

EMERALD CITY

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Introduction

My but the 'zine seems small after a Worldcon issue.

Fortunately I'm not devoid of material. In fact there is a con report here, and a bunch of interesting books. So without any further ado, read on.

In This Issue

Return to Oz - Sean McMullen's Greatwinter series gets back to its homeland

Artificial Intimacy - Maureen McHugh ponders on relationships with constructs

Wings on the Wind - Ursula Le Guin returns to Earthsea

True Magic - Storm Constantine enthrones the sacred king

The Con that Wouldn't Die - Silicon rises from the grave

ShadowCon 0.1 - BASFA hosts a pilot for a Shadowmarch convention

Miscellany - all that other stuff

Footnote - the end

Return to Oz

I've probably said this before, and I'll probably have to say it again. When it comes to literary quality, Sean McMullen still has quite a bit to learn. He is very competent, but not spectacular. On the other hand, when it comes to imagination, deviousness, humour and entertainment value there are few better. The new novel in the Greatwinter series is a classic. I loved it.

I should say that *Eyes of the Calculator* takes a while to get going. It is almost 600 pages long, of which more than half is set-up. Sean is developing a Tad Williams-like tendency for introducing lots of characters and side-tracking into stories about them. However, just as you think that Sean cannot possibly bring all of these threads together, all hell breaks loose and the book gallops towards a sequence of conclusions that neatly snip off all of the loose ends and tie it all up.

Along the way, McMullen takes some audacious steps with his characters. You will remember that *Souls in the Great Machine* is set in Australia and *The Miocene Arrow* in North America. The new book returns to Australia in the wake of the end of the American Civil War started by

Australian aviads. The Americans are not happy, but they also desperately need horses, which they can only get from the Australians. Will the Americans be able to tell the difference between human and aviad Australians? Or will the notoriously fractious Americans start feuding amongst themselves again? As all this develops, will we start to see characters we have grown to know and love from the two previous books taking different sides in the conflict? Oh my.

Talking of characters we know and love, a return to Australia means a return to many familiar themes from *Souls in the Great Machine*. Sean manages to bring back the human-power Calculor. He has Jemli Milderellen reprise her sister, Lemorel's role as dangerous demagogue. He introduces a new character, Martyne Camderine, who is a sort of anti-Glasken – so moral and upstanding that he resorts to all sorts of Glasken-esque tricks to avoid going to bed with women. Why, he even manages to resurrect... But that would be telling.

You will probably have guess that the new book contains just as much sexual intrigue and farce as the previous volumes. It would be a mistake, however, to believe that McMullen's books are all just sex and wild technology. There is a lot of philosophy hidden in there. I must admit that I have some doubts about Sean's occasional arm-for-an-eye, lung-for-a-tooth morality, but for the most part his heart is in exactly the right place. For example, his tales about armed gangs of human settlers forcibly settling aviad territory and trying to embarrass their government into providing military backing is very reminiscent of what has been going on in Palestine over the past few years. Many of McMullen's heroes are ruthless and brutal. Some of them are like that because the world is a nasty place and they sometimes have to

respond in kind. Others are like that because the world made them that way and they don't know any better.

Think back for a moment to the start of *Souls in the Great Machine*. Lemorel Milderellen was the heroine. The first of Sean's brilliant plot twists was to have circumstances turn her into a dangerous villain. Think too how a couple of bitter and twisted characters, Serjon and Bronlar, became war heroes in *The Miocene Arrow*. This, together with the gradual growth and rehabilitation of John Glasken, are the central themes of the series. *Eyes of the Calculor* brings the whole thing to a satisfying conclusion.

I'm very close to adding this book to my Hugo list. I do think I is over-long, but the ideas and entertainment value pretty much make up for that. SF needs people with daring and imagination, and Sean has both in ample quantities.

Eyes of the Calculor - Sean McMullen - Tor - hardcover

Artificial Intimacy

If this book were a new Talking Heads album it would probably be called something like, 'More Songs about Depression and Alienation'. Yes, it is a new Maureen McHugh novel, how did you guess?

McHugh is uncompromising. Having her characters suffer an agonising death would be too easy. Instead they are condemned to live in endless misery, stumbling hopelessly from one personal disaster to another, and failing at everything they attempt. If this is escapism, it is aimed solely at major league masochists.

