



The Illuminata

Delving Deep Into The Worlds of Science Fiction and Fantasy

Everything Old Is New Again (Remakes III)

By Bret Funk

It's been said that there are no new ideas, that all we have are reimaginings of plots past, stories resurrected and dressed up for the times. Some might argue, but Hollywood certainly agrees, and the pantheon of studio execs seem determined to forego innovation and simply remake everything under the sun.

We've already discussed *Reinventions*, where old, often popular stories are picked up, modernized, and (if we're lucky) reinterpreted. *Reinventions* add range and depth, and they improve upon the originals in at least some way. The next major category of remake is the *Homage*, a remake whose purpose is not to break new ground but to honor the greatness of the past. Often *Homages* are made out of a nostalgic need; sometimes they're engineered to expose a new generation to a once-popular franchise. When they're done right, they're mimics of the original, as good or almost as good, emphasizing the same values, showcasing the same characters, walking the same path. If they go a step too far they become *Reinventions*,

and if not enough attention is given to them, they slip into one of the lesser classes. Sadly, the latter happens far more often than the former.

To list all *Homages* is a futile and tedious endeavor, because all but the dreaded *Poser* should contain at least some element or reference to the original. After all, if the intended goal is for the remake to have nothing to do with the original, it's not really a remake, is it? True *Homages* (ones that don't fall into any of the other categories) should meet three requirements: 1) They should not introduce anything substantially new to the story; 2) They

should reference the strengths and/or poke fun at the weaknesses of the original, and 3) They should evoke the same feelings (be they positive or negative) in viewers as did the original.

Currently, Hollywood is focusing its remaking efforts in three areas, two striving to capitalize on the interests of varying demographics, and one with a long history of remakes. The former two—adaptations of TV shows for the big screen and remakes of earlier movies for a specific ethnicity—currently comprise the largest selection of movie remakes. Adapting a television show into a movie seems to logically demand a certain level of homage, but (sadly) in some cases the similarities between the original are cosmetic, and in some cases barely go beyond the shared title.

By way of example, *The Dukes of Hazzard* remake kept the names, places, and car the same, but I felt that something was fundamentally different (and not in a good way) between the much beloved television show of my youth and the silly, poorly-conceived remake. That difference may simply be the twenty or so intervening years. Another example would be the recent *Miami Vice* remake. Again, the names and title remain the same, but from what I've heard (I must admit to not rushing out to see that movie) the entire tone of the film differed from that of the series. Contrast those with *Charlie's Angels* and *Starsky and Hutch*, which kept a tone more in line with the originals, if perhaps more teasing than venerating; or with *The Fugitive*, which I think managed to adequately condense the series into a passable film.

The fault for poor remakes may lie with the actors, the writers, the director, or the producer. It's hard to pinpoint where the breakdown occurs (though I'm certain money, or rather, the desire not to spend it, is at the heart of most failed remakes), but it galls me to think that someone in Hollywood thinks they can slap the name of something I care about on a piece of junk and make me love them for it.

The second major class of *Homage* takes a pre-existing movie and jazzes it up for a different group. These movies revolve around the original premise,

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The RPG Corner v5.7: NOT RPGs!

by Doug >!< Roper of EPIC Gaming

Many of my friends, who happen to be gamers, are involved in some way with World of Warcraft; either playing it enough to call it a profession, or plugging in a few times a week. The game is played via computer, online, and is mislabeled as a MMORPG, or a Massive, Multi-Player Online Role-Playing Game. I submit to you that games like World of Warcraft have as much to do with Role-Playing as piranhas have to do with brain surgery. When I hear someone call World of Warcraft (WoW for short...ugh) an RPG, I have to resist the urge to find a heavy bit of wood or pipe and educate them on the differences. Maybe it's a knee jerk reaction to my own dislike of the game, but what the hell, I'm comfortable with that. This mistaken identity extends to single user electronic role-playing games as well, games like Final Fantasy, Knights of the Old Republic or King's Quest. All of the video games that have ever been labeled "Role-Playing Games" are in fact, not. Despite this fact, the mis-naming persists.

