



The *Illuminata*

Delving Deep Into the Worlds of Science Fiction and Fantasy

Crossing Over (Without John Edward)

Bret M. Funk

There is a general rule for cinema: If a movie is a remake, watch the original; if it's an adaptation, read the book. This rule applies in the opposite direction, too, and I'm reasonably sure it extends to other forms of media.

Apparently, Hollywood never got the memo. Printed versions of hit movies are in bookstores before Blockbuster has the DVD, and it's the rare bestseller that doesn't eventually find its way to the silver screen. A few exceptional films have earned a stint on television; in the reverse direction, even television shows of questionable appeal are being adapted into movies (I'm still waiting for the *What's Happening!* movie). More recently, made-for-TV adaptations (of those books not quite popular enough for Hollywood) have littered the networks and, with slightly better success, the cable channels. Even video games and comic books are getting into the game! Is nothing sacred?

The fact that most adaptations are terrible (anyone see *Battlefield Earth* or *Starship Troopers*?) doesn't help, and in the case of SF&F, even the 'good' adaptations often eliminate intricate plot points (or characters) and completely pervert or misinterpret the author's work.

Wait! *That's* the problem! If adaptations were well-made and true-to-form, I wouldn't be writing this article.

But if adapted versions are regularly of poorer quality than the originals, why are they made? More importantly, why is the general public so interested in media crossovers? The SF community in particular seems obsessed with crossovers, anxiously waiting months or years for an anticipated release. Finally, and perhaps most perplexingly, what factors are driving the recent slew of better-than average (in my humble opinion) adaptations such as *X-Men*, *Spider-Man*, and *Lord of the Rings*?

While several factors drive the production of crossovers, money is the undisputed

frontrunner. When Hollywood adapts a best-selling novel or comic book series for the screen, they *know* they have an audience willing to pay \$7.00 or more to watch something they've already read, if only so they can complain accurately about the dissimilarities between the two versions. If the movie is well made (or at least if it generates enough revenue) it will spawn a sequel or two (like *Batman* and *Superman*); if it is terrible, it is quickly yanked from theaters, moved to video, and forgotten (anyone remember the *Punisher* or *Captain America* movies?)

Money is the driving force behind most other crossovers as well. A television series adapted to film will draw fans of the original show, while hit movies that made the switch to the smaller screen might draw big-budget advertisers hoping to capitalize off the movie's fame. Books adapted from movies often jump high in the bestseller lists, and books that are adapted into movies often enjoy a resurgence in popularity.

Crossing-over into multiple genres, especially when coupled to video and DVD sales, video games, and other merchandising efforts, creates a near-endless assault for a given movie/book/show, especially when coupled to a good advertising campaign. This promotional blitz can feed off itself, generating more income for each version of a work than several solitary efforts.

Creators of a work are influenced by the siren's song of money, too, though fame and recognition might play as nearly as strong a role in the appeal of a crossover. Few starving writers (and the vast majority would starve if they relied on writing to fill the dinner table) would turn down a six-figure payment or small percentage of the gross to see their work adapted to film, even at the cost of creative control and the possible misinterpretation or alteration of their themes, morals, and even plot. Even a modestly popular movie adaptation will bring attention to the author's book, and a successful one might be more than enough to launch a writer's career. Since recognition and acceptance of one's writing should rank nearly as high as making money, selling out to Hollywood can be a very attractive prospect.

Other factors do exist for the creation of crossovers, but they pale in comparison to the power of the dollar. They do, however, figure in more prominently with next month's topic: why the public loves crossing-over.

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Flights of Fancy (IV): Sea Transportation

Brian Otridge

Organized sea transportation is probably the oldest form of transport in the history of the world. To be frank, I don't think that there will be any astounding development in this area, but it is worth sailing over a few ideas. Those ideas center around propulsion, passenger craft, freight craft and underwater.

In the propulsion arena I suggest that two areas may see technological development. At the moment fossil fuels are cheap enough to make other forms of sea propulsion prohibitive, but as oil runs out other solutions will need to be found. Nuclear energy is obvious and has been used for nearly fifty years in military vessels.

Given sufficiently reliable and safe power units, and the environmental acceptability of disposing of spent reactors, this is an eminently sensible form of propulsion. Most of the cost is capital, which is what ships are anyway, and with mass production this could reduce as would the cost of fuel rod manufacture and disposal.