The new novel, *Nekropolis*, is no exception. Hariba is jessed, that is she has willingly subjected herself to medical conditioning to induce absolute loyalty to her employer in order to get herself a decent job. She is, to all intents and purposes, a slave. Akhmim, on the other hand, is a possession. As a vat-grown, genetically engineered humanoid, a harni, he is no better than a machine, and machines have no rights.

Bound by their common misery, Hariba and Akhmim fall in love and seek to escape their oppression. This is, of course, highly illegal, and their flight causes endless problems, both for them and for Hariba's friends and family. Furthermore, their elopement seems futile, for Hariba is unable to accept that Akhmim is not human. Yes, he is programmed to develop what appears to be emotional attachment to humans. He is very good at making people comfortable with him. It is part of his function as a sex toy. Does it mean anything to him? It seems unlikely.

All of this misery is, of course, intended as a means of making political points, though it is often difficult to determine what those points are. Much of the time McHugh comes over as some sort of Puritan ascetic who feels that all human life should be lived in misery. Hariba starts out as a model traditional woman. She is a demon housekeeper, taking pride in her economy and cleanliness and looking down on those who fail to match her domestic excellence. As the story progresses she becomes a selfish whiner, wanting nothing but to be looked after in her romantic entanglement with Akhmim, and demanding that everyone around her make this a reality. I guess both of these character phases are views of femininity that McHugh wishes to attack, and in the end Hariba is forced to stand on her own two feet. But she did that before she met Akhmim, and it is hard to escape the conclusion that what she did

wrong, in McHugh's estimation, was to have aspirations. Life, after all, is supposed to be shit, so we should suffer it, right?

Then again there are the questions of slavery and free will. Hariba voluntarily submitted to slavery and despite being conditioned to loyalty is able to break free. Akhmim was made to be loyal. It is uncertain whether he can ever be anything else. Indeed it seems that he only leaves his employment because he has somehow transferred his loyalty from his owner to Hariba. What does this tell us, other than the fact that Akhmim is genuinely alien? Not a lot, I think.

Finally there is the question of women's rights in Moslem societies. Hariba and Akhmim live in Morocco. They dream of escaping to Europe where jessing and the owning of harni are illegal. The innate sexism in the book's view of Moroccan society is demonstrated at every opportunity. Clearly McHugh intends us to come away with a distaste for Islam and all of its doings. And yet in the acknowledgements she confesses that she has never been to Morocco and that her vision of it in the book is entirely fictional. Compare this to Jon Courtenay Grimwood's *Pashazade*, which is based on Jon's experiences in North Africa and shows a far greater understanding of the situation there.

I have commented before (in my review of *Half the Day is Night*) on McHugh's seeming lack of research and stereotyping of foreigners. *Mission Child* is equally as insulting to transsexuals. I find this amazing in someone who has lived and worked in China and is supposedly very left wing. Then again, I have spent much of the past month being gobsmacked at the amount of ignorance and arrogance displayed by many Americans when confronted with the uncomfortable fact that

there is a world outside their borders (or indeed outside the confines of their daily lives). Perhaps it is unreasonable of me to expect McHugh to be any different.

Shame, it is a beautifully written book.

Nekropolis - Maureen McHugh - EOS - hardcover

Wings on the Wind

Now here is an event. After all these years, a new Earthsea novel is born. For your humble reviewer, this is a nightmare. To start with, there have been far more academic papers written about Le Guin than about any other SF writer. Furthermore, mentioning Earthsea is a bit like talking about Dylan's conversion to electronic music back in the 60s. Half the world is convinced that *Tehanu* was a total betrayal of everything that the original Earthsea novels stood for; and the other half sees it as a radical and much needed re-working of the theme. So how am I supposed to review *The Other Wind*? I can't even treat it as a stand-alone novel, because so much of it refers to what has gone before. Oh well, let's fall back on that hoary old tradition of recapping the plot.

Le Guin is getting old, and so is Ged. They both look back on the world with wry amusement, occasional despair, and a resigned acceptance of the way things are. Ged now lives in relative isolation in a small farmhouse on his native island of Gont. He has, of course, given up all of his magical powers, though he is still nominally the Archmage. He plays very little part in the story, but his disenchanted view of all things heroic colours the narrative. Le Guin's outlook is now relentlessly practical rather than

adventuresome, and she makes her case well.

He found his council served him well, and people of power had come to respect it. Common folk did not pay much attention to it. They centered their hopes and attention on the king's person. There were a thousand lays and ballads about the son of Morred, the prince who rode the dragon back from death to the shores of day, the hero of Sorra, wielder of the Sword of Serriadh, the Rowan Tree, the Tall Ash of Enlad, the well-loved king who ruled in the Sign of Peace. But it was hard going to make songs about councillors debating shipping taxes.

