

PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE
STORIES OF ADVENTURE

Susan
of the North!
by Silo A. Garian



AMOR TWO

THE AMOR DE COSMOS PEOPLE'S MEMORIAL QUIET-REVOLUTIONARY SUSANZINE: A PERSONALZINE
PRODUCED BY SUSAN WOOD GLICKSOHN, 139 MAYFAIR CRESCENT, REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN S4S 4J1
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DEDICATION: Happy New Year-- and on the premise that life will spiral upward, I salute two disappointments: Kohoutek, rapidly-fading non-"comet of the century"; and the Dylan/Band concert in Toronto, tonight-- here I am, 1,700 miles away. Still, the disappointment could be more immediate. My brother Bob, for example, will be not-seeing the show in Ottawa, where city authorities discovered that, oops, the Civic Centre was already booked for a semi-pro hockey game, which they refused to cancel.

Other than that, the new year seems to have started well. Except for the main fact of my life...

"I was tired and downcast. I said, 'I've been cold ever since I came to this world.'"
-- Genly Ai in THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS --

Winter. January 9, 1974 A.D., in the city of Regina, the province of Saskatchewan, latitude 50.25° N, longitude 104.39° W, altitude 1,884' above sea level, on the planet Earth, or Sol 3. This morning, at 8:30 A.M., Central Standard Time, as Janet Reeker and I drove in to the university, a full moon still rode high in the dark sky, its light glimmering on piled and drifted snow, while the car radio informed us that the temperature was twenty-nine degrees--below zero.

In AMOR 1, I told you we had four inches of snow for Hallowe'en. That snow never melted; more fell. In mid-December, shortly before I left for the East, Saskatchewan decided to persuade me not to come back. We had three blizzards and a snowstorm in one week. Wind. Snow. Below-zero temperatures. I ploughed through the first storm one Saturday to reach my office, and a pile of marking. Stinging ice crystals flung in my face, dry-as-dust snow piled in three-foot drifts, wind cutting through layers of wool and fur in seconds, an eerie howling that filled the empty Humanities building with inhuman noise, a white nothing that blotted out the library a hundred feet away: that is a blizzard. A blizzard means, for example, that Fraser Sutherland set out, on a Tuesday, to supervise the final examination for his class in Weyburn, seventy miles south-- and didn't get back to Regina until Thursday afternoon. The Mounties (who are also provincial police) weren't letting anyone drive, even on the main highway. A blizzard means that I used a set of out-of-practise shovelling muscles. Wednesday night, Cathryn Miller and I found their truck under a drift, and shovelled the laneway--into the box (gave great traction.) Thursday night, another storm. Friday morning, with the driveway and Mayfair Crescent choked, Janet and I managed to get the Falcon stuck and stalled; thirty seconds in the wind ensured that the engine wouldn't start again. I walked to, and from, the local shopping centre, hauling groceries (the cab companies weren't even answering their phones) and cursing. By Saturday morning, the snow had stopped, but I had seven guests coming for dinner, no-where for them to park, no-where for them to walk since we'd lost the front steps several days before. The Reekers were in Ottawa, Janet was selling records at Simpson's. So: extra sweater, extra socks, warm coat, hat, mittens, oh yes, and turn on the radio to keep the dog company. "It's 10:30 here in Regina, and the CJME temperature reading is-- twenty-two degrees below zero!! Better button up your coats, it's a little chilly out there!" chuckled the cheery announcer.

So I went Back East-- and Toronto got a record seventeen inches of snow in two days.

The temperature at the moment is -30° . Sunrise tomorrow is 8:57 A.M., Central Standard (which happens to be Daylight Saving) Time. I wish I could hibernate.

SUSAN SEES SILTON'S SCULPTURE

Climate notwithstanding, the natives enjoy themselves. Why, today Doug Goodhue finally took me to see the elephant!

In Silton, about twenty miles north, lives a freaky artist who creates Strange Constructs. The high point of his achievement is a huge wooden elephant-structure, built of boards with fenceposts for legs, a tyre hung from a rope as a tail, a ladder into his body and a slide to the ground for a trunk.

I faunched to see it. Goodhue kept bouncing into my office, usually at two minutes to a class, and announcing: "Let's go see the elephant." Why? Because it's there, because an elephant expedition would be a strange and marvellous (or, locally, "kinky") experience, because Goodhue has a fine faanish personality... My sense of wonder craved the elephant.

Today, at 9:16, the power went off on Regina Campus.

A sudden absence of noise from the airconditioning/heating blowers, shifting immediately into awareness of a sudden absence of: LIGHT! And a frantic shrilling of elevator alarms. A moment of disorientation, a few moments of bitching to Gorgeous-Rick-in-the-Next-Office and a couple of graduate students, gathered under the floor's one emergency light; and then, since the rising sun was streaming through the skylight and windows, illuminating even my interior fishbowl, I went back to my office to finish collating a collection of 19th century Canadian poems on ditto sheets.

Absorbed in this fascinating task, I failed to hear the door open-- and jumped ten feet when Goodhue shouted. "Hey, Susan! I can't stand this place a moment longer. Let's go!"

"Wha? Oh, hi, Doug. You just got here."

"Yeah. Can't stand this place. We're going to Silton! Here, mind the dog. Get your coat on." And he departed in quest of mail, while I tried to catch Spook, his 10-year-old standard poodle who'd decided she wanted to meet the computer science people down the hall.

Ten frantic minutes later, we were in warm Bourgeoismobile, speeding through the fog. Yes, fog. Regina lies at the bottom of a dried-up lakebed, some forty feet below the surrounding countryside. Hence, interesting inversion layers, trapping all the car-exhaust, furnace, breathing and other types of urban exhalations-- all of which, in temperatures that had reached -40°, were instantly transformed to ice. It was all very beautiful-- frozen, snow-shrouded Wascana lake, all the trees furred with white, swirling fog lit pink and gold by the rising sun-- and very dangerous.

Ten miles north out of town, and the fog vanished-- because civilization had also vanished. Behind us, the IPSCO steel mill poured grey vapour into a white sky, for a hundred feet or so; then the column flattened out, spread to cover the mill and the city behind. Above us, sky of the intense, pure blue I have never seen anywhere but in Canada, on a sunny winter day. Around us, white, unbroken to the horizon.

Saskatchewan is all shades of pale. Grey of road, sparkling white of snow, merging into a softer white on the horizon, which becomes a pale blue, which becomes the brilliant blue of the zenith. Snow in shadow transformed from eye-searing light to delicate shades of blue, grey, brown, yellow. Trees, blackish-brownish-greenish, frosted with white. At intervals of a quarter or half a mile, small white clouds; farmhouses, furnaces valiantly fighting to keep back the cold.

Bourgeoismobile throbbed northward; found a sideroad, nosed down it; discovered a ploughed depression past scattered houses, ventured down it. On the right, a schoolhouse, white boards, steep stairs to a signposted door: "No casual visitors, please!" And in the yard, an old wagon, transformed into a huge, barn-board hen.

"Hey, look-- that's new!" said Goodhue. "Isn't he great? But wait'll you see the elephant!"

Down another track, past deserted-looking houses and hibernating trucks, to an open field-- and there he was! "Yes, Goodhue, that is a Truly Magnificent Elephant!" I agreed. Two humans and an aged dog tumbled out of the car, bounded across a fence (at least I assume it was a fence--there were logs that looked like fenceposts sticking at least two inches out of the drift) scrambled up through a cavity, darkness barred by sunlight through the boards, up more steps, and-- whee, slid down a red-painted metal slide into a conveniently-placed drift. I bounced some more, flopped down, and made the first snow-angel I'd made since leaving Ottawa three years ago, in a smooth clean drift beside the fence. We examined the elephant, admired it, slide some more, and suddenly realized that it was, after all, nose-nippingly chilly. Bourgeoisobile sought out a gas station. We stood and drank coffee and chatted with the owner (who lived in the old railway station, or, in Western Canadian, the depot, pronounced dee-po) about life in Siltan. A train a day, the passing freight, children bussed to school in the next town; houses for maybe \$4,000 IF any were for sale, out they weren't. "Yeah, me an' the wife used ta live in Regina. I was an accountant for twenty-five years, but y'know, all those people and fighting that traffic home every day, I just got tired of it... It's nice and quiet around here." And friendly. We finished our coffee, talked some more, and heading home drove back into fog, and movement, and noise.

SUSAN SACRIFICES HER STANDARDS

As those of you who remember ASPIDISTRA will know, I have grave reservations about the misuse of certain modern conveniences, such as the motorcar. "Whee, look at all that energy! Burn gas! Burn oil!" Goodhue kept choriling, as Bourgeoisobile hurtled down the highway. Michael and I spent three years in Toronto explaining to people that no, we didn't have a car because the subway system was perfectly adequate, there were grocery stores nearby that we could trundle food home from in our handy wheeled cart, parking was expensive, driving a nightmare... because, basically, a car could be an expensive, unnecessary nuisance, nothing more than a status symbol. Why add to pollution when we didn't have to?