Before I get hundreds of e-mails in protest, let me say that the environmental issues may make this one a non-starter, not forgetting passenger resistance to sitting on top of a potential nuclear bomb. So where else can you get free or cheap energy - solar power? Fine, if you always sail round the South Sea Islands on fine days. On the other hand, wintertime crossings of the Atlantic might be a bit slow. But the sun puts plenty of energy into the global weather system, rain or shine. At sea, this energy manifests itself as wind, 99% of the time. I'm not suggesting a return to the clippers of the nineteenth century, but already there is a prototype freighter with metal sails, computer controlled. It has an auxiliary oil engine for those few days when wind is scarce and for getting in and out of port, much like a large pleasure yacht.

So, what about passenger ships? The problem with the sea is that the resistance of the water presents an effective brick wall when you are going fast enough. A fall from 250 feet into water will guarantee death to a human being - it's that hard - diving from the Golden Gate is not, repeat not, a good idea. Yes, today we now have catamaran hulls, and hydrofoils and hovercraft, but there really is no way of cheating the sea any further. Sixty knots seems to be the commercial limit. Yes, I know that

water speed record guys can do 205.494 mph, but at what fuel, noise and safety cost? Also, the Russians built the enormous Ekanoplan, a ground effect aircraft that could only be used over millpond surfaces like the Caspian Sea.

And that sixty knots requires a lot of energy and makes a lot of noise. In any case, why hurry when you are going by sea, air transport is far more practical for long distance journeys. Such high-speed craft will really only find practical application in ferry-crossings of between 25 and 300 miles.

I doubt that the use of the oceans by passengers will go much beyond the cruise ships of today. And how those cruise ships are developing - larger and larger, like small cities! With ships, the only practical limit on size is getting in and out of port. What I suspect may happen is that the uses to which these ships will be put will diversify enormously. There is already one cruise ship that is home to around a hundred wealthy people. I suspect there will be a lot more of these, some never coming into port, declaring themselves as countries - tax-free havens for the rich. Older cruise ships may get used for other more dubious activities like illegal drug manufacture. I remember reading one story about a gang that set up gladiatorial fights on such a ship - naturally, the Navy was justified in an act of piracy to stop this barbaric behavior.

Turning to freight. Yawn... Yes, ships will become more advanced in terms of control systems and propulsion. Perhaps you may see a crew-less ship; a whole fleet controlled by one person sat on the dockside in Miami. But the job of moving non-perishable, low-value goods around the world is unlikely to change much, nor will any other form of transportation take over its job - except airships (see Part 3).

What about underwater? Here the problem of water resistance is greater; the whole ship is surrounded by it! Frankly, except for military purposes and underwater exploration, I do not see much advancement in this area. One could postulate a world where we built underwater cities when land-space runs out. But before we get there it would be cheaper and safer to urbanize Greenland, Nanavut and Antarctica; the Russians have already done it to Siberia.

Con't on page 7

The RPG Corner (v2.1): Creating A Role-Playing Game

Doug <!-- Roper of Epic Gaming

This may sound a lot more challenging than it really is. Obviously, if you are looking to create a mass market game, you will need to do a lot of research and create something that industry considers new and fresh, or your game may never sell. However, this series of columns will not deal with making a mass market games, since in my opinion, most of them stink, and they are simply beyond my scope and the scope of this column. Instead I want to look at creating a unique RPG that is intended for an individual Gamemaster, in this case me, and a small group of hypothetical players. Since this game is for myself, and those that will play under my stewardship, I have total creative control, and don't need to worry about marketing concerns like creating countless supplements and revised edition rulebooks and so on to maintain sales, and I can focus on what I consider the more important aspects of Role-Playing, like character and story.

In the main of my experience, there are two ways to go about making games, and they both start at opposite ends of the game to be. One I call the Top Down method, where you begin with sweeping generalities and vague ideas, and slowly work your way down to the details. This allows you a great amount of freedom, since areas of your world to be that will not immediately be explored can be left nebulous and malleable while the places that the players walk everyday are concrete and richly detailed. This method allows for a lot of mystery for the players, because there is so much that they may not know about this new world (and a lot the Gamemaster may not know as well!), and a lot of freedom for the Gamemaster, as he can create many things from a type of bug to a continent spanning empire off of the top of his head, and all as the flow of the game dictates, but it always starts at the top, and moves down to avoid the problem of escalation that we'll look at in a second.

