

The Aussies Want Me to Shoot the Dog

Well, it's what they don't want me to do to the dog that's the dilemma.

It started a few days ago. I got an email, offering me actual money for rights to publish one of my stories in an Australian quarterly somethingorother. Sounded good at first, but then the catches started rolling in.

They wanted it cut to around 1000 words. Oof! I took a look; as written it was 2740 words. That's a *lot* of cutting. The "Advanced Topics" section would have to go. Some of my favorite barbs would have to go. The veiled reference to Homer and his proclivities would have to go. Was I willing to defile my Art in this way, for a mere handful of silver?

You betcha.

Well, I can take it to 1500 words. Will that work, I asked them?

I got an answer; yes, 1500 words will work, but the money stays the same. Okay by me. I slashed and cut, edited and rewrote. What the hell, I got it to 1484 words. The story still bears some resemblance to the original. What the hell, I sent it off.

What do I hear back? "The publisher has had a bit of a minor freakout about the bestiality + rape + incest themes." They want them to go.

Now, this is a humorous piece, low humor, but with a sharp edge. A nation of sheep shaggers, and they're worried about doing the dog? Oh, sorry -- that's New Zealand. They don't shag sheep in Australia. Don't know what the Aussie animal of choice is.

No, they're worried about the new net censorship laws going into effect in January 2000. Haven't they heard, "the net treats censorship as damage, and routes around it?"

Those paragraphs around Miss Fluffy are finely crafted, and contain some very nice juxtapositions. They lead into a good transition which also has some good and contrasting images.

Am I willing to lose the dog for money? Hey, it's Aussie dollars at that -- they're metric and smaller than real dollars. Do I stand up for the purity of my original idea, or go for the money?

Fuck the dog.

Oops, that's what they don't want me to do. Lose the dog -- that's better. Sorry, Jack -- you'll have to wait for your fun with Miss Fluffy when the Aussie net censors aren't looking, which thankfully is most of the time.

They're also queasy about the "nympho daughter." Ooh, incest -- never happens in Australia -- very bad, very bad, not allowed on the internet. Hey mate, got any libraries over there? I can think of a some Greek farces with incest and a lot more -- they've been around for a couple thousand years. Okay, change the "nympho daughter" to the wife's "nympho sister." I imagine adultery still goes on in Orstralia.

But that lets me put back some of the original material, and tidy up the end a little. Now it's 1474 words. No more bestiality -- Miss Fluffy runs away. No incest. In fact, no sex at all. Let's see how that flies in The Land Down Undah.

How do I feel about this? I've mercilessly butchered a story I like very much, one that was finely crafted. Humor is hard to write, especially when it combines the broad whacks and subtle jabs as this one does. Will I whittle it more, water it down more, or tell 'em to go shag sheep (or whatever animal they don't do in Australia)?

Bowdlerized. Eviscerated. Guttled. Castrated.

Are these stories my children? Should I be protecting them, nurturing them? Or is it time for them to get out and start making some coin for their daddy? Hey, even with the exchange rate, this will pay for session with the therapist.

One thing I'm sure of. The Aussies are fucking nuts. Censorship doesn't work. Oh, in case you're wondering, this is **NOT** a work of fiction. This is real.

POSTSCRIPT:

I got the check in the mail. I cashed it, after making a photocopy for my records. The money went to my therapist.