And then I moved to Regina. And got my Saskatchewan driver's license, and started adding my bit to the world's energy crisis, converting fuel into fumes. Why? Convenience, what else, and opportunity. The Reekers have a tired, but determined, 1963 Falcon for Janet to take to school, Mrs. Reeker to take shopping, and Susan, sometimes, to take out in the evening. The engine needs tuning and, since it's only used to stop-and-go around the city, it drinks gas the way no economy car should. But... it beats carrying parcels, or waiting for buses that run every half-hour if they run at all (I ended up, last semester, walking home from my night class since the bus to my suburb stops running at 7 p.m.) Besides, cars aren't intrinsically bad... my brother needs his Toyota pickup to transport his lighting equipment to jobs, not to mention transporting his body halfway across town to the computer plant where he works. The Millers need their Toyota pickup because they're moving to a farm outside Saskatoon, come spring. ("Welcome back to Regina," David said. "How'd things go Back East? Cathryn and I felt really sorry for you, in New York-- we've decided Regina's too big, we can't wait to get to the farm with just ourselves and the goats and rabbits...") Janet and I don't exactly need baby-car (which is just as well, because baby-car's engine barely turns over, these mornings, despite the block-heater; and the cold, which contracts the air in the tires and makes them freeze to the ground in hard, square, blocks, is probably to blame for the flat it developed the other day.) However, there is a lot to be said to any alternative for waiting for a bus in the dark, at -37°F.

IF I get a contract here next year (a mighty big IF) I will have to seriously weigh the multiple personal and social disadvantages of car-owning versus the sheer comfort and convenience of a Renault sedan. Especially in the winter. Or even in the winter, on unploughed, unsalted, unsanded, very slippery roads.

"Grave misgivings" is almost too weak to describe my reaction to parbing myself in the skins of slaughtered baby animals. Yes, I know, there are animals raised just for fur; mink or rabbit coats don't involve the extinction of a species. But how could I wear bunnies, after owning Windsor? Except... I came out here in midsummer to set up courses, and everyone started warning me about The Other Season (all six months of it.) "Get some

cotton underwear," advised Shirley Murray, the department chairman's wife. "The air's so dry, you get zapped every time you walk across a carpet. Especially with the heat on all the time, come September. And you'll need to bring lots of good face cream. Your skin'll flake off. Don't wear dresses and nylons; wear pants. Warm pants. And BUY A FUR COAT!"

"I don't like wearing dead baby animals."

"What's more important, some rodent or you? You'll freeze. Cloth doesn't keep out the wind."

A few days later, in Ottawa, I was telling my Mum that I was considering, reluctantly, investing in a Salvation Army secondhand seal. Mum vanished into the basement, and reappeared with the muskrat coat she had decided was too big, too old, and too much of a bother to wear. "Here," she said. "Maybe you could have that altered."

Yards and yards and YARDS of lustrous, soft, brown fur. A little rubbed on the huge wide-cuffed sleeves, a little torn under the arms, but otherwise in good condition. Soft, silky, warm-- like being embraced by a giant teddy bear. It swept down nearly to my ankles, draped in ample folds; how my mother, who is shorter than my 5'3", ever dragged that voluminous garment around, I'll never know.

"Weeeelll..." I said, stroking myself, and swooping over to the mirror.

"It is warm. And I won't need it. And don't worry; those muskrats have been dead for at least eighteen years!"

"Nice coat," I said, petting it.



In a box all to itself, the teddy bear coat, accompanied by my books, eventually arrived in Regina. So did my Toronto-elegant, smartly-tailored green wool coat. I wore that exactly once. Hallowe'en arrived with snow. The winds howled, and elegance vanished into my trunk, in favour of several layers of sweater and something solid to put over them. I assembled my battle gear; high boots, with an inch-thick sole between me and the iron-hard ground, covered with snow so dry it squeaked under foot; wool hat; fleece-lined mitts; two scarves; and The Coat. Rather to my surprise, the combination had a certain funky élan. More than that, the sensation of being protected by a large, benevolent beastie became stronger.

I decided to call it Woolff.

Woof.



JAN. 23, 1974.... A STATEMENT OF UNPOLICY AND UNPROGRESS

That sounds marvellously negative, doesn't it? I've had two weeks of feeling negative: the pressure of an extremely heavy semester, coupled with the pressure of a harsh environment, the feeling of being trapped in the little pockets of warmth represented by home and school, left me feeling depressed. Even if I'd had time to work on AMOR (and time is going to be at a premium for the next few months) I lacked the ability. Or do you understand that feeling of having your brain turn to lime jello?

AMOR is supposed to be a substitute for the letters I don't have time to write. So what's to substitute for the AMOR I don't have time to write?

I mean to get AMOR out fairly regularly, every six weeks or so. PreChristmas marking took care of that idea. I left Regina on December 18 with my mail more-or-less up to date; I returned on January 6, to a foot-high stack of mail. Thanks to the P.O., most of your Christmas cards were in that pile... immediately before I left, it was taking a week, minimum, for an airmail letter to reach Regina from New York or Indianapolis! So thank you for the cards, and the letters, and the fanzines... I appreciate them... but I'm still getting caught up. This semester I'm teaching three classes, all of them new. I'm at the university from 8:15 to 5 PM or so; then I come home and work. If you don't hear from me, please don't be offended! Think of me grading papers on STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND instead.

So: AMOR will be irregular. Probably won't appear again until the end of April, when classes are over. AMOR will be evolving. This issue may be a little more formal and fanzinish-- I think I'm going to have a proper lettercolumn. Maybe. Certainly it's going to be fatter than an eight-page letterzine; I really couldn't resist the opportunity to run my present on the cover! It's still available at whim; if I don't have some indication you want to read it, I won't send it to you. And, with a nod to all the people who kindly corrected by previous errors of grammar and logic, I'll try to balance off

first-draft spontaneity and polished re-written essay contents.

I'm developing more and more sympathy for Bill Bowers and his whither-OUTWORLDS debates-with-himself. A planned format that you bring to perfection is pleasant and secure; we basically always knew where we were, with ENERGIUMEN. But creative chaos has its moments too. As long as AMOR is readable, I'm just going to let it evolve. Like my sf class. But that's another topic.

Meanwhile, it's Wednesday, Jan. 23, and I'm talking to my friends. And Sense of Wonder, people, I still can't believe what I did today:

I called the Chairman of the English Department of the University of Lethbridge, long-distance on my university's bill, and invited him to have dinner with me!

He accepted.

I'm still close enough to being a student-- and a student from large universities where there was little contact between instructor and instructee-- that I'm overawed by what I did. Besides, Dr. Laurence Ricou is one of the new Potential Big Names in Canadian literature criticism. He's coming to Regina to read a paper on nature in Prairie literature to the Canadian Plains Studies Institute (I'm supposed to contribute a backup paper on prairie novels, which, I promise, I will never read again once I finish my thesis on agrarian fiction!) Dr. Ricou has promised to come to my honours Canadian-lit seminar in the afternoon, have dinner with the class, me, and the Goodhues, and then accompany us all to the Plains Studies meeting.

Sounds terribly formal and academic, doesn't it? Well, Laurie Ricou was a ~~drinking~~ buddy classmate and office-mate of Goodhue's at University of Toronto. He and I have the same mentor, a common bond of "hey, remember Doug Lochhead with those old presses teaching Biblio II in the basement of Massey..?" (Actually, we both adopted him as our advisor when our assigned supervisors left. I saw my regular advisor this Christmas, and he didn't remember who I was. So much for large universities.) Ricou is still in his early 30's; chairman, yes, but of a very small department at a very small (about 1200 students) university. But still... but still... last year at this time I was miserably convinced I'd never get a job, that my entire university career was a failure, that I'd wasted my time and should be learning to type so I'd at least be able to support myself. And now I'm inviting department chairpeople to dinner.

Sense of Wonder.

Last Wednesday, my SoW got another boost from Globe Theatre. In addition to Regina performances, the company tours the province, taking children's theatre to Moose Jaw and Elbow and Frontier and East Poplar. The school-tour company was giving a dress run-through for the stay-at-home company, so the Millers took me along. We sat on the floor around Globe's small in-the-round acting area, listening to the Storyteller in "The Dog and the Stone" and being wind, or magic-makers, or birds, or bees, or tunnellers, when he needed us to be. Fun. Especially the dog, Scrabble. Then we got to sit around and pick holes in the script: "When they came to the desert, we could've been camels." "Yeah, or wind again, to blow them across." "Yeah, they wasted a wish there. We could've been birds again, or something."