The opposite method I call Bottom Up, and while some may prefer this method because it allows for play much sooner in the creative process than the other, I find it too limiting and dangerous. Bottom Up begins with the player-characters, or PCs for short. The Gamemaster then creates their immediate surroundings and interactions, without first setting down the general layout of the game. While this may seem attractive for the thrill of "making it

up as you go," it tends to suffer from a problem the United States had in the '50s and '60s, Superpower Escalation. For example, the original bad guy that the PCs thwart will be so powerful. Naturally as the PCs themselves grow in strength and experience, the Gamemaster will need to provide a more powerful adversary. This escalation continues until the characters are tackling beings of immense, and often ridiculous powers. Once the Gamemaster has established a certain level of anything in the Bottom Up method, he is forced to increase it to maintain the effect, leading to too much of everything.

The first few questions an RPG designer needs to ask are simple, but vitally important. The first is simply, "What kind of games do you want to play?" Answering this will at least get the designer facing the right direction, as opposed to floundering in the sea of possibilities, and trying to do too much in one type of game. Do you want starships, wizard duels, high adventure, science gone wrong, armor battles, or man versus nature? Brainstorming, and writing down all of the things that you would want, is the place to begin. Other important questions will take this general idea you have and refine it to a point where you can begin to work. Questions like deciding on the level of technology, the presence and prominence of magic, whether or not the place where the game is set is earth, or earth-like, are there actual people there, what kind of people are they, and so on and so forth.

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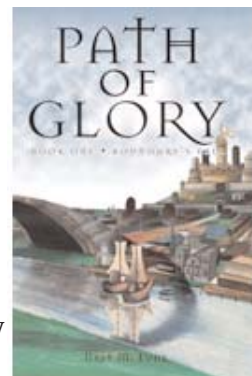
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Book One • Boundary's Fall

by Bret M. Funk

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Two Words That Spell Disaster

Terry Crotinger

There is a dirty word that concerns writers of a specific genre. Two innocent words put together that provide instantaneous scorn in many circles. Fan + Fiction (ff). Caveat: Legitimacy goes awry quite suddenly. Using the two words, one after the other, could be deadly for a writer's reputation.

What is ff? It is an extension, a desire to realize more possibilities from already copyrighted material. A television show, movie, book, comic character—even artwork!—can be the stimulus for ff, and ff is certainly not limited to science fiction.

Writing effective ff is challenging. Parameters can be explained, trivialized or expanded, but never ignored. For example, Star Trek in any form without the Federation is rather pointless.

Just why did Star Trek get so popular after the first series was axed? Not marketability; at least, not at first. That came after manuscripts for continuing episodes and books trickled steadily into Paramount. Unsolicited manuscripts submitted from non-published sources might be bothersome, but from a research standpoint, they might be significant and are viewed as a compliment at least, a hit show at best. Sponsors take note!

The editor's attitude is covert and patronizing. "You write 'fan'.... I see." (Translation: You just tipped me off that you are a loser and will get little of my time. There is no way I will consider you for publication because, like your writing, you are too dense to realize you will experience major distance from me.) "You must be dedicated." (Translation: You're an obsessive maniac.)

Why the scorn? Is it about money? Perhaps. Publishers, editors, scriptwriters and sponsors have given us memorable books, movies and shows. In American, with the free enterprise system, making a profit is not a crime but a fact of survival; some survive better than others, so happiness and joy to them.

Are ff writers surviving well? It would be nice, even fair to think it depends on the level of writing ability. But are their query letters even considered? Not often. Finding an agent is difficult as well. Would-be writers for decades practiced their writing through the ff medium, sharing results with friends. They write ff to try out their skills and because the subject matters to them; they enjoy the creation intimately. The odds a publisher would be interested in this kind of writing is small.

