

doxa!

A fanzine of opinions, outrageous and otherwise • An Incurable RomanTic Production • February 24th, 1990

Three Day Novelty

"How'd you like to spend a weekend with me..."

Jasmine is a tall, slim, attractive brunette. I raised one eyebrow.

"...writing a novel." I raised the other.

"It's part of the Fringe 3-Day novel competition, you see. I'd like you to be a collaborator, and help write a novel. The winner gets their novel published by the end of the Festival."

I dropped both 'brows, and grinned. A lot of strange and curious things happen during the Adelaide Festival of Arts. Why not, I thought?

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The rules for the 3-Day Novel Contest allow you to do as much plotting as you like beforehand, but you can't actually write the story until the designated weekend. You have to complete the work by 8pm on the Monday, and get Justices of the Peace to witness affidavits that the novel was in fact completed during the three days. *

Since the most I'd ever written was the odd short story, or magazine article (about 3,000 words), I thought it'd be interesting to attempt a novel. And Jasmine had a suitably warped sense of humour: a collaboration would be an interesting experience. We laid down ground rules, and decided to work on the piece at the Centre for Environmental Studies, to which we both had access after hours. They have a few Macintosh computers, and a laser printer for the final copy. We allowed time for our respective household duties, and planned for a bit of partying on the Weekend as well.

Unfortunately, having agreed to write the novel, we both forgot about it until a couple of days before the Event. And then, with work and studies taking up time, we only managed a brief hour's planning before the starter's gun. Jasmine wanted to write a feminist fable, with a slight fantasy twist to it; I was planning a detective story of pulp dimensions. We both reread *Dirk Gently's* to get a feel for disjointed writing (as this effort would undoubtedly be...)

We had agreed on a setting not too different from this world, with odd quirks. Our hero was a secretary who solved puzzles as she daydreamed her way through everyday life. The Case was that of a murder victim, who hires our hero to solve her own murder. [a few weeks later, I read Dan Simmons' *Hyperion*, where a similar case is given to the detective. Dan's solution bears no relation to ours whatsoever. He's a much better writer, too. I heartily recommend *Hyperion*.]



SCIENCE FICTION HANDBOOK, REVISED

How to Write and Sell Imaginative Stories



L. Sprague de Camp and Catherine Crook de Camp

\$3.95

an indispensable reference for anyone trying to write a novel in three days

Starting: We met Friday night to sketch out the characters, and bounce around some plot elements. We broke the novel down into 25 chapters, each of 1,000 words (yes, I know that's a little short; we weren't going to manage *War & Peace* in three days). We tossed in some events in each chapter, and each picked a chapter to start on. Jasmine started work on Dimity (who later became Rachael Dimity van der Meer, or Rache for short), while I started in the Detective's office with a jewel-encrusted dagger embedding itself in the wall.

There is nothing quite as discouraging as your partner pounding away twenty to the dozen while you peck away sporadically at your keyboard, wander about aimlessly, make cups of tea, and face the terror of an empty screen - and mind.

Around eleven, we decided to take a break and enjoy the remnants of the Fringe Opening Street Party, two blocks away. There were still hordes of people, and a few acts on stages.

We returned to the story, several drinks and

nibbles later. I finished my chapters, and left Jasmine hard at work on her characters. We agreed to meet the following afternoon.

Day One, Revision: I borrowed a copy of the de Camps' *Science Fiction Handbook, Revised* and spent the morning reading the sections on plot and dialogue. By the afternoon, I was inspired. I returned to the task, armed with two quotation dictionaries and the de Camp. I read through Jasmine's work, added a few comments and suggestions, and fleshed out the character description of the Detective, Christopher Anthony Aloysius Gordon Gough Fork, aka Chris Fork. Jasmine returned late afternoon, and we discussed the plot further, adding incidents to the outline and completing a few more chapters. Curiously enough, another staff member was also working in the centre, on his own novel. Maybe our enthusiasm inspired him!

Most of the fun was reading the other half of the story. Around eight, we broke for dinner,

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doxa!

March was a busy month. With the Festival and Fringe ending only a week ago, various interstate fen dropping around, a Federal Election yesterday and the start of term, there's barely been time to breathe, let alone put out fanzines.

I hadn't expected to see many of the Festival/Fringe events, because of lack of funds (rather than lack of desire).

Luckily, I was asked to help with Triple M's coverage, and so scored a media pass to the Fringe — which meant free tickets to their shows; a friend with an artist's pass offered me cheap tickets to a couple of festival shows, as well, so I managed to see lots of shows (some were *terrible*, but that's the price you pay for being a reviewer).