Then, in "The Copetown City Kite Crisis," we not only became workers in the super kite factory-- "Now, over here the kites are painted." "Hi-- hey look, I put a butterfly on this one! See, a red butterfly!"-- we also got to vote whether to go on strike against the factory which was polluting the town's air and water, and maybe lose our jobs; or not go on strike, keep our high standard of living, and pretend the air and water were all right. Globe has two different endings, but apparently they've only played the non-

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strike ending three times in a year of school tours! The company really had fun presenting the play to an adult audience-- the dignitaries and culture-vultures invited to the gala opening of the new theatre. There were speeches, with dignitaries fidgeting at having to perform in the round; there was a delightful sense of being the Cultural élite; and then the mayor (pointedly caricatured in the play), the premier, the lieutenant-governor and all the stuffed shirts had to be (not just pretend to be, or watch others being) children and workers. Apparently they made rather a fuss of abstaining from the strike vote! For a province with a socialist government, and medicare, and socialized this-and-that, Saskatchewan is often pretty conservative.

Last Monday, I got to be A Theatre-goer. This bird of exotic plumage and noble demeanour will never be found cross-legged on the Globe floor, gluing an imaginary kite-frame. Its range is the elegant foyer of the Saskatchewan Centre For the Arts, where it struts, dressed in velvet suit or elegant gown, holding a glass of Bristol Cream sherry, staring at others' plumage, and discussing the performance the company visiting the boomdocks once gave in the O'Keefe Centre or the St. Lawrence Centre in Toronto.

Playing Theatregoer can be fun. (It can also be deadly serious; Regina has its share of self-conscious Patrons of the Arts. Luckily it also has a healthy share of people who brush the snow off their jeans after they've finished digging out the pickup truck, and head into town to enjoy themselves.) For one thing, I'm a costume freak; if the actors get to dress up and play roles, why can't I?

Mia Anderson is a Canadian actress who, a few years ago, put together a collection of Canadian poems and bits-of-novels and such into a sort-of-revue, sort-of-performance called "Ten Women, Two Men and a Moose." Because it was all so Canadian Cultural, the Canada Council (bless it) which supports the arts, and scholarship, and other Finer Aspects of Life, including my thesis, has been sending the show on cross-country tours. It came to Regina on a snowy Monday night, with very little advance publicity, and almost no tickets sold. So who goes to the theatre on Monday night? Well, about 300 University of Saskatchewan students, on free tickets. My Canadian lit classes got priority, and turned out in force-- and laughed, and applauded, and generally tried to be enthusiastic enough to make up for the thousand or more empty seats in the huge barn of the Centre. I went with David Miller, and Les Stolzenberger, both of Globe-- and enjoyed, with a very different sort of critical detachment from my enjoyment of kite-making.

Anderson's show, as she slid from satirical to sentimental, from pregnant thirty to nostalgic ninety, was all technique. Her voice was a marvel of variety, her body a marvel of control, her act so polished it had become unreal. The audience laughed in all the right places, as she expected them to; then the show went on in front of them. The manipulation of emotions substituted for rapport. She was acting, as if to and for herself, not sharing delight in a good line, still less sharing that line. Even the introductions to the poems were an act, the voice coy, arch, affected. Part of my reaction was the awareness that, since I'd seen the show a year before in Toronto, nothing-- not a line, not an inflection, not a breath-- had changed. I might as well have been listening to a record, a witty, sophisticated, enjoyable record instead of a person. Another part of my reaction, of course, involved sharing the experience with two actors, and in particular two actors committed to "people's theatre," to working with, and as part of, a small, dynamic, involved company; committed also to entertaining and involving, not performing in front of, an audience. Posing in the lobby and sipping our sherry, me in a gorgeous long croched evening skirt (that's 'crocheted' for all you proofreaders; handmade by an exclusive Eastern craftswoman, who happens to be my Mum) and David in his jeans, we decided that we were being entertained by Mia Anderson-- not moved by Marian McAlpine, and the scrubwoman, and the girl in the wool shop. My favourite poem by Margaret Atwood:

You fit into me
like a hook into an eye

a fish hook
an open eye

brought, not a shock wave, but giggles. Everything was distanced by the technique that should have made it immediate. And, basically, I go to the theatre for involvement. That's one of the reasons theatre still exists, despite movies and tv.

Shock? Well, there was some... There were three audiences in the Centre of the Arts last Monday. The theatre freaks, like David, Les and me. The university students (some of them theatre freaks too, I suspect, but a lot of them doing something fairly new because it was free and Canli t-ish) were there in jeans, unselfconsciously enjoying (yeah, my problem is, I over-intellectualize). And the culture vultures were out in force, to be seen in their minks, to hear pretty Canadian verse, and be uplifted. Instead they were horrified. The next day, I was talking to Mrs. Rankin of the University Women's Club, which had provided all the free tickets. "My classes really loved the show. They want to read all the books it was based on. Isn't that great? Please thank the club for us!" I bumbled. "Er" said Mrs. Rankin, looking prim, "I'm glad. They didn't, er, object to the material? We've had several complaints..." Anderson, y'see, chose material that dealt, in a couple of cases, with female sexuality... and even employed certain four-letter words (though not that one)... and just what was the taxpayers' money being used to support such trash for, anyway? Even Mrs. Rankin felt, uneasily, that some of the material had been "in questionable taste."

Canadian poetry is supposed to be about maple trees, wheat fields, and God.

I asked my classes to write to the Canada Council's touring office to say they'd enjoyed the show, and learned that Canadian writing could be real, and fun; and we had a good discussion of Prudery in Canadian Life and Letters. But the vulgarity-hunters with their own genteel vulgarity depressed me.

KANAJAN KULCHUR: I've started off my classes, both semesters, with a poem I enjoy:

Can. Lit.

Since we had always sky about
 when we had eagles they flew out
 leaving no shadow bigger than a wren's
 to trouble our most aeromantic hens.
 Too busy bridging loneliness to be alone
 we hacked in ties what Emily etched in bone.
 We French, we English, never lost our civil war,
 endure it still, a bloodless civil bore;
 no wounded lying about, no Whitman wanted.
 It's only by our lack of ghosts we're haunted.

--Earle Birney--

For those of you who wondered what I'm teaching, that's it. Sky, railroads (including Lightfoot's "Railroad Trilogy"), feeling inferior to "the Americans" and looking for ghosts or myths or an identity... Specifically, because several people have asked for a Basic Canadian Reading List, I'm teaching or planning to teach:

Poets Between the Wars and Poetry of Midcentury, ed. Milton Wilson
Poets of Contemporary Canada or 5 Modern Canadian Poets, ed. Eli Mandel
Modern Canadian Stories, ed. Rimanelli / Canadian Short Stories, ed. Weaver
Surfacing, Margaret Atwood / The Stone Angel, Margaret Laurence
Two Solitudes, Hugh MacLennan / La Guerre, Yes Sir!, Roch Carrier
The Tin Flute, Gabrielle Roy / The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz, Mordecai Richler
Fifth Business, Robertson Davies / Grain, Robert Stead

Not an ideal list, by any means, but I'm happy with it. If I started recommending books (The Edible Woman and Power Politics by Margaret Atwood; St. Urbain's Horseman by Mordecai Richler...) I'd go on for pages. Read a basic critical guide and pick out what seems interesting: I'd recommend Survival by Atwood, Survey by Elizabeth Waterson (it has pictures in it) and, for you Americans (that's a Canadianism for you), O Canada, full of holes and misjudgements, but fascinating, by U.S. critic Edmund Wilson.

"What's a fanzine?" asked Doug Goodhue.

"Oh, it's whatever you want it to be..." I replied, vaguely.

AMAZING STORIES: The most amazing thing about AMAZING is, I'm writing for it! Ted White wrote to me in December, just before I left for the east, asking if I'd like to take over "The Clubhouse," the fanzine review column.

Sense of Wonder.

Hey, does this mean I'm on my way to becoming a Fabulous Fannish Fan?

I decided to write my first column on "academic fanzines"-- a contradiction? maybe-- because I'm an academic; and more important, because they were what I had to review, or could get easily enough from the Spaced Out Library in Toronto. Four weeks and innumerable drafts later, I sent some pages off to Ted. I hope he likes them. I hope You All comment. Problems: writing about specialized, scholarly journals, for a non-specialized audience with its own preconceptions of what a scholarly journal is (dull. But not necessarily, folks!) Writing as both a scholar and a fan. Writing about several different types of magazine, from magazine to sercon fanzine to serious scholarly offset periodical. Writing, ultimately, less about individual issues of EXTRAPOLATION and FOUNDATION than about the whole idea of The Scholarly Journal as applied to sf, what its strengths and weaknesses are, what it can do, how it as a medium shapes the author's style, vocabulary, approach.

WHAT IS THIS THING? WHAT CAN IT DO? HOW?

That's the problem I'm involved with in my sf class (what is ?sf ?class), and in AMOR, and in the rest of my life... It's all very exciting, living on the frontier, asking all the questions that no-one ever knew existed, finding out the how and why of function and therefor of form. It's also very tiring. Creative chaos is frustrating and scary (though not boring.) And there are times when I wish I knew just one answer. Even to "What are you going to do next year?"