Look, for a moment, at the role of publishers. This is big, risky business. Besides editors, agents and publicists, the industry requires experts in layout, photography, illustration and printing. Getting books from the publisher to the bookstore is another industry. It can be costly if the works that editors choose to publish do not sell. The screening process in publishing keeps trashy, formless works off the shelves; those few that slip through are swiftly put out of print by the public's lack of enthusiasm. But have publishing houses developed a writing formula so rigid that, after three decades, readers are unaware that they have been ever so slightly brain-washed regarding what 'good' writing is?

Writers of self-published works and ff writers do not fit into a tidy formula. The result is that competent writers who chose to write within the confines of an already copyrighted work, with permission of course, are viewed as inept and sophomoric. Some of their writing definitely is. However, the majority freely request commentary and critique, presumably to get better at their craft. And writer's forums for just about any subject abound on the web for the same reason. So then, why is writing about fictitious airplanes and soldiers more acceptable than writing about a television series with planets and space stations (or altiverse of the same series)?

The difference, perhaps, is passion. Are there levels of fan fiction? Yes. ff can cheapen a television series/book/movie or raise it to new levels. There are the dedicated writers, neophytes and inflated egos, all submitting ff on various fan websites and newsgroups of dubious quality. **Con't on page 7**

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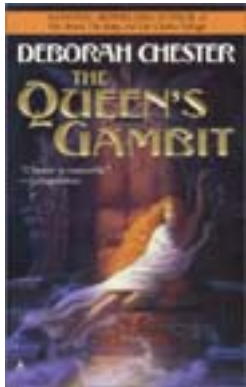
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The Queen's Gambit Deborah Chester



Ace, Dec 2002
\$7.99, Mass Market, 464 pages
ISBN 0441009972
Review by Harriet Klausner

The only thing that prevented Pheresa from dying in Nether was drinking from the sacred holy relic The Chalice, which restored her life and her health. On the other hand, her betrothed, the heir to the Kingdom of Mandria and son of the current ruler King Verence,

died because he embraced the dark side of sorcery that eventually engulfed him.

Pheresa believes she is destined to become the next heir to the realm. However, the church has other plans for the one who imbibed liquid from the Chalice, and who they now believe is an icon. They want Pheresa taken to the convent because they believe the church owns anyone who was touched by the sacred Chalice.

Pheresa has to use her wiles to avoid the priests and stay in close proximity to the king. Verence, lost in grief for his son, ignores his duties and neglects the people closest to him. However, an attempt to kill Pheresa by an evil sorcerer snaps the monarch out of his state of mourning. He names Pheresa Princess of the Realm and heir to the crown, but to ascend to the throne she must marry her distant cousin Lervan. She readily accepts the stipulation. To keep his heir safe, King Verence appoints a private

guard Sir Talmor to be Pheresa's bodyguard. Though she felt this was her destiny, Pheresa is stunned when the monarch suddenly dies. Before she can be crowned Queen of Mandria, the castle is attacked, forcing her and her bodyguard to flee. The Queen and her protector, Sir Talmor, will face many incidents, from foreign enemies to the treasonous and weak-willed lackeys of the inner court, before they return to the capital city and attempt to reclaim the throne.

The heroine is a woman who believes herself born to be Queen of Mandria and lets nothing stand in her way. The philandering husband she once adored, the father who sides with his son-in-law and the churchmen who want her for their own are eventually swept away by Pheresa's iron will. She is a character one grows to like as she matures from an uncertain princess into a warrior queen. She finds trust in the loyalty and sword of Sir Talmor, and eventually, the reliance and confidence that this noble knight will willingly die for her turns into a love so pure that nothing can break the bond. Readers will delight with the chess games in which Pheresa outwits first church and later her enemies in the inner court.

Simply, Pheresa is the star of *The Queen's Gambit*. Her determination to become Queen metamorphoses into a struggle to free her kingdom from the foreign invaders abetted by many of the inner court, and if successful in her endeavor, to rebuild Mandria to its previous glory. Pheresa will remind readers of Elizabeth I, who faced many of the same problems, and they will demand that Deborah Chester write another novel showcasing the queen and her loyal protector.

The Great Hunt (Wheel of Time, 2) Robert Jordan



Tor, Oct 1992
\$7.99, Mass Market, 705 pages
ISBN 0812517725

Hot on the heels of *The Eye of the World* (a little over a decade ago) Jordan released the second book in his epic series, *The Wheel of Time*. This was Age long before fame, and Age yet to come, an Age long past, when only I and a few others

were reading the series.