But there is, after all, a story to be told, and stories demand drama, not shipping taxes. Enter, therefore, a magician called Alder. The magic that Alder practices is little more than hedge witchery. He mends things: fences, pots, clothing, bones. He is very good at it. Then he meets Lily, who is also a powerful mender of things. They take to each other immediately, and plan a long and happy life together, but death in childbirth puts an end to their dreams. Their relationship is sundered, and though neither of them would have thought to do so consciously, the two most powerful menders in the world strive in their hearts to come together again, even if so doing will break the Wall of Death itself. By the time Alder realises what is happening it is too late: the dead have sensed the possibility of release, and they are not about to pass up the chance. The irony of a power as simple as mending, and a motivation as admirable as passionate love, bringing the world to the brink of destruction is entirely and beautifully deliberate.

Cut with this imminent disaster are further incursions from the dragons of the west,

and a new and powerful warlord risen to be emperor in Karg to the east. Both of these developments make life difficult for young King Lebannen. A threat from beyond the grave, and no Archmage to stand beside him, only serve to make things harder. But then there is Ged's adopted daughter, the dragon-girl, Tehanu. There is the Kargish princess, sent to Lebannen as a potential bride and seal on an alliance, who may have useful talents hidden behind her voluminous red veils. It may also be the case that all of these developments are connected.

The true story here is about greed: about mankind's desire to have it all. And here there are echoes of Tepper-esque Luddism in Le Guin's thesis. The argument is, however, much better presented than anything Tepper has done of late. It is possible to interpret the book in a number of ways. Some will doubtless see it as an argument for pastoralism over science, and that is a defensible interpretation. It is also possible to see it as an argument for a religious view that incorporates reincarnation in various life-forms. Such beliefs tie humanity far more closely to the rest of nature, and can be set against the vision of heaven and the primacy of humanity over all other life that it implies. Finally it can simply be seen as a message from one old woman about the inevitability of death and the futility of seeking immortality. Because Le Guin is very clever, it is almost certainly all of these things, and more. With so much bad fantasy around, it is a pleasure to see a master of the genre once again show us how it should be done.

The Other Wind - Ursula K. Le Guin - Harcourt - hardcover

True Magic

You may have noticed that I was slightly under-enthusiastic about the first two volumes of Storm Constantine's Magravandias trilogy. It was occasionally difficult to see where the series was going, and the books seemed a little obsessive. *Sea Dragon Heir* spent a lot of time detailing the passionate incestuous affair between the Palindrake twins, Valraven and Pharinet, and the debaucheries of Prince Bayard. *Crown of Silence* got serious about the tangled homosexual affairs of Tayven Hirantel and then took an extended holiday on a mystical quest that few readers will have been equipped to understand. The books were admirably subversive, but what about the story? Was it just a case of shocking the reader? I am delighted to say that I can now see the whole design, and it was all planned. *The Way of Light* brings everything together beautifully.

Right from the beginning, the new novel is nearly all plot and hardly any diversions. The book concentrates on the political situation in Magrast as the ailing Emperor Leonid nears death and his ambitious younger sons, Almorante and Bayard, seek to outflank their devout but insipid elder brother, Gastern. Storm does political intrigue amongst dissolute nobility really well.

Meanwhile, of course, the magical side of the story progresses. The ruthless Empress Tatrini continues her quest to place Bayard on the throne, firm in the belief that Magravandian blood and utter devotion to power are all that matters. Against her, Tayven, Taropat, Shan and Sinclara, aided by sympathisers in the nobility, seek to make Valraven king, despite his continued professed devotion to Gastern as the rightful heir. There is something of a mystical diversion as Taropat and Shan

kidnap Valraven's wife, Varencienne, and end up in the Tibet-like Hamagara, and it looks like this might finally bring all of the enemies of the Magravandians together. But will the long history of sexual jealousy between the various leading players enable them to present a united and effective front against Bayard? Are they, in truth, any better than he is? It seems unlikely.

Along the way, Storm has to contend with issues such as the desirability of divine kingship (which, as I have said before, she understands well), the working of religion, and of real, low down, brutal politics. All of this she does well. Take this quote, for example:

"A new emperor has come to the throne who is in the cacophony of madness. He is driven by a single vision of fear, and will seek to impose his beliefs upon every corner of the world, in order to feel safe."