Next year? I'd settle for being certain about tomorrow.

Now, for example, do you review a fanzine? At least, when I returned after Christmas, I found I had some here to review. And some more. And some more. And... hey! STOP!!! I'm never going to read them all! If you want, or don't want, your fanzine reviewed, please indicate that clearly, ok? And please don't be angry if I don't respond. Cultural jaunts aside (hey, I thought the American Film Theatre's "Luther" was great! And I got talked into going to "The Way We Were" and was depressed for a week-- hopelessness as a theme is even worse when it's pretty-plastic. Eech!) I'm working a twelve-to-fourteen hour day, seven days a week. On Sundays I do my laundry and fanac and sometimes even write to my family. I'm not dead, just buried. Speaking of which, it's snowing again.

And speaking of fanzines: Andy Porter's ALGOL 20 is the most impressive assemblage of words, graphics, intelligent thought, irritating and interesting communications, I've seen in a long time. Congratulations. Especially on the LeGuin material.

A TALE OF SEVERAL CITIES

I: REGINA

"Pulled from our ruts by the made-to-order gale
We dropped Regina behind like a pile of bones."

--F.R. Scott

"Trans-Canada"--



Regina looks small from 27,000 feet.

Thirty seconds after takeoff, the city's vanished. Dark blight of the IPSCO steel mill, isolated boxes of farm buildings in flat white nothing sliced by the dark strip of highway to Winnipeg; cloud, white fluff scattered over a backdrop of white, squared off by road lines, blotched with greyblack of leafless, stunted trees. An hour of whiteness to Winnipeg.

Regina, "The Queen City": dignified name given to Pile'o'Bones when the little settlement with its heaps of buffalo bones (to be shipped east for fertilizer) became territorial capital. Fort Qu'Appelle (which Eli Cohen insists means "Fort Whachamacallit"), a lovely little town to the east, on the winding Qu'Appelle River amid the lunar, eroded hills had been the original choice; but the territorial governor, a man named Dewdney, with his friends owned most of the flat, featureless land around insignificant Pile'o'Bones...

Pierre Berton once claimed that Regina was the most beautiful city in Canada because her people, having started with nothing, worked hard to create an attractive setting for their lives, instead of destroying what nature had provided. And so there are parks, and carefully nurtured trees. The university stands on the edge of town. From the fifth floor of the Humanities building, you look east over the parking lot and highway to unbroken prairie. Or, north, you see Wascana Lake: frozen and snow-covered now. It has Canada Geese, islands, flowers in summer, a fringe of tree-covered hills: only the geese aren't man-made, and they're there because of the warm water from the power plant, and the man-provided food! The park sweeps almost to the centre of town, an expanse of picknicker-covered greenery or crosscountry-skier-covered whiteness.

What else besides grass and geese? Moving water in summer; in winter, a moving lake of white as snow blows and drifts over the huge empty spaces of this city, under its huge, empty sky. Buried tips of red snow-fences. Wide quiet streets of brightly-painted houses. Regina residents seem to go in for lots of frame or aluminum siding, in turquoise, salmon pink, bright green, royal blue. One two-story house near here is entirely lavender, with vivid purple trim. Another is shocking pink with turquoise. Fences are common-- high ones too, an apparent contradiction of western friendliness. In theory, at least, they stop the snow drifting and protect the gardens from wind. They also provide space for more coloured paint. Someone near the highway on the north side of town painted the fence in panels of the Canadian maple leaf flag. The colour looks vulgar and garish to an easterner in summer. It looks beautiful and brave to the same easterner cringing from flat whiteness in winter.

Whiteness. Space. Horizontal space. There's a new apartment near the university, tallest building in the city, rising twenty stories above Wascana Park. It's not just ugly, a grey box with poison-yellow extruded balconies; it's wrong, a vertical scar. This is a city close to its physical environment-- the radio stations seem to broadcast more weather reports and highway-condition reports than records. The largest city in the province, it has 145,000 people. The entire province has less than half the population of metro Toronto.

Regina has no frills. When my friend Dianne (whose parents I'm staying with now) moved here nine years ago (reluctantly), we played a game called "Do they have X in Regina"

Dianne: "Do you suppose they have tv in Regina?" Susan: "Probably not." Both sigh. Well: we don't have a good bookstore (one is trying hard, though) or a good record store, or neat boutiquey places; or bagels, or AMAZING, or Duff Gordon sherry. We do have Twining's tea, though, and I've even been able to track down "Je Reviens" perfume. We have the sense of being, six months of the year or more, at the mercy of impersonal, hostile forces: shovelling snow that blows like dust, filling in the driveway as fast as it's cleared, freezing your ears under a wool hat and a scarf, sliding uncontrollably off the road and halfway down the Qu'Appelle Valley as Debbie, a friend of mine who has to travel a lot, did. We have a sense of the imminence of sky: white or deep blue or pink-and-violet, clear and star-filled, bright with Northern lights.

Just before Christmas, Janet Reeker and I were driving through downtown Regina. It was five o'clock, rush hour, which meant maybe three cars were lined up at each stoplight. (I have never before lived in a city where I could drive downtown on Saturday afternoon secure in the knowledge that I could find a parking space half a block from the main shopping area.) We drove west between department stores and dirty-brick office blocks-- and suddenly at the end of the drab street was a glowing crimson sky, with a black wedge of geese stamped across it. Then it was empty again.

And it's seventeen hundred miles of snow back to everything I've known for 25 years.

One day last fall, Doug Goodhue was showing me some of his photos. A small field, elm trees shading it, goldenrod beside the old weathered logs of a snakerail fence. "Hey! That's home." And it was home: taken near Kemotville, Ontario, thirty miles south of Ottawa, where my grandparents lived. I felt positively homesick for that field, for someplace where people had lived, and left a mark.

Except: under this Western sky, people do seem to take the time to notice each other. They smile, and are friendly. I've been made welcome. "Aha!" said the university folk I met in August, "New Blood in the Department. You must come to dinner tonight!" So my good friend and earthmother Elizabeth Buchan Kimmerly gave me a long string of garlic to ward off the vampires... Life still has space and time to be human, in little Pile'o' Bones. I'm just not sure my life can be lived here.

Partly, I'm leaving to find out.

II: Toronto

"Oh Jesus please don't let Toronto
take my song away"

--Bruce Cockburn

"Thoughts For a Rainy Afternoon"--

We descend through dirty clouds to fields where lights bloom to the dim, shimmery horizon. Toronto goes on forever. Three and a half months ago, numb with exhaustion, I sat watching these factories and freeways vanish, wondering why I didn't care. I spent exactly three years of my life in this dirty blur, Aug. 30, 1970 to Sept. 1, 1973: and three months in Regina. It seems reversed. All I feel is apprehension; my hands are shaking and I clutch the seat.

"I'm sorry you're so down on Toronto," says Rosemary Ulyot to me on a tape, "I like it. All the cultural life..." Three years ago, Rosemary was complaining about the cold, indifferent, expensive big city. She's adjusted. I thought I had, until I escaped.

Besides, what's "cultural life"? In Toronto, I usually sat at home. I've been to more movies, plays, concerts and so on, and shared ideas with more people about them, in Regina than in the previous three Toronto years combined. Ten days ago, I went to the Regina Symphony Christmas concert. Beside me, six-year-old Dana Goodhue chortled

at the Toy Symphony. Her parents and I recognized half our colleagues in the orchestra, chorus (Rick-in-the-next-office had been practising bits of "Messiah" in the corridor at me for weeks) and the audience. On the other side of me sat Burton Weber, muttering to Susan the Seeing Eye Rat sardonic comments all through Leroy Anderson's banal, clumsy "Festival of Carols" with its incongruous transitions from "Jingle Bells" to "Adeste Fideles." As the final notes died, he burst out: "Well, at least we Jews didn't crucify Christ when He was born!"

I'm still grinning when the plane lands-- several hours late. A planeload of people, impatient, shoves into corridors full of more impatient, shoving people. Noise, confusion, too many bodies... Michael, smiling and furry, rescues me.

Bus and subway. "I'd forgotten how long it takes to get anywhere in Toronto. Back home, we'd be halfway to Moose Jaw." Back home.

Snow's followed me east; here, it's damp and cold. Despite all Woolff can do, I'm shivering; and my warm new boots have developed unexpected leaks in the dirty slush. My case is getting heavier; why did I buy everyone books? And why did I buy my brother Bob the expensive cowboy hat he wanted, its felt swathed in plastic: completely unpackable, I've been nursing it on my knees all the way East. I'm vaguely aware of huge buildings, huge trees, looming out of wet, snow-swirled air. I keep slipping, my feet are soaking, I'm so cold... and here at last is Michael's apartment with its beautiful leaded glass windows and its dying plants.

"Dear, what are those funny, tall, scaly things, that go straight up and down and then get all fuzzy at the top?"

"What things?"

"There, all along the sidewalk. They're tall, and black, and sort of woody..."