The Great Hunt takes place not long after the end of *The Eye of the World*. The heroes (Rand, Mat, Perrin and company) are still in Fal Dara, one of the Shienaran

fortresses guarding the Blight. Mat and Perrin are preparing to journey to Tar Valon, where their friends Egwene and Nynaeve will join the Aes Sedai, and where Mat can finally be cleansed of the evil of Shadar Logoth. Rand, however, now knows that he can channel, and will consequently go mad and die (if the Aes Sedai don't kill him first). To make matters worse, Moiraine believes him to be The Dragon Reborn, the reincarnation of Lews Therin Telamon, the ancient hero who sealed the Dark One's prison, then went mad and broke the world. Suspicious of Aes Sedai plots, Rand intends to leave on his own, to seek a place of isolation where his curse will not hurt others.

But the Wheel has greater plans for Rand. When the legendary Horn of Valere (as well as Mat's cursed dagger) are stolen, Rand accompanies Ingtar and the Shienarans on the hunt. The trail of the horn leads them

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When Dragons Rage Michael A. Stackpole



Bantam, 2002
\$14.95, Hardcover, 450 pages
ISBN 0553379208

Review by Harriet Klausner

The evil sorceress Chytrime rules the frozen lands of the North with an iron grip. However, her ambition reaches much further than her realm, as Chytrime seeks nothing less than to be acknowledged as the Empress of the North. Twenty-five years ago, Chytrime was defeated by the armies of the South, but now she and her mighty forces have overrun Fort Draconis, a strategic place of importance to the South. Her armies are on the march, and the southern nations fall like dominoes.

To accomplish her objective, the malevolent sorceress searches for the seven broken parts of the Dragon Crown. If she reassembles them, she will gain control over the mighty dragons, which in turn will make her virtually invincible. Even without the magic of dragon domination, Chytrime has a formidable weapon at her disposal that could enable her to achieve her goal: she is able to spell cast great warriors and force them to do her bidding. But the Dragon's Crown means certain victory.

Chytrime's daughter, the innocent Princess Isaira, remains blindly loyal to the person she considers her mother until she sees firsthand the cost of war. Though she wants to stay staunch in support of Chytrime, Isaira can't help but be disturbed by her observations of destruction.

(The Great Hunt con't)

south, through empty wastes, parallel worlds, and the city of Cairhien, where political maneuvering and intrigue are the order of the day. Along the way, Rand and company are reunited with old friends and introduced to a slew of new characters, including the Seanchan, descendants of the army that Artur Hawkwing sent across the sea a millennium ago. The book's climax takes place in the city of Falme, where Rand once again battles the fiery-eyed form of Ba'alzamon, the incarnation of the Dark One.

The Great Hunt improves dramatically on *The Eye of the World*. With the story more established, Jordan is able to showcase his characters' strengths and weaknesses better and entice readers with a bit more action. The heroes are now on the offensive (sort of) chasing down the agents of the Dark One to reclaim a relic of great

Princess Alexia of Arkanell has spent her entire life in exile, training to lead an army to oust Chytrime from her homeland. Crow, a man thought by most to be a traitor, is Alexia's staunchest supporter. He has fought the evil sorceress for over a quarter of a century and remains ready to die in order to stop Chytrime's plans. Kerrigan Reese, a powerful but young and immature sorcerer, uses his power to aid Crow and Alexia on their quest.

Chytrime hunts Will Norrington, The Norrington of Prophecy, because she believes he, or one of his bloodline, will be the instrument of her destruction. If she kills him, Chytrime believes victory is hers. Will joins the other heroes waging war on the evil ones while the kings of the South are a month away from holding a conference to decide how to handle the armies that are moving to destroy them.

The heroes of this tale have quests to fulfill. They must keep Chytrime from finding the pieces of the Dragon Crown and try to halt her movements at the same time. They gain many allies, know some success and one bitter failure. The heroes of this tale are very likable and the reader will want them to succeed. The romance between Crow and Alexia adds a sense of softening to the sharp edge of the epic fantasy as that subplot serves as a stark contrast to the gruesome war scenes. The last sentence of this tale yields a startling revelation and gives the reader a sense of what will happen in the next installment of this magnificent series. Michael A. Stackpole is a master magician who raises the level of excellence in the realm of fantasy several notches as if he, too, possesses an enchanting spell.

importance. Jordan introduces numerous new secondary characters, expands upon the histories of others, and delves into some of the cultural differences between the different countries. It is this complexity and attention to detail that makes Jordan's characters (and world!) come alive, allowing readers to overlook the occasional odd turn of phrase and wordiness that peppers his writing.