Oh yes. If there is one thing that we have learned in spades over the past few weeks, it is that frightened people will submit to any curtailment of freedom, and commit any atrocity, in order to feel safe.

Not content with excellent insight into the human condition, Storm is also unafraid to leaven the story with a little comedy. With Valraven finally forced to face his magical heritage, Storm cannot resist throwing a little female practicality into a Lovecraftian situation.

"Foy knows what lives down there." Valraven said at the top of the stairs, "but I would imagine it has many tentacles and a general antipathy towards human kind. How many people have died down there? I am far from eager to join them."

"There are only storage cellars down there," Niska said. "The Palindrakes would have kept wine and meat in them. Things with tentacles undoubtedly live in the dungeons proper, where people were tortured and killed. It's unlikely they'd be found off the kitchen."

Or try this for a splendid put-down of the overly righteous Gastern:

Gastern's wife, Rinata, stood at his shoulder, with their sulky-faced son, Linnard, beside her. Varencienne could not imagine how two such rigid, prudish creatures had steeled themselves for the act that had produced Linnard. Perhaps the child's dour nature reflected the lack of pleasure involved.

I might add, as a fellow Brit, that Storm has sneaked a little political satire into the book as well. When Leonid dies we might expect Tatrini to be given the official title of Dowager Empress. Instead this implacably vicious, scheming, conniving and arrogant harridan, who nevertheless has a talent for getting the common people to love her, becomes known as the Queen Mother. Coincidence? I doubt it.

And so we come to the end. The culmination of three thick fantasy novels, and it is all set up for the final confrontation between Valraven and Bayard. The empire is at stake. At which point Storm takes your expectations and shreds them. If you are looking for traditional fantasy, for comfort reading, for a pre-ordained ending to usher in a brave new world of happiness ever after, this is not the place to come. If, on the other hand, you like intelligent commentary on the realities of politics in mediaeval societies, you like characters who are human beings rather than icons, and you like books that

don't end as you expect, this is the stuff for you.

This is the best thing that Storm has done in a long time. Not only has she proved herself a true heir to Dion Fortune – a literary high priestess who really understands the magic about which she writes – but she is also producing intelligent, insightful and subversive fiction that is a credit to an otherwise moribund genre. Fantasy needs more writers with her talent.

The Way of Light - Storm Constantine - Gollancz - hardcover

The Con that Wouldn't Die

Here we go again. If it is a weekend then there must be a science fiction convention happening somewhere in the USA. As it happens, the current one is local. The Bay Area is well blessed with conventions, and while they never conflict on dates, there is a certain amount of competition for attendance. Some people are not as daft as Kevin and I and don't spend all their money and time on going to cons. Silicon is one of the less well-supported local cons, as evidenced by the fact that this is its fourth incarnation. Two other groups have tried to make a success of the event, and have either failed or got bored. But the name is so good that someone always buys the rights to it and has another go.

By one of those strange quirks of fate, the home of the new Silicon, the Sunnyvale Four Points Sheraton, happens to be the very same building that was once the

Sunnyvale Hilton where Silicon was housed back in the mid-1990s. Just a block away is the Coco's Restaurant where BASFA first held regular meetings. The area is steeped in fannish history. But then I guess that isn't hard round here.

With this being a re-launch, the con isn't very big. I believe that there were only 100 or so pre-registered, though doubtless a good number trooped in over the weekend as the membership is that expensive. The program too is a little thin, but we make our own entertainment, right? Which in the case of your two favourite sick puppies means spending most of the weekend behind the ConJosé table. Yes, there is no hope for us. But it does mean that during quiet moments I can get this issue written.

I guess I should do the usual con-running critique, even if it is a bit unfair on people just starting out. In startling proof that even the most egregious mistakes will be repeated, Silicon managed to produce badges that were even less readable than those at The Millennium Philcon. Minuscule type for names is perhaps forgivable. Printing those names in a condensed bold font is not. Oh dear.

The con newsletter produced a classic example of 3:00 am production quality. "Well written nonviolent comics could really be a useful tool in the fight against literacy". Oops. Though I should add that the newsletter editor came and pointed it out to me. It is good to see people retaining a sense of humour.

On the positive side the con produced a number of very large print-outs of the entire program which were posted at various points around the hotel. Program updates were posted by writing on these posters. Obviously you can only do this if you are a fairly small con, but it was still impressive and very useful.