"Oh, those. Those are ogres, tweetie. Dead ogres. Don't you have ogres in Regina? There was a battle between the ogres and the trolls, that's what's left..."

Trees. Tall trees. Tall buildings. Vertical eastern city, blank-eyed people between the high-rises, slush underfoot, glittering Christmas stores. Glitter and dirty slush.

Wednesday, Michael and I go shopping. I revel in bookstores, and the sophistication of the window displays along Bloor St.-- gold and silver, velvet and sequins, a profusion of luxurious nonsense. Regina offers the basics of life: jeans, but no crystal mushrooms; ROLLING STONE and a few DAW books, but no Canadian poetry. The first stop is the academic SCM bookstore, near the university. I pull out a list ("Don't you have any bookstores in Regina?") and move methodically through the Canadian literature section, accumulating Slim Volumes. "Look, dear, here's Doug Barbour's new book with the poems about LeGuin and Delany, and here's the Atwood books I said I'd get for Fraser, and I wonder if they have Ken Mitchell's novel, no, and..."

MICHAEL, LOOK! MY BOOK!!!

Slight digression. Eighteen months ago, I wrote a long, scholarly introductory essay for the reissue of an early Canadian novel: THE HOMESTEADERS (three guesses what it's about) by Robert Stead. I even scored a minor Academic Coup. While digging through Stead's papers in the National Archives, I discovered both a book and an unpublished ms. not listed in the one-and-only Canlit. bibliography. I included them in my own biblio. The book eventually appeared from the University of Toronto Press, and the first copies were sent to me in Regina in October.

It is the most beautiful book in the world.

It was party day on my corridor, as I went bouncing around showing off The Book with its bright orange covers and my name, as big as the author's, in white letters. There I was, Published. Sense of Wonder. Naturally, THE HOMESTEADERS wasn't for sale in Regina. But here it was, in SCM. I paid for approximately \$75 worth of assorted poetry, and floated out.

The scene repeated itself in Longhouse, Toronto's Canadiana specialty bookshop, and in the main Yonge St. branch of Coles, a bestsellers-and-remainders non-specialty store. "LOOK! MY BOOK!! IT'S HERE TOO!!" I suppose if I were Robert Silverberg, I'd become blasé about seeing my name on a bookrack. I suppose...

Meanwhile, before the egoboo can overwhelm me, I drop in to see my thesis advisor. He doesn't remember me.

Several hours later, we squelch home, laden with exotic goodies: Arthur Rackham prints, Hungarian wine (no, we don't have socialist wine in Saskatchewan but we do have the local liquor, Beau Séjour aka Old Moose Jaw), and a hamster for Larson E-- seven feet of sluggish serpent who refuses to eat and is bitten by his dinner. He's not been well, and you have no idea how hard it is to buy a get-well card for a boa constrictor. I change quickly, put on my clammy boots, and, shivering, we head back to the subway, the streetcar, and Rosemary Ullyot's subterranean penthouse.

Rosemary cooks fabulous dinners; tonight, it's beef stroganoff, with a Rosemary Original Salad, the kind in which cubes of cheese, olives, raw mushrooms and possibly eyes of newt lurk under the lettuce leaves. Angus Taylor, accompanied by his brother Duncan and his alter-egos Bedford Cartwright, Lance Hardy and the rest, arrive. We exchange presents. Angus, who conceals a thoughtful soul under a glittering façade of wit, erudition and scepticism, bestows upon me a beautiful edition of Blake's SONGS OF INNOCENCE, with eerie woodcuts. Rosemary gives me a Bunnykins plate: for livening up lunch in the school cafeteria? Fine bookstores are, of course, one of the attractions of Big Cities; but what I've missed in Toronto is my friends.

Thursday: Rosemary calls from the airport; she's enroute to England for Christmas with her family, but the flight's delayed-- the plane is stranded in London by the fuel shortage. She sounds annoyed. We say goodbye again. Then I head out into the softly falling snow. Quiet grey sky, fat white snowflakes drifting down to the faroff chime of bells; the Hart House carrillon, and behind it the university buildings, all Victorian-gothic grey turrets. Peaceful and fairytale-ish.

I spend an academic day, talking to professors, and reading serious discussions of sf in the Spaced Out Library. For some nonserious chatter, I bounce into Ken Smookler's office, calling "Hi, Joyce! When does the committee meeting start?" She yelps, Ken hugs me, and I promise to invite them all to my dissertation-oral party, which I figure will be the next time I'm in Toronto. "But my advisor still isn't sure who I am, I'm going to fail, and you'll have to console me!"

Ken grins. "I remember the party you planned when you were sure you'd lose the Hugo. And no, they aren't ready yet."

Since con-committee business is over and Ken and Joyce have Real Work to do, I head back into the slush, admiring, this time, the marzipan pigs and other exotica in the ethnic shops along Bloor. Doris' radio in the library informs me there's been 14" of snow, the Gardiner Expressway is jammed, the Parkway is closed, Highway 401 is clogged, the city can't get enough equipment to move the snow... ah, rushhour in the Big Apple of the North. The promise of food lures me back into the slush. A stop at Bakka for more books (how will I get this stuff home?) including Lundwall's SCIENCE FICTION: WHAT

IT'S ALL ABOUT: if I'm setting myself up as an expert, I'd better know. Then I truck next door to Anna Carter's antiques-and-handicrafts shop. As I play with a fuzzy knitted handpuppet, fuzzy Michael snowdrifts in, announcing "Rosemary's coming to dinner with us."

"Rosemary's in England. She left four hours ago."

"The flight's delayed again. She leaves tomorrow whenever the plane gets here."

So we all went to a Japanese restaurant because we couldn't get into the Russian restaurant because Michael didn't have a tie. No, we don't have exotic restaurants in Regina.

Friday morning, the phone rings. "Rosemary! You're on your way to England! You've left!"

"The plane left-- two and a half hours early. They didn't notify about ten of us, and we have to go on another flight. This evening. I hate Toronto airport!"

"Well, while you're waiting, write it up. It'll make a great column." Rosemary snarls.

I finish my research at the library, and we celebrate with hamburgers and "American Graffiti." There are times when I wish I'd had a teenybopperhood. The entire audience cheers when the epilogue announces that the hero moved to Canada.

Finally, since we're spending Christmas in Ottawa, New Year's at separate locations in the US, before returning to Toronto, we open some presents to leave here. Thoughtful Sheryl Birkhead's box of handmade goodies includes a mini-afghan, for Regina winters. Great. Michael, so I'll have a Kirk of my own, gives me the cover drawing; I give him an Alicia Austin portrait of himself-with-snake, a mate for the "Lamia" he bought at TORCON. Larson E., unimpressed, goes to sleep without touching his dinner again.

At last, Saturday morning, it's stopped snowing. We drag our suitcases to the subway. Never, EVER, will I buy anyone an unpackable Western hat. Or books...

Bus station. Bus. Dreary streets. Expressways. Dreary suburbs. Traffic. Confusion in grey under grey as we trundle out of town. Even in three and a half months, the city's changed: buildings are down and Tower of Concrete, the huge CN communications tower not built by androids, spears the snowclouds. Some things haven't changed: crowded Yonge St., odd blend of tacky and sophisticated, with smiling freaks selling candles and hurrying, harried, grey-faced strangers. Big, dirty, cold... Oh yes, the book stores and record stores are great, and the libraries, and the whole ambience of alternatives: Regina is a very meat-and-potatoes, shop from the Eaton's catalogue, live-like-the-neighbours town. And I certainly enjoyed seeing my friends, and regret not having time to call others. But: Toronto is pleasant, but I'm not committed to it. Perhaps it's pleasant because I'm not committed to it.

I don't think I'll live here by choice again.

III: OTTAWA

"As Bytown [the city's original name] is not overrun with Americans, it may probably turn out a moral, well-behaved town, and afford a lesson to its neighbours."

--John MacTaggart, 1829--

"A sub-arctic lumber-village converted by royal mandate into a political cock-pit."

--Goldwin Smith--

I hate bus travel. The air is smokefilled. I'm cramped and tired. I can't read. I huddle into my seat and feel sorry for myself. Finally, there's a glow on the horizon, which can't be Ottawa so soon... but it is. The sleepy little civil service town where I grew up has mushroomed out over the farms. The fields where I picked wild flowers and fell into the creek are now parking lots in the inner suburbs. Still, dim in the twilight outside the dirty window are hills, and little fields separated by snakerail fences, and trees: scenery. ("Don't you have scenery in Regina?" "No, wheatfields.")

The miles of suburbs and superhighways are less of a shock with each exposure, but they still remind me this isn't my city any longer. This time, what's new is the bus terminal, all clean tile and hard-edged neon. We find a taxi, load the heavier-each-minute luggage, zip through suburbs full of coloured lights: no energy crisis here! (I tried unsuccessfully to get an Alberta "Let the Eastern bastards freeze in the dark" bumpersticker for Bob.) And finally, here's Mum in the doorway with a huge ball of white fluff.