This, then, might be termed the special festival edition of *doxa!* I can't squeeze in reviews of everything I saw, but let me recommend most highly the production of *A Confederacy of Dunces* by Canadian Kerry Shure, who plays fourteen different characters in a manic two-hour one-man show. He's done a lot of work for BBC radio, as well as record a radio version of this Pulitzer prize-winner. His rapid change of voices creates the illusion we're hearing all of the characters together. A superb, hilarious, performance, which should be currently running at the Melbourne Comedy Festival.

Rumours

Michael Tolley, at the University of Adelaide, has got the OK to offer a course on SF to his English students. It'll probably alternate with one on Crime fiction, so that anyone taking a degree majoring in English can collect the full set. What's next, units on cyberpunk?

Brian Forté has apparently signed a deal to deliver a shared-world anthology to Australian and American publishers. We hear even now the tread of eager authors to his door....

John Foyster has apparently had to change his PO Box. The staff at Norwood were sick of dealing with all the letter-bombs he was receiving from disgruntled DOXY! victims.

Jeff Harris and Chris Simmons are now major caffeine addicts, after their mighty effort to complete a novel in three days, as part of a Fringe Event.

They must have done something right, though, as they scooped first prize in the competition: a slim volume called *Shadowed Magic* is now available from the publishers, Landin Press, and odd booksellers about town.

Also of interest was the Leicester production of *Hamlet*, in which the actors were upstaged by their curtain: a richly textured wool (cotton?) backdrop which sweeps across the stage, and provides curtains, walls, corridors, "split-screens" and backdrops. The actors hug the curtain, wrap it about themselves, caress it, snuggle up to it. All in a fast paced, modern production.

Best local production came from the *Red Shed Company*, Adelaide's own alternative theatre group, with a piece called "Frankenstein's Children". A stolid political view of the rise of callous modern science, it's set back in the 1830s, during the fun-filled time of graverobbers and surgeons. The author, David Carlin, wanted to dramatize the issues of the modern day, such as Genetic Engineering, and thought a more dramatic setting would be ...heh heh ...interesting. If they tour interstate, watch out for this show.

CANE TOADS

Warning: Some people or Deep Ecologists may be offended by this article. If, after having read the following you find that you are offended, then go and take some psychotropic substances and re-evaluate the meaning of life etc. Alternatively, do that first, then read on.

The Cane Toad Bufo Marinus is without doubt one of the most hideous and fun creatures which exists on this planet. This invasive species has a limitless appetite for food ("if it moves, eat it; if it doesn't, eat it"), sex (if it looks like another cane toad...), and territorial expansion (leaves the Indonesian government and IBM for dead)! So, what, as concerned ecologists (sic) can we do to save this, our only planet from being over-run by these forces of evil and darkness? Subversion? No, they're not smart enough to come to terms with certain basic concepts like Existentialism, Gaia, the Laus of Thermodynamics etc. Besides, they are already having a lot of fun eating and screwing (bonking) their way through life pausing only to sniff the roses (just in case there are any insects on the leaves which they can eat). Suasion also doesn't appear to work very successfully. That only leaves ecologically sound DIRECT ACTION; cheap, non-toxic, non-polluting, non-alienating, easily accessible and lastly - heaps of fun.

Safety Cane toads have poison glands in their skin. When they are squeezed too hard these glands exude a white substance of creamy consistency. This substance can blind you, at least temporarily! Ingestion of this substance through the mouth produces an intense burning sensation and frothing at the mouth. In addition this poison is psychotropic. So if you don't wish to make a very funny spectacle of yourself follow some fairly basic precautions when handling these toads. Wear eye-protection! Either wear gloves or remember to wash your hands before touching your eyes, food or mouth!

Fun things to do with cane toads
Number One in the series...

1/ **CANE TOAD GOLF** this is my personal favourite. I hate playing conventional golf but this I enjoy! The first thing to do is to choose a golf iron. I find that a 5 iron gives enough lift to clear many nearby obstacles. The next thing of course is to locate a cane toad. Now it's no good just waltzing up to any old cane toad and having a thrash at it with a club. If you think that conventional golf can be frustrating then think how it would be if the ball was mobile!! Choose a large toad to start with - especially as a beginner. Then approach it casually and line-up the head of the club with the toads shoulders about 15 cm from the toad. Then with an over-hand grip on the club deliver a stunning blow between the shoulders. Don't worry about killing the toad at this stage. Next line up the toad using the head of your club. Prop it in a squatting position - the classic froggy style (pardon my pun). Now line up your club with the toads chin and drive it into the middle of next week. Now the key here is to get comfortable, swing easy and remember to follow through. If you do this correctly you will be rewarded with a sweet "thwuck" sound which you will undoubtedly remember for the rest of your life. A variation on this is to find toads near a brick wall and play the toads onto the wall - the sound of the toad rebounding off the wall will add to the feeling of well-being and accomplishment as you find that 'sweet-spot in the middle of the club. In the interests of accessibility it should be noted that a golf club need not be used - any old lump of wood will do.

darren kritikos

more next issue

Frankenstein's Children

I've never been fond of cemeteries. Not even in the daytime. I know some like to play among the gravestones, admiring the statues and the peace and quiet of a grave after dark, but I've always found it *creepy*. Yet I now found myself sitting on a gravestone with a friend, surrounded by a hundred eyes.