Those of you who remember my Wisconsin reports will doubtless groan in agony when I mention that the Silicon hotel had a wedding reception booked at the same time as the convention. This one was a classic. It was a full-blown Mexican wedding, complete with what seemed to be hundreds of bridesmaids and a flamenco band. They made a lot more noise than we did. I felt very sorry for any ordinary people staying at the hotel over the weekend. One group of lunatics is quite enough.

Something that should have added greatly to the convention was the fact that it was located just across the road from the Faultline Brewing Company. A microbrewery and a good restaurant: what more could we ask for? Well, we could ask that the brewery hadn't booked out the entire place to a private function on the Saturday night of the convention. Sigh.

Talking of alcohol, the convention reportedly managed a minor screw-up by failing to get a corkage waiver for their con suite. It got closed down for a while until they agreed to stop serving alcohol. Oops.

Overall the con was pretty quiet. We sold rather more ConJosé memberships than we expected, which I guess goes to show how many local people failed to heed the warnings we put out about buying early before the price went up. From the Dealers' Room Dave Clark grumbled that we had taken more money than he had. It was good to see a whole bunch of our friends, but there wasn't much in the way of buzz. On Sunday afternoon the con chair made an announcement urging people to buy their memberships for 2002 now, "because we really need the money." It sounded suspiciously like they were mortgaging next year's convention to pay for this year's debts. Back to the grave?

Of course Kevin and I did buy memberships for next year.

ShadowCon 0.1

Well, it wasn't exactly a huge convention. Not counting Tad and his wife, Deb, I think there were 6 Shadowmarch members in attendance. But it was a BASFA meeting as well, and in total there were 40 around to hear Tad Williams talk about, well, being Tad, just about anything.

We don't do author visits at BASFA very often. It would, after all, cut down our opportunities to be silly. But Tad Williams is a local boy, and hugely entertaining to boot. He is also BASFA's Admiral of the Fleet, a title that we bestowed upon him last time he came because he asked for it. Willingness to participate in silliness is an excellent way for authors to endear themselves of BASFAns.

Fandom was also one of the things Tad wanted to talk about, because Shadowmarch is an ideal example of the fannish phenomenon in action. Tad likened fans to sticky molecules. Get any bunch of fans in the same place, he said, and they will stick together and make things. In Shadowmarch terms that means that the site is already far more than an online novel. It is a community, and it does a whole bunch of things. There is a writers' group, a fanzine, and discussion forums that range all over the place.

Tad then linked this into politics. The future world, he speculated, will be comprised of horizontal communities linked by common interest, not vertical communities linked by geography. It did occur to me that Islam and Christendom are examples of communities linked by a

common interest. But then again I can hardly imagine communities going to war about whether Tad is a better writer than George Martin is, so maybe he has something there.

Discussion then turned to the process of writing an online novel. Tad said that Shadowmarch had not turned a profit as yet. It should break even by end of year, especially if he and Deb got round to doing some serious marketing, but that hardly counts as a successful business venture. On the other hand, Tad said he was having tremendous fun doing it, and if it wasn't losing too much money he hoped Deb would let him carry on.

The big difference between Shadowmarch and writing a normal book, Tad said, was the interaction he had with readers during production. Each time a new chapter is published, there is immediate feedback. People coming up with mad conspiracies, far more bizarre than anything Tad says he can come up with. There is also a certain joy for the author in seeing readers pick up on red herrings he has laid, and get neatly led over the cliff.

Although Tad planned the first few chapters in advance, he is now writing material only 2-3 days before publication (or the day before, chimes in Deb). Consequently there is no big story arc. The world is largely planned – that is necessary for any fantasy novel - but the story isn't. One of the consequences of this is that Tad can adapt future chapters based on audience feedback. If the readers are clearly very interested in a particular subplot then Tad can focus more on it. Areas that attract little interest can be dropped.

Tad said that he found the process astoundingly energising. Before he became a successful writer Tad used to do theatre and rock 'n' roll. These have the same immediate feedback as Shadowmarch,

something you don't get when writing a novel.

Another aspect of real time writing is that the author can capture the current mood. Tad said that his writing is always influenced by what is happening in his life, and the wider world, but a novel won't be published until many months, of not years, later. Shadowmarch, in comparison, is published just days after it is written. If Tad wants to put in topical material, he can, and the audience will recognise what he is saying and react to it.