Christmas with my family is quiet and warm. Christmas with Brother Bob's Samoyed puppy, Hendrix, is chaotic. Imagine all the cute-puppy antics: chewing Mum's slipper to shreds, gnawing on the rawhide bone Michael bought, eating the cat's dinner and anything else around (including a bar of soap, which he threw up in the middle of the livingroom rug), racing through snowdrifts for hours, exhausting all the humans so he has to lure poor harassed Puppy the Cat into a game of tag through the kitchen and around the tree, and jumping into the nearest handy lap to be cuddled... Imagine all these antics performed by a lovable white fluffy creature with the face of a clown. And the body of a half-grown Big Dog. Hendrix kept deciding he was lonely and wanted to gambol-- in the middle of the night. A five-month-old Samoyed landing on your stomach is an unforgettable experience.

Christmas night. Mum's dozing upstairs, Michael's dozing downstairs, Puppy's dozing on a chair out of Hendrix' reach, Hendrix is dozing under the tree dreaming of turkey giblets. Brother Bob's gone out with his girlfriend Marilyn, and his friends John and Clay, who were staying with us, have gone home as Christmas presents to their families. Bob's Amazing Sound System which can shatter windows for a quarter mile is turned way down; Christmas carols drift softly through the room. I sit quietly in the darkness, watching the fire, full of turkey, Christmas pudding, mincemeat and assorted traditional goodies. Eventually I tiptoe out to the kitchen for a glass of sherry. Hendrix lollaps out, so I feed him some turkey. He flops by the fire with a contented sigh. I put my glass down, turn around for an extra log, and... schluurp! Hendrix licks his chops, hiccups faintly, and settles down to sleep again.

Christmas with my friends is noisy and fun. Christmas Eve, Richard Labonte's co-op holds their annual Holiday Feed: turkey, ham, salmon, home-made bread and Christmas cake for 28 or so, to the accompaniment of conversations that have been postponed since last year. Then, several days after Christmas, I leave Michael at the bus station enroute to the Haldeman clan gathering, and head off to my earthmother Elizabeth's house. "Please watch the bread, Susan," she says. "Ian and I are going out to buy a house." So I sit eating peanuts, listening to Bette Midler and making friends with the cat until the door opens. Rosemary Billings, two English friends, and... "John! Doctor Bag!!" I squeal. And we pick up our conversation where it left off three years ago, when he went off to Glasgow to become an unemployed PhD.

"Thank you for AMOR, Susan. You gave me an idea for a poem."

"That's great. About Regina?"

"No, using that line 'I dropped out of Canadapa when I went gafia before TORCON, and killed it.' Such power. Such hints of unexplored tragedy and passion. Such in-

comprehensibility. It's got to be put into a poem. And I'm writing an epic on the human body, based on the Reader's Digest 'I am Joe's Big Toe' series... Here, have some more wine, you look pale."

Having disposed of the future of Canadian poetry, we exchange gifts. It's five minutes before I can stop giggling, because Elizabeth presents me with an antique ersatz Hugo: a rocket-shaped bank that fires pennies up into its nosecone! Magnificent!

And suddenly it's early on a dull grey Saturday. I'm in Bob's pickup with the radio blaring, dashing for the airport.

IV: INTERLUDE IN MONTREAL

It's a twenty minute flight to Montréal, but Air Canada plans an hour layover on the "direct" flight. Seems that to make things more "convenient" we're to pre-clear US Customs and Immigration.

Deplane. Trudge and slidewalk miles to the baggage counter. Swelter in winter clothes. Conveyer belts start, stop, start, stop. Various flights announce final boarding procedures. Mine is one. After 48 minutes, baggage starts arriving. Snatch cases, drag to Customs counter. Polite lady informs me my Ottawa-to-NY boarding pass is wrong. I, and the rest of the flight, wait in line. We get passes. Back to Customs. "What's in the suitcase?" "Clothes." "Why does it have that 'Fragile, Delicate Instruments' sticker on it?" "Er, well, my brother works for a computer firm, and he stuck it on, and..." Rummage, rummage, toss... "Hmm, ok." Sprint down the corridor. Wait in line to be frisked. Wait in line to be X-rayed. Wait in line behind two women and a child with, oh Lord, Chinese passports, who take forever to clear Immigration. More corridors. Wait in line to be frisked, again. And back on the same blasted plane, with two minutes to spare, sweating under Woolff. If human beings had been meant to fly, we'd never have created airports.



V: NEW YORK

"Here we are in New York City, the hub of the universe."

"What good is it being on the hub of the universe when your hubcaps are stolen all the time?"

--Emerson and Cohen, on an Avocado Pit tape--

What surprised me most about New York was, I didn't hate it. Of course, I didn't really see the city. I saw friends.

By the time I deplaned at Kennedy, I'd grown somewhat tired of long, dreary airport corridors. At the end of this one, though, was Eli Cohen, trying hard not to look like a newly-hatched baby chick, a Sandra Miesel sensie he's still trying to live down. "Hi! Welcome! We were going to go to a Thai restaurant in the back of a pizza place tonight, but it burned down yesterday."

We chattered as the airport bus wheezed through endless shabby streets ("Eli, where are the tall buildings? Did I get off in New Jersey?") Then the subway, and talk is impossible. Noise. Dirt. Grafitti. Litter. NOISE. An incredible, dirty, crowded station. A map like a tangle of coloured spaghetti-- "Look, we're here, we're going here." I nod blankly. More movement, noise and dirt, and finally...

tall buildings! Columbia, hub of the universe for us boondocks scholars ("Here at the University of Southern North Dakota at Hoople..."). The Statue Where the Riots Were, back in the activist past. Double and triple locks, opening on a zoo of furry bodies, at least one of which is David Emerson. Sense of Wonder: New York.

Eli reels off an impressive list of activities: a PDQ Bach concert tonight with 17 intimate friends; dinner with Jerry and Suzle and Barry Gillam; call Andy Porter; the Planetarium has a Christmas show; we've got tickets to "The Fantastiks" and the Peter Cook-Dudley Moore revue, "Good Evening"; there's a Fanoclasts meeting, would I like to see "Sleeper", let's go to the Met... "Eli, it sounds marvellous, but you've forgotten something."

"The Empire State Building? Oh, of course... bookstores!"

"No. When do I get mugged?"

"Well, y'know, it's cold so there aren't many muggers hanging around, and they're really busy, but since you're a Canadian and a visitor and all I did manage to get you an appointment for Thursday at 4:30..."

I do, however, get to see a Genuine NY Cockroach. And I do enjoy the city, and I am able to breathe the air... sometimes. I sit relaxing, that first evening, remembering how uptight and miserable I'd been when we drove here for Lunacon in '71, and thinking "Hey, this isn't so bad after all." And then, in the midst of enjoying David's superb pea soup and Eli's chicken in curried cheese sauce, I start gasping. A giant fist is squeezing my chest, and I can't breathe. Whatever the cause, this reaction recurs, annoyingly. One afternoon, Eli and I went shopping for exotic foodstuffs ("Don't you have bagels in Regina?"); we end up walking on downtown. Magnificent tall buildings rise against the sunset, flashing rose-and-gold light from millions of windows. The Lincoln Centre complex is a dazzle of lights, with sculptures, graceful fountains, relaxed people wandering... "You know, Eli, I almost like New York."

"You do?" He sounds pleased, if incredulous.

"Yes really" I say, fumbling for a Kleenex because my nose is stuffed up, my eyes watering, and suddenly I can't breathe, again...

It's a week of fragmanets. I pull the visitor's trick I'd demonstrated six months earlier for Charlie and Dena Brown on the other side of the continent: the sickies. Actually, it's David's fault because he shared The Bug with The Pit and me. The Bug induces fever, snuffles and other cold symptoms, and a strong desire to sleep all day, drink quantities of hot tea with honey, and stay up til 4 am, talking.

David, on fandom: "You know, all my friends are weird. The people I work with are weird. It's a relief to go home sometimes and see normal people, people with predictable behaviour. I'm more comfortable with normal people." He stares gloomily at Yarik, the seven-foot decorated-for-Christmas avocado, underneath which rests a quivering heap of one-two-three-many cats, and Arthur, Asenath's ex-husband, now a ceramic frog.

"David, you're a latent straight!"

"No, he's a latent accountant!"

"David, you're a latent dog person!"

Fragments: Still on a face-the-class-at-8:30 schedule, I stumble into the kitchen to make some tea, and am faced by eight unblinking cateyes. Four silent, alien furry bodies stand statuelike. In the air echoes, soundless, a command: FEED US! OPEN THE TENDER VITTLES PACKAGE!