OK: it wasn't a real graveyard, just the set for a play. But even so, the feeling was uncanny: open tombs, plaster angels, withered grass and dead trees, broken crosses and grey slate. Mary Moore had outdone herself in designing the set for Frankenstein's Children, constructed in the decaying east end market site (eventually to be rebuilt as mega-story hotels).

The play is set circa 1832, and deals with the rise of science and inhuman, "clinical" values, as surgeons conspire with bodysnatchers to further their cause (see box for details).

The story follows the career of Anne Sheridan, a young woman who disguises herself as a man to learn anatomy and take part in the glorious march of science. We also follow Penny Dreadful, a seller of entertainments and effective town crier (played by Eileen Darley, who gets to sing some wonderful ballads such as *Mary's Ghost*, *The Pauper's Grave* and *Monster Science*, all from the 18th/19th Century, in her fine Irish voice), Polly, a woman who manages to sell her body — in more than one way; the Hares, who've found a convenient way to supplement their income, and a very arrogant Sir Astley Cooper, who needs more bodies for his anatomy classes.

The sets surround the audience (who sometimes sit on them, moving as the action proceeds in their corner), and the actors weave in and out of the audience.

Although a comedy, the play has elements of tragedy, and does raise important questions about the values of science and its place in the world of today. As the author, David Carlin, points out,

"The development of modern Western scientific orthodoxy, with its emphasis on the separation of "man" from nature and its mechanistic belief that nature can best be understood by reduction into isolated individual components, has not taken place without violence or political struggle....

The classical Scientific Method is based upon doubt and scepticism; nothing is to be taken for granted. Nothing, that is, except the ability of the *rational* scientist to remain objective about what he studies. But can anyone view the world uninfluenced by their own gender, racial or socio-economic background? How much power do scientists have in our society through



the weight of their knowledge, and how is this power being used? How much did we know about thalidomide? How much do we know about genetic engineering?"

Important questions, asked in an entertaining and thoughtful way, in *Frankenstein's Children*.

The major problem facing British anatomists and surgeons was obtaining enough bodies to satisfy the expanding requirements of their research and teaching. Deeply held spiritual beliefs regarding the integrity of the body after death meant that bequests were unthinkable. The situation was made worse by the fact that dissection was associated in the public mind with punishment for murder: the only legal source of bodies being those of people hung at the gallows as murderers (a law passed by Henry VIII). However, since murderers never constituted an adequate supply, the vast shortfall was made up by bodysnatching. All the great anatomical collections of London and Edinburgh have on display many fine specimens taken from people who were bodysnatched.

The anatomy act of 1832 effectively ended bodysnatching, but did not end the fear of dissection for the poorer sections of society. It created a system of institutionalized coercion whereby poor people dying in workhouses or hospitals and left "unclaimed" by friends or relatives, would be automatically taken for dissection. Thus, what was originally a punishment for murder ended up being a punishment for poverty.

from the programme notes by the author, David Carlin

from page one

and printed a copy of the story so far. It was an interesting read.

We had to be very careful not to duplicate effort, and tag each comment to ensure we knew which version of the text we had. It's the same problem databases have: how to know that you've got the latest revision, and that when you make changes, they're made to the master copy. Of course, it's much more interesting when you're dealing with a novel, rather than statistics of wombat egg production.

I left around midnight, clutching the most recent version of the story under my arm. Jasmine was still typing away as I left. I promised I'd return early the following morning to pound the keys.

Day Two, Tedium: Sundays are curious days. I've gone through several stages, measured by how I react to Sunday mornings. First, there was the lie abed until noon stage: a convenient rest, opportunity to read books and magazines, or just loll about. Then I went through the up-at-the-crack-of-dawn, no time to waste, this beautiful day beckons, off to the park to do T'ai Chi and then...Rising at nine, when the rest of the household is still asleep, and pottering about the kitchen, listening to the radio and leafing through magazines as you munch fresh croissants was my most recent stage. Except, with daylight saving, and interstate guests, you can't just dash off immediately after breakfast. So I lingered, and somehow didn't manage to make it to the novel until just after noon.

Jasmine was worried that I hadn't contributed much to the development of Rache, the main character. I edited her chapters, annotated possible changes and pointed out that the reason I hadn't put much into Rache was to avoid tampering with Jasmine's character. There seemed little I could add.

I altered my chapters, reacting to some excellent suggestions from my co-conspirator.

When Jasmine arrived, we discussed the story and characters, and complimented each other on nice touches we'd added. We rearranged a few chapters according to the new plot requirements (even in a time travel story, some things must happen before others).