The majority of *The Great Hunt* follows Rand, though perspective changes from chapter to chapter in true Jordanian style. And, as is to become customary with the series, the book's ending is bittersweet: half victory, half defeat. While frustrating (especially when you have to wait a year and a half for the next book) *The Great Hunt* is a small story inside a larger one, leaving readers with a certain amount of satisfaction even as it makes them howl for more.

Flights of Fancy (Con't)

Another idea I have seen, in a 50s SF story, was the underwater tube. A long tunnel, under the Atlantic, laid on the ocean bottom. It was evacuated of air, so that trains could reach very high speeds through it. Neat idea, very futuristic, but in my opinion, totally impractical. For a start, there are some awful big chasms in the middle of the Ocean and bridging them would be an engineering nightmare - on land it would be hard enough. The pipe would need to be laid at the general level of the "plains" of the Ocean, perhaps a couple of miles deep, with enormous external pressure and nothing on the inside - a recipe for disaster in my books!

If the future for sea travel seems pretty boring, then I'm sorry, it is! In the next part we launch off into space - might get exciting!

RPG Corner (Con't)

Once these questions have answers, you can begin to sit down and design the world that your PCs will inhabit and explore. For the example game that I will be developing, I have decided on a fantasy setting; a place of high adventure, great deeds and great perils. I know I want magic, but I'm not quite sure how powerful or widespread magic will be in this place. Also, I know I want the typical creatures of high fantasy games (goblins and elves and dragons and such), and I believe that the technology will be at an arrested level between the medieval age, and the Renaissance, with the exception of steam power, which some regions have developed.

With that in mind, we're ready to look at more detailed aspects of our game world. Next time will look at techniques for designing the physical world in which the game will be set. We have to look at not just geography, but climates, lower flora and fauna and a lot of other aspects of the world that may not seem important, but can be vital to dramatic games. We'll also look at how to create the maps that will flesh out the character's locations.

Staff Writers Needed

The Illuminata is looking for writers. Though our greatest need is for reviews, we are still seeking a few more regular columnists. And, starting in January, we will be including short works of original fiction. For more information, e-mail Illuminata@TyrannosaurusPress.com

Two Words (Con't)

Admittedly, there are stories that are veiled attempts at acting out fantasies for the writer; fortunately, those are easily spotted within the first paragraph. It is unlikely that serious ff writers publish novels to these sites anyway-limited space on a site/server and determining ownership of copyrights being only two issues to address.

After polishing the manuscript, publishing is a logical 'next step', and for any other subject, it is fairly easy to find a market for submission. Unless of course it's ff. If the premise is sound and the quality is comparable to Asimov, Card or McCaffrey, why does this 'marked' feeling pour from the envelope along with the 'no, thank you', otherwise known as a rejection slip?

Options? Print on Demand has merit depending on the author's intent as do self-publishing and E-Books. All require keen knowledge of the issues surrounding that avenue, an investment and commitment to a certain amount of marketing and promotion. Establishing and keeping rights is a challenge because ultimately, who owns your work: publisher, owner of the series or copyrighted work, or yourself? Getting good counsel on this is imperative and prevents problems later. Read the fine print. Have all authorizations in writing, not cyber mail. Finally, obtain knowledgeable legal advice-specifically on publishing rights-easily worth the investment.

Do other professionals view POD, self-publishing and E-books as legitimate? Ah. That is the problem. The work might be brilliant, and adoring readers might beg for more, but often, Writer's Guilds will not consider them to be works worthy of admission. Publishers normally shun ff, and other methods are not recognized. If they are not recognized, then how does a writer establish a reputation? This cycles repeatedly.

For that reason ff has become a sub-class of writing for potential authors. A dirty word. No - two dirty words. Those of us who write ff struggle for recognition. Is fan + fiction as legitimate as original fiction or science fiction? If it is, great! Otherwise, don't put the two words together; your reputation may depend on it.