Full of Szetchuan food ("Don't you have...?") I nevertheless urge a Pit stop at Baskin-Robbins for icecream in the middle of a sleet storm. Seven people crowd into the store, I'm the only one buying, and I take forever to make up my mind; but the clerk isn't busy, and in fact seems impressed. "You've come all the way from Canada, just for ice cream?" "Oh," says a strange voice behind me, "I'm Canadian too. We have Baskin-Robbins now, did you know? I live around the corner from one."

"Oh, the Yonge and Eglinton branch? Yeah. But I'm from Regina."

Chorus: "Don't you have Baskin-Robbins in Regina?"

"No! But we DO have Monty Python, EVERY WEEK!" They are crushed. Still, it is a proud and lonely thing to be an apricot brandy sherbet fan in a vanilla-and-chocolate town.

The Village, in another sleet storm. (Thank goodness for Woolff, but why did I have to visit in midwinter in a fuel shortage?) For an old folkie, it's a strange experience, ten years after. There's Bleeker St., looking dingy, but the Nite Owl is a sleazy poster shop and the Purple Onion advertises topless dancers... David plays me an Ian and Sylvia album, and his autoharp, as consolation.

David on New Year's day, holding his stomach and moaning after a party chez Katz. "Ooh, I ate too much, Joyce cooked this huge turkey, with vegetables, and salad and lasagna and beans, and it was sooo good, and we kept eating, and then Arnie said 'There's three cakes in the kitchen,' and I had a piece of each, and, ooh..." And he went back to preparing the black-eyed peas for southern-style New Year's dinner. I've never seen anyone with a food hangover before.

Not one, but two Japanese restaurants, the second almost deserted; six o'clock before "The Fantastiks" is my supertime, but afternoon for the natives. The chef puts on a show for us, flourishing his huge knife and tossing steak, shrimp and vegetables about on the grill in front of us. The friendly waitress makes us feel we are guests in her house... and then asks where we're from since we must be out-of-towners, "you are so friendly, so polite..." And to finish off a perfect meal, we see two huge boats go sailing up Sixth Ave. New York's a marvellous place.

I didn't figure out the subway (Eli: "Riding the New York subway is a Daoist experience. It all connects, but you can't see how.") Or go to the Met with Andy Porter, having reached the "thanks but I'll just stay home and die" stage. Or publish a oneshot, though Asenath kept dreaming up titles. But there's always next trip, before Discon, when maybe I'll be able to take Mae Strelkov to the Japanese restaurant, and show her the sign in the Planetarium that points downstairs to "Solar System and Washrooms." (Actually, the Planetarium was a bit disappointing. Half the exhibits were shut down because of the energy crisis. One by one, the stars were going out.)

V: REGINA

Finally, westward. Plane to Toronto. Overnight, long enough to listen to the Flanders and Swann Bestiary I'd bought for Michael, and collect my careful of books. Homeward bound? Well, back east are a lot of people I miss, but I've a suitcase full of presents for people in Regina. If home is where your friends are, I'm going home.

EPIPHANIES IN A WHEATFIELD: LETTERS

With thanks to you all-- letters are most welcome, but not necessary, especially since I haven't had time to answer the 63 waiting on the kitchen table-- and a special dedication to the marvellous Sheryl Birkhead, Good Person and creator of the Bow-Wow Awards. Thank you!



I have here some samples of Letters a Reginan Can Live Without:

ALICIA AUSTIN: Just got your newsletter and your mention of the weather made me run outside, look up at the sun, breathe deeply of the nice warm smog and gambol about in shirtsleeves. Even sniffed a rose-- they're in their third blooming now. I've just bought a house here in L.A. It's a real neat house; two bedrooms, bath, kitchen, living room, back porch and yard with large 25 year old magnolia tree and a gazebo. Pseudo-agrarian.

DAVID EMERSON: I saw (by a fluke of luck at the last minute) the Bob Dylan concert in NYC. It was, needless to say, a monumental event, the likes of which I have not known ever before. It made the Joni Mitchell concert on Wednesday and the Steve Stills concert on Friday seem inconsequential. But the upcoming YES concert has me hopping in my shoes already...

It snowed here on Friday (Feb. 3); not just pissing snow like it usually does in the city, but real honest to goodness heavy snowfall (I hear you sneering.) Being a Florida native, I was thrilled to see it, and celebrated by walking home in it-- from 57th St. That's 61 blocks, which is a little over three miles. It was still coming down like mad while I was out in it, too. It's so great, because it makes the city a little less harsh, and it tends to bring people together. I stopped and talked to 5 or 6 people on the way, which for this town is a rare thing to do. I know, I know... you've got snow up to your eyeballs and you think I'm a raving lunatic. Sest lah vye.

***Ultimate weather comment: on the second "official" day of "spring" in this province, March 22, it was 30 degrees below zero here, with a windchill factor I won't even think about. Outside my front windows are bushes with a few frozen berries still clinging to the branches, attracting a cheeping flock of cedar waxwings. And lo, in the flock was a Spring Robin... hunched up in his ruffled feathers, shivering, and muttering "They told me it was spring, they told me, spring, fly up north now..."

Today-- April 27 and yes, it's been a long time since I started AMOR!-- it is SNOWING. I'm leaving for the Centre of the Arts soon (ballet: "Tommy" by Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, to the Who's master tapes, with lightshow) and I'm going to get slush on my velvet pants again. Of course, yesterday it was 80° above zero here... Which seems an appropriate place to interject a letter from

ELI COHEN: Listen, I don't want to hear any more complaints from you about weather. You live in Regina, you expect cold. I live in New York, and when I get up on April 10th I don't expect to find it 29° with snow on the ground, which there was this morning. Maybe the Russians have figured out a way to divert the Gulf Stream current... We never had this sort of weather before men started walking on the moon. If God had intended us to go to the Moon, he would have put a MacDonald's there! ***

CONNIE FADDIS: Temperature hit 75° today, with sun and sun. Can't do a damn thing. Spring fever. More like Spring plague.

Almost the only fanac I've done was to stop in at the Star Trek con in NYC when I was up to visit friends. There was quite a crowd, and David Gerrold looked me up to tell me that he wants the painting of mine that he bought at TORCON to be used as the cover for his next book. Big thrill.

Meanwhile, on the mundane scene, I've gotten on the Board of Directors (read "slave-labour team") for a new non-commercial, public-programming-oriented FM station here. WYED, 91.5 FM. We've got an FCC license, some borrowed equipment, the basement of a garage, an infinitesimal federal grant. We do not have a sound room or studio, an organized work force, a reasonable program setup, or enough money to pick our teeth with. And we have to be on the air by May 1st for a minimum of 14 hours a day.

BUT-- If we do make the airing deadline, I hope to have a daily spot, 15-20 minutes in the evenings, to read some sf! I hope to start by reading the MARTIAN CHRONICLES, a story at a time. That will last 3-4 weeks. If we get positive response, we'll go on to other sf things. Suggestions?

And my garden is blooming. Crocus, anemones, narcissus, iris reticulata, some Siberian squills. They're out here baking in the sun, and I can't get the laziness out of my bones. Ahhhhhh...

That was April 3. Not only is it snowing here, there isn't a leaf out...

From an earlier letter... Thought I might as well respond to AMOR while I'm sitting here in our living room getting my ears blasted by the too-close-range of my husband's bagpipe. I think the tune is "Banjo Breakdown" (yes, on the pipes!) but I wouldn't make a wager on it. They all sound alike to me. (He says the same about sf.)

Wish you were still pubbing ASP... the energy crisis down here is going to make for some remarkable changes. Frankly, I think it's going to be the finest thing to

The University of Alaska in Anchorage is expanding its physical-education department to include a course in dog mushing. The two men who will teach the class say they hope to put a University-of-Alaska dog-sled team together. But they admit the sport has some limitations. Professor William Sturdevant says, "I doubt we'll ever mush against a team from the University of Florida."

happen since the National Park system. It's exciting! Think of it: areas forced into relative isolation again, much like in the 30's and 40's when most everyone stayed home and a "big trip" was the three-hour drive to Grandmother's for Christmas. But with a difference: we now have effective mass communication. Nationwide TV and radio will counteract the tendency for "isolated" areas to backslide into social and political ignorance. Who knows what cultural repercussions this will have?

Anyhow, it'll be nice to have the lumbering moneymobiles off the roads; the trailbikes out of the woods; the Winnebagoes out of the parks; the racket of the snowmobiles gone, gone... ahhhh....!

BILL WRIGHT: Melbourne is in the middle of a heatwave [Jan. 28] and nobody is getting much sleep, what with the stifling atmosphere and an inconvenient plague of fleas... Sydney is no better off, being plagued by torrential thunderstorms. The humidity is frightful. Further north, Brisbane is under water, the Brisbane River having burst its banks. One third of the suburbs are under water, even the roofs of the houses being submerged in some areas.