Late afternoon, I gave up and escaped to see one of the Fringe plays: a production of *Desire Caught by the Tail*, a Pablo Picasso play, produced by the Bastinados, a troupe of twenty-three (Hail Eris!) from Sydney who had invaded Adelaide for the Festival. I'd interviewed them for Triple M's Festival/Fringe coverage, and was intrigued by the snippets we'd recorded in the studio to want to see the whole play.

I returned by 8:30, in time to drag Jasmine out for a meal. She'd worked hard through the afternoon, and our novel was starting to look presentable (if a little short). We had a whole scrapbook of interesting lines and scenes which we hadn't yet placed. Some were sug-

Snippets

from Eric Lindsay, of 6 Hillcrest Avenue, Faulconbridge comes the following note:

Hi Roman,

I'd have thought being branded a heretic by the Catholic Church would be seen as a positive state of grace these days. But I'm not much into following antique superstitions.

[The interesting thing is that heresy is just defined to outlaw threats to the Church's authority. Hence the outrage over liberation theology. I'm fascinated that Matthew Fox wants to work from within the Church to reform (remodel?) it — RO]

Liked your vanity editing piece — wonder who will scream?

[Although Jeff didn't care to comment, George Turner felt it was an unfair comment ...see

the issue dated Feb 10th for details — RO]

Buses I take to Melbourne don't get lost — they just break down.

[Funny, I had the exact same problem: the bus I took from Sydney to Melbourne broke down at one of the "rest stops". After almost an hour of black smoke pouring from the engine, the drivers gave up trying to fix the bus. They transferred six passengers onto a bus from another company. Since I had to make a connecting bus to Adelaide, I was one of the lucky few to escape. I think the rest of the passengers had to wait another hour and a half before they were rescued. - RO]

Judith's oven may cook the dinner, but mine insists upon me preparing it first.

[Eric is editor of *Gegenschein*, and in the latest issue (#57) suggests that there may be a place for a bulletin board run by fans, but bemoans the likely cost of trunk calls.

As Eric notes, there is already a discussion on the Usenet about sf, called *aus.sf* (I think) which is available from your friendly neighbourhood educational institution — University, CAE or whatever. I'm sure that the net could carry a fannish discussion across Australia. Personally, I'm more interested in Pegasus, the local outlet for the international greenie networks. I'm not sure how many fans are members, but the rates are reasonable. I might fly the flag to see how many salute..

Also received recently: copies of *ASFR*, *DOXY* (Foyster's Scandal sheet), *Sweetness & Light* from Jack Herman, and of course, *Gegenschein* from Eric.

Remember, we'd love to hear from you.

Feel free to drop us a note or postcard from your current state of mind.

And, of course, articles or artwork would be welcomed.

doxa! is produced on a (roughly) fortnightly schedule.

Next Issue: more on the March of Science, and perhaps some thoughts on genetic Engineering, rather than body-snatching

Anyhow, take care...Last Page laid out march 25th, 1990 Roman Orszanski]

gested by a lovely little chapbook on the true meaning of arcane mystical knowledge Jasmine had discovered. Unfortunately, it had no spells to ensure we'd complete the story by the deadline. And Jasmine had to work on the Monday!

We stayed up until one, whereupon we adjourned to the Pancake kitchen for food, and another story conference.

I hadn't written much, just odd spurts of dialogue here or there, fragments of scenes and the odd chapter.

It was clear that we weren't going to complete our original plot, and there were still massive holes, and unexplained events. We ruthlessly pruned the plot, and simplified it. Before parting, we noted the most important chapters to complete on the next last-day.

Day Three, Desperation: By late afternoon, Jasmine had completed all the necessary work for the day, and we were free to tie up loose ends, in an attempt to knit a story together. All right, we knew that we were missing a few stitches, but with masking tape and string...

We invented a plot which somehow accounted for all of the disparate chapters, and even used many pieces we hadn't realized were

vital clues when we wrote them! All we need do was complete the missing six chapters, which included the traditional denouement, an explication of the McGuffin, the finals of the Zeppelin races, and the secret of the FasTrax Courier service. And, of course, explain the motive and the reason for the bloodred bicycle. *In three hours.*

I started on the chapter wherein Rache was hired by Fork as his assistant, then the entry of the client.

Jasmine worked on explaining the microdot. Some of the bridging chapters became bridging paragraphs. A few were little more than a sentence — if we had the time, we'd flesh them out later.

We stopped at 8pm, and opened the champagne (domestic and cheap) to toast the completion (sort of) of our novel: *Bittersweet Cakes are Best*

One day, we may actually complete the work: it was certainly interesting to co-author a novel in three days. We both like the characters, and were surprised how they took on a life of their own. By the second day, we were already saying things like "No, George wouldn't do that. He's much too shy."