Tad was asked whether Shadowmarch would ever make it to paper. He said that he has no immediate plans for a book, and that the story would probably need substantial re-writing to adapt it to a book structure rather than the episodic structure he is using on the web site.

Finally Tad was asked what he had learned, as a writer, from doing Shadowmarch. That one stumped him for a while, but eventually he said that he had learned to jump in quickly sometimes. In his normal novels he prepares everything carefully. In Shadowmarch he as learned to have an idea and dive into it straight away.

All in all it was a pretty successful evening (she says, modestly). Maybe I should arrange a few more author visits to BASFA. In the meantime, those of you who don't live in the Bay Area are reminded that you will be able to see Tad perform at ConJosé. Membership fees rise at the end of the year. Buy now.

Miscellany

Overly officious

I have received several emails concerning the newsletter fracas at MilPhil. It turns out that the point of dispute was that Baty and Bobo had awarded their party of the night to Boston and some people felt that this was showing bias in the site selection vote. That is, of course, completely ridiculous. Party of the night often goes to one of the Worldcon bid parties because they have the most money to throw at partying. Nevertheless, complaints were made, and the newsletter was forced to print a disclaimer.

Humour impaired

Meanwhile Mark Olson is worried that his joke about ConJosé bribing MilPhil to set a low target might have been taken seriously. I took this as yet another example of some Americans not having a sense of humour but, just in case anyone from MilPhil is deeply offended, please blame me, not Mark. I wouldn't have quoted him if I hadn't thought it a good joke.

Hugo Nomination Approaches

It is nearly the end of the year, and I'm a bit perturbed that two of the three books I have on my list right now (*Perdido Street Station* and *Revelation Space*) are books that were published in the UK in 2000 and qualify through the eligibility extension. This is not good. If anyone has any suggestions about 2001 books that I may have missed, please let me know.

Soccertown USA

As many of you will know, Americans are famous for their disdain for the most

popular sport in the world. They much prefer to watch the "world championships" for sports like Gridiron and Baseball that only Americans are any good at and only American teams (and the occasional sacrificial Canadian side) are allowed to enter. However, interest in soccer is growing fast, partly thanks to immigrants, and partly thanks to it being such a popular game in schools. The USA has managed to qualify for next year's World Cup, edging out Mexico along the way. And much of the action is taking place right here in San José.

We all kind of expected the CyberRays to win the inaugural season of the women's professional soccer league. The USA are the current Women's World Champions. The star of the World Cup Final was Brandi Chastain, and Brandi is a local San José girl. It is kind of like having David Beckham in your team. What we didn't expect is that the men's side, the Earthquakes, would win their league as well. So there we are. We have not one, but two US Champion soccer sides. Amazing.

Going Green

I was talking to M. John Harrison the other day about his new web site, Empty Space (<http://www.mjohnharrison.com>). He pointed out to me that one possible etymology for Viricononium is Green City. Not that I had this in mind when choosing a name for the 'zine, but it is rather cool. Perhaps I shall adopt it as an official urban legend.

Gimme, Gimme, Gimme

Last issue I reported on how one James Gifford complained bitterly about how the Hugo voting system was rigged because he didn't win. More recently the letters page of *Locus Online* has received some similarly

bile-full complaints from people who feel that they were not treated with the respect that their God-like status requires by the MilPhil programming team. Said complainants were John Norman and, oh, what a surprise, James Gifford.

Obviously these people have been very badly treated, and someone has to do something to soothe their wounded egos. I'm therefore suggesting that I establish the **Emerald City Gimme Award**, which shall be given to whichever self-styled "important person" in the SF&F business makes the loudest and most obnoxious complaints about lack of respect from fans during the year. So far we have two nominees for 2001: Mr. Norman and Mr. Gifford. To make it a reasonable contest we need a few more, so please write in with your suggestions.

By the way, like Mr. Gifford, Mr. Norman claims to be a Libertarian. He is also the only Libertarian I know whose definition of "liberty" includes having the right to own slaves. You see why I have difficulty taking American Libertarians seriously?

Footnote

Next issue will see reviews of books by Tim Powers, Ray Bradbury and Pat Murphy, amongst others. It is, of course, Thanksgiving here at the end of next month, which means LosCon. But I also need to get #75 out promptly because I'm off to London on a business trip on the 27th. This is good thing because there's a new Justina Robson novel that I need to pick up. And if any of you want to see me giving seminars on valuing electricity contracts... No, I thought not.

Ciao,

Love 'n' hugs,
Cheryl