The Premier of Queensland, the Honorable Jon Bjelke-Petersen who defines aboriginal babies as deformed for adoption purposes, has been accused of denying rescue facilities to aboriginal settlements. The tribal councils have resolved to render no assistance

whatsoever to the white man, and if past patterns are repeated, we can expect to see gaolings of young aboriginal leaders and an increase of police patrols at night through aboriginal settlements. Meanwhile, Joh is sitting in his Parliament House (already flooded to a depth of one foot) co-ordinating the evacuation of Brisbane. Sooner or later he will have to be rescued himself as the Brisbane River is due to rise another four feet at least. And so, you see, practically all of Australian fandom envies you your seclusion in the wilds of Saskatchewan where all you have to contend with is a somewhat chilly atmosphere.

DOUG BARBOUR: It is cold in Edmonton, and what makes it so awful is that it hits, and you run screaming through the streets (in your mind), but although it was early, and much too cold indeed, within a few days you have accepted it, adapted (just like a human, see any number of famous stories on this matter, and of course why did I feel so at home with THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS) and have apathetically set yourself for the next six months of same.

***I had great success with LHOD on my sf course; quite apart from the fact it's a marvellous, complex, subtle book-- with all sorts of immediate relevance in the question of sexual roles, for instance-- my class identified like mad. Of course, when you cross the Gobrin Ice every morning walking to school at 20° below.... Doug recommends, as Canadian sf, Leo Simpson's THE PEACOCK PAPERS and John Mills' THE LAND OF IS. And there's always Leonard Cohen's BEAUTIFUL LOSERS. ***

GARY HUBBARD: (On AMOR 2.5) My Dear Duchess: I was overjoyed to receive your communication of the 12th instant having deduced from the great amount of time that has passed since we last received one of your droll little newsletters that you had become so caught up in your scholastic pursuits that you no longer had the time to communicate with those of us in the outer world. The somewhat grisly notion had also crossed our mind that perhaps you had perished in one of those terrible snowstorms that we hear occur out there on the Western Plains, or else that you had fallen beneath the jaws of some wild animal.

But, as the poet says; "Non scholae sed vitae discimus."

I have just finished reading Bulwer-Lytton's latest novel, THE COMING RACE. It is an amusing fantasy about an advanced Race of people living in underground caverns. The book is generally considered to be a satire on our present-day passion for Progress, but I am afraid that Lord Lytton has betrayed a certain amount of antagonism toward the Suffragette Movement, which I understand Your Ladyship is somewhat involved with, however, I feel that one should forgive him this; he being an Englishman and all, and, therefore, not as morally or spiritually advanced as we are here in America, or, of course, there in Canada.

When, do you suppose, will we be getting a new Novel from M. Verne? I really feel he is overdue for one. Literary lights must be constantly refueled if one expects them to stay lit, you know. And when, as long as we are on the subject, will America produce its own crop of scientific fantasy writers? How long must we let English-and-Frenchmen outshine us in this area? I think I will take this up with Teddy at the Club sometime.

For after all, who was it said: "di buona volonta sta pieno l'inferno"?

Your Ladyship seems really to be "roughing it" (as we used to say in my old regiment) out there on the Plains. Only three bedrooms and no servants? Well, I have heard that people out West live under primitive conditions, but I never thought it

could be as bad as you describe. Any danger of being attacked by Wild Indians?

Still, your description of your first night in your new "digs" did bring back bitter-sweet memories of the first night I moved into Hubbard Court. All I had was a bottle of Moselblumchen and a tract I had come across advocating stricter immigration laws to keep Irishmen and other assorted rabble from our shores. Ah, nothing can compare to the quiet joy of one's first night alone in one's new home; gradually making the unfamiliar familiar and making plans for the future.

I must take my leave now, Your Ladyship. The Post has just arrived with the newest issue of "Jolly Titters", and I must get to it you know. Cheerio.

--Yours for Progress, Gareth Neal Hubbard, III--

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TIM KIRK: Greetings, fellow Stranger in a Strange Land. Is Saskatchewan as strange a land as Kansas? Hallmark really is a swell place to work. I'm doing my best to introduce more and scallier dragons into their card line, but have only met with limited success. My first project--due out at Christmas '74-- is a Bambi calendar complete with Bambi, Thumper and lots of fat petalled Disney flowers. It'll be printed on linen and may be used as a dish towel, bath mat or drip pan for the car. Sigh. Don't tell anyone, but the Hallmark building has more cockroaches per square inch than Tiajuana, Bedford-Stuyvesant and Harlem combined. I bought a Dick Tracy dart gun at the A&P today, just in case I ever have to shoot my way out of my booth.

We have lots of agrarian things out here in the Heartland, too; in fact, you can hardly throw a rock without hitting a tractor or something. I'm in Shawnee, which is a remote suburb of Kansas City and right smack on the edge of the Great Plains. Yes, history is alive and well in Shawnee, Kansas. Why only the other day I went out to warm up the Pinto for driving to work, and danged if the tires weren't filled with Osage arrows! It's a hard life here, but a satisfying one. I'm supplementing my Hallmark income by painting "Californy or Bust" on conestoga wagons.

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MURRAY MOORE: I remember a joke, perhaps in MACLEAN'S, involving the, I imagine now, proverbial American tourist couple getting off a train somewhere in the prairies and asking a native where they were. "Saskatoon, Saskatchewan." "Isn't that quaint, dear, he doesn't speak English!"

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WAHF: John Bangsund: "Thanks for the AMOR DE COSMOS PEOPLE'S MEMORIAL QUIET-REVOLUTIONARY SUSANZINE no. 1. That's a real jazzy title. Trips off the tongue like the name of a petty German nobleman of complex lineage.

Greg Benford: "This is the first loc I ever dictated-- don't think it works, really."

Andy Porter, who sent a NyCon 3 Hugo ballot, and the names of some Saskfen from the F&FS slushpile....

WE APOLOGIZE to readers who bought our paint guaranteed to change your steed into a Horse of Another Color. Some of the paint labels were transposed and others have unfortunately fallen off, so you'll just have to take your chances. SR/W Box HAC-2.



and thank you to: Michael Glicksohn, Rosemary Ulyot, Elizabeth Buchan Kimmerly, Ken Fraser, Angus Taylor, Richard Labonte, Sheryl Birkhead, Barry Gillam, Rose Hogue, Eric Lindsay, Carey Handfield, Robin Johnson, Paul Anderson, Bruce Gillespie, Sue Clarke, David Grigg, Leigh Edmonds, David Fiber, Mae Strelkov of course, James Shull, Grant Canfield, Lesleigh Luttrell, Eric Lindsay, Ed Connor, Norm Hochberg, Craig Strete, Patrick McGuire, Sandra Miesel, Linda Lounsbury, Linda Bushyager, Paul Novitski, Buck Coulson, Robert Silverberg, John Berry, Jerry Kaufman, John Douglas, Gay Haldeman, Sandy Bathurst, Terry Austin, Robert Macaulay, Roger Brant, Joan Bowers, Mike Wood, and probably other people buried in that pile of letters I'll answer Real Soon Now.

DON'T TAX YOUR ENERGY and adrenal glands by writing nasty anonymous letters. Delegate your ulcers to us. Our gifted writers will draft anonymous, caustic letters for all occasions. SR/W Box K.K.

AND A SPECIAL THANK YOU to David George, Pat Burroughs, Mike Bailey and Susan Walsh, who gave me a most pleasant winter break at V-Con 3; a chance to meet Good People and remind myself that greenery still existed.

Spring has finally come, bringing disasterous floods... but also A JOB. I was hired here as a one-year replacement, but my contract's been renewed, with a \$1,100 raise. And please note:

=====
COA: EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY

Susan Wood
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Meanwhile, while this is being duplicated and my typewriter overhauled at last, because I'm tired of rewinding the ribbon by hand every second page, I am taking a holiday from sf and Canadian lit. in Glamorous New York, where I will relax by seeing the new Tom Stoppard play, "Jumpers"; the NYC ballet in "The Firebird"; Zero Mostel in "Ulysses in Night Town"; "Moonchildren" which poses the profound question of how many peanut butter sandwiches you make to take on the demonstration; Leonard Bernstein's musical version of Candide; maybe the Firesign Theatre; maybe the Met!

ART CREDITS: cover, Tim Kirk
backcover, Bill Rotsler
p. 4, Dan Steffan (from my column in OUTWORLDS 10, she said modestly)
p. 10,16,19, Cathryn Miller, who got involved doing marvellous black humour paintings for JOE EGG and sewing Salvation Army bonnets for MAJOR BARBARA and then moved to Saskatoon to raise goats and help David make dulcimers, before I could beg for more Graphic Embellishments.
p. 22, Tim Kirk

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"Is it possible to attain satori meditating in wheat?" -- Sandra Miesel--

WHAT MORE CAN YOU
EXPECT FROM YOUR
FRIENDS THAN THAT
THEY INTEREST,
AMUSE, AND
PROTECT YOU?

THEY SHOULD BE GODS, MAYBE?

BUT THEN **WHAT**
GOD
COULD DO MORE?

THINK ABOUT THAT WHEN
YOU HAVE
THE
TIME
IF
EVER