The idea to call these types of games RPGs undoubtedly sprang from the concept of keeping track of details like hit points and magic points and food, encumbrance and all kinds of things in a game using a system of numbers. This is one of the few qualities that electronic "RPGs" share with true RPGs. Character attributes are recorded as numbers, and success in battle allows the increase of these statistics through the accumulation of experience. Unlike traditional video games which may focus on puzzles or action, electronic "RPGs" focus on the slow unfolding of plot. There are lots of other non user controlled characters to talk to and get information from, but this is the most crucial deviation from real role-playing. The character that the Player controls has no real interaction with the other characters outside of a list of pre-generated questions and responses. There is no dialogue, and no meaningful interaction besides whatever is necessary to advance the plot. There is no room for self-exploration or idle, characterizing chit-chat. Despite the programmer's best efforts and wishes for the contrary, each character he animates and writes for is ultimately an exposition fountain or a meaningless distraction.

Despite the fact that many electronic "RPGs" bill themselves as allowing the player to do anything they want in the game, there is no way that anyone could believe this is the case. There is only so much that can be programmed and anticipated, and there are an infinite number of interpretations and ideas about how to do things ready to be born every second. Without a

flesh and blood GM to control the world and help the PCs navigate, the Player will always be stuck to a rail from which he cannot escape. GM's with their ability to improvise, and accommodate unexpected (and sometimes quite insightful and potentially successful) actions, all a Player is doing is following one clue at a time, or doing one task at a time to find out who done it, or get to a point where they can confront the bad guy. The journey is empty, because there is no way for the character that is being played to change and grow. The crucial missing element of an electronic "RPGs" is the GM, and to a smaller extent, other Players, who care about the game and care about creating a good experience.

The large scale multi-Player games like World of Warcraft, Ultima Online and Everquest, do add real people to interact with, but the focus of these games becomes less of an immersion into another world, and more like navigating the worst neighborhoods of the internet. With so many people there for so many different reasons, it's impossible to build a meaningful relationship with another character, and not be interrupted, mocked or outright attacked for absolutely no reason under the sun. I've heard that there are attempts by people to make this type of game a character oriented experience, but for the most part these efforts are doomed. There is no way to filter out the Players who are serious about development and interaction of different personas from those that are looking to level up quick and get all the gold they can. The focus of these games tends to become the accumulation of power, wealth or both, even for the most dedicated character-centric people. There just isn't another meaningful way to enjoy these games, and that isn't what Role-Play games should be about.

So why do more and more people get sucked into these games? To be honest, I'm not sure, as they don't appeal to me in the least. I have heard that they are addictive, and I don't doubt that, but there are those who want more out of our interactions with others. Online Multi-User games do have the advantage of putting you into contact with people from all over the world, and is a great tool for gaining all kinds of friends and perspectives, but do you necessarily want to game with all of those people?

Gaming with a group of friends around a table is about socialization and hanging out with your friends. It's about meeting and talking with pals, and it's about the communal creation of memorable experiences

Con't on page 9

Women in Gaming: Luck Roll

by Terry Crotinger/montanasing

In this final foray of examining roll playing games and how female fen (plural for fandom) find fun and fulfillment in the world of science fiction fandom, I present two breathing, active women gamers who were willing to share their personal experiences. In October, I was at ICON31 (Cedar Rapids, Iowa), my favorite convention where I rejoined my rpg group for a one-shot, reunited with old friends and made new ones as I learned what was under my nose the whole time I lived in Iowa—more gamers—women gamers. And not only more women, groups of long-time gamers—one group having met together for decades! In my research at ICON, I observed several people interact in various ways in the room set aside for “games”. These women are serious gamers. They weren’t flirting, though some dressed in period costume that revealed, well, things to reveal. Imagine the current female version of Starbuck: solid and commanding, with a playful side.

One group of note is a long-standing game/group developed by a lady I’ll call “E” who created everything—her background story, character traits, method for stats, barter system and political hierarchy. And that’s all I know about it. I was unwilling to barge in on her convention experience with questions because of her private nature and other factors. The members of her group are careful to not reveal anything but bare facