reasons – the "Willie Horton effect.") This review has never really been a "review" anyway, in that it has never been used to review a denial, only to reverse a positive finding. You would think the Governor would empower these commissioners with their six figure incomes to do their job as the regulations direct and not second-guess them.

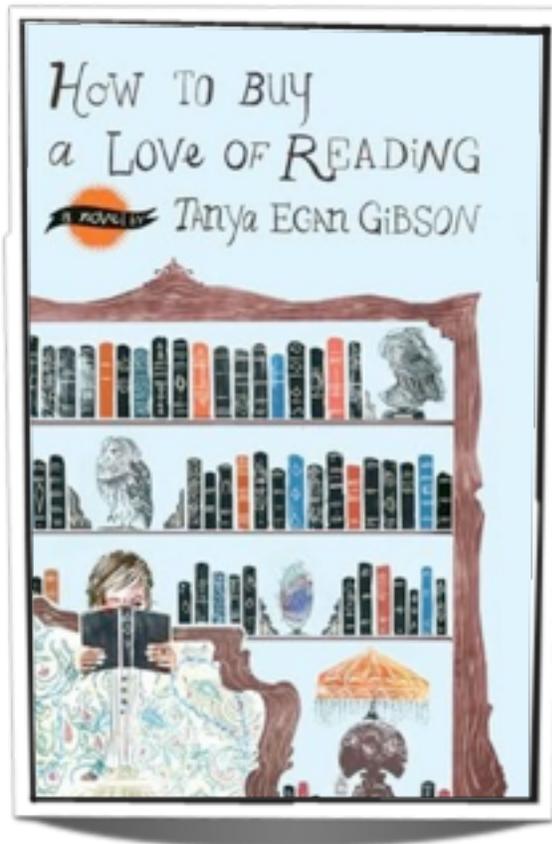
The rate of recidivism in California for older lifers released is negligible, less than one percent. Compare that with a seventy percent recidivism rate for all other prisoners.

We have a crisis here – a moral, ethical, fiscal, and societal crisis – and it can be corrected if enough people get involved, speak out, write legislators, and make their views known.

Jane Dorotik, W-90870, California Institute for Women, MB 114L, 16756 Chino-Corona Road, Corona, CA 92880-9508

REVIEW: HOW TO BUY A LOVE OF READING by TANYA EGAN GIBSON

CRISTINA DEPTULA



Carley Wells, the teenage protagonist of Tanya Egan Gibson's debut *How to Buy a Love of Reading* (*HTBALOR*), begs her personal, hired novelist Bree McEnroy to drop the metafiction and “just tell her a story.” Already weary of the endless parties and shallow relationships of her wealthy Long Island neighborhood, she finds little comfort from postmodern intellectuals who revel in the supposed novelty of meaninglessness.

Gibson begins each section with both a literary term and a party invitation, thus comparing how both the very rich and the highly intellectual can lose themselves

in overwrought fantasies. *HTBALOR* imagines its privileged world in exquisite, fanciful detail, complete with Medici-style sculptures of prominent citizens, private family homes with staffs of twenty-five or more, and brunches replete with food from every country – which no one touches in order to maintain their perfect figures. The highly creative description slows down the novel's pace, reflecting a world where people survive by paying attention to every detail of how they appear to others, rather than thinking on their feet to meet their basic needs. Sometimes the pace becomes too slow and the layers of description

too thick, and *HTBALOR* bogs down and gets hard to read, but if one perseveres through those sections, the moments of whimsy and poignancy return.

Reality does intervene, even in the lives of Fox Glen's residents and the state's literati: writers must sell books and land commissions to survive, and so their work must resonate with some aspect of the book-buying public's psyche. The town's pretty-boy comes down with colds and flus, people fall into ponds wearing all their fancy clothes, ice sculptures melt in embarrassing ways, and some people, including bored, overweight, lonely Carley, are not shiny and perfect.

To her parents' shame, Carley obsesses over teen soap operas and reality shows, some of which are clever parodies of *Survivor*, *Lost*, and other actual programs. In one of Gibson's gentle nods to human nature, *HTBALOR* never mocks Carley's passion and suggests real reasons for the appeal of popular shows. Carley finds what she watches on TV more authentic than anything assigned and dissected in her English class. People in her favorite shows experience life directly, feeling all the emotions, without having to explain, analyze, or make obscure references. Also, the shows provide enough backstory to help viewers understand what's going on, rather than staying opaque for effect.

Backstory, and the concept of memory and the past, play a central role in *HTBALOR*. Carley continually retreats to Aftermemory, a self-named place in her head where she relives events, imagining herself saying and doing the perfect things. This becomes her own personal space, a place where she can 'choose her own adventures' and claim some independence from her false friends and controlling family. Justin, Bree's writer colleague and former lover, cannot win her back, despite his success, rock-star persona, and genuine caring, when she realizes that her past, and her present, identity resulted in part from his past deceptions. Like the character Glory in the teen drama *Arion Annals*,

and like her own postmodern version of Odysseus, she's lost her sense of who she is by losing her sense of her past.

Gibson also suggests why, even with our modern technologies and academic knowledge, we find ourselves looking for our cultural memories, going back to our oldest stories, re-making them over and over for different times and places. As Carley explains to Bree, with an insight beyond her sixteen years, many readers crave stories where good wins out in the end and people can rescue each other, even when matters would be more complex in real life. We long to identify with the characters as people rather than simple constructs, and to receive affirmation that there are things worth doing in the world. Like Carley, we want reminders that our efforts towards heroism and altruism are worthwhile, even when we do not succeed.

Through her characters' experiences with various forms of story and narrative, Gibson satirizes through humorous exaggeration the ways people create elaborate means of hiding from themselves and each other. Still, through the characters' efforts towards self-awareness, and through Carley's eventual choice to claim personal autonomy in real life as well as her Aftermemory and embrace the book-project on her own terms, *HTBALOR* ultimately affirms the power of story to help us communicate, understand ourselves, and stay motivated to care for others. This is a book as much about finding (not buying!) the love of living and finding oneself in story, as much as about the love of reading – and appropriate for adults as well as mature teens.

Tanya Egan Gibson's *How to Buy a Love of Reading* (Penguin Group, 2009) can be ordered through the website <http://www.howtobuyaloveofreading.com>, which includes stories from fans about how reading made a difference in their lives.

REVIEW: THE POCKET OPERA + LA VIE PARISIENNE

FINN GARDINER

At the end of June, I had the opportunity to attend a showing of the Pocket Opera's performance of Jacques Offenbach's opera *La Vie Parisienne*, at the Julia Morgan Theatre in Berkeley.

The Pocket Opera is a San Francisco-based opera company specialising in English performances of foreign-language opera. It is the labour of love of the musician, writer, consummate polyglot and director Donald Pippin, who painstakingly translates German, Italian and French libretti into English, making special efforts to convey emotion and meaning even in translation. The lyrics do not feel translated; rather, they feel as though they were originally written in English. These are certainly not poor pastiches. Particular attention is paid to accessibility: Pippin and his team do not merely translate the libretti; they also project the lyrics on a screen to allow people to follow along. The Pocket Opera's goal is to allow everyone to appreciate the lyrical beauty of operatic music without needing to pay exorbitant prices or deciphering non-English lyrics.

“the intimacy of the performance allowed me to feel a greater, more visceral connection to the characters than I would have in a larger and more impersonal venue.”

I have seen other Pocket Opera productions—*La Bohème* and *Carmen*—and the quality of the performances in *La Vie Parisienne* lives up to the other performances I have seen. Although *La Vie Parisienne* is a comic opera, unlike the other two performances, it is treated with the same respect for beauty, content and lyricism as the other two productions.

Broadly, the play is a rollicking, hyperkinetic glimpse of the life of a hodgepodge of Parisians, from a delightfully incompetent major-general (evoking shades of Gilbert and Sullivan), to a gaggle of overfed and undersexed noblemen, to an exuberant Brazilian, to a pair of scheming friends returning from their travels abroad. The entire production is a series of madcap hijinks involving mistaken identities, labyrinthine plots, and even a bit of drag. There is never a dull moment: there is always something to capture the viewer's attention.

The spare sets and costuming belied the intricacy and creativity of the performers' work. The aesthetics of *La Vie Parisienne* did not come from elaborate costumes or lavish sets; rather, they came from the full, compelling voices of the performers, as well as the crackling wit of Donald Pippin's translation. While I am admittedly fond of large-scale productions with elaborate costumes and sweeping sets, I can also appreciate the intimacy and accessibility of less elaborate shows. The performance felt like a community theatre production, rather than that of a travelling theatre company. This is intended to be a compliment; the intimacy of the performance allowed me to feel a greater, more visceral connection to the characters than I would have in a larger and more impersonal venue.

The Pocket Opera's performances are excellent introductions to the world of opera, and *La Vie Parisienne* was no exception.

COLOPHON

Synchronized Chaos is an interdisciplinary art, poetry, literature, science, nature, cultural and travel writing webzine. It is the brainchild of an international group of contributors, as well as volunteer editors and creative facilitators. It draws inspiration from the mathematical concept of chaos theory, the study of how to effectively model and predict the behavior of systems which seem random, but are in fact highly influenced by initial conditions not yet fully understood.

This issue of *Synchronized Chaos* was set in League Gothic and Calluna. The cover art is a collage by Anthony May, one of the artists featured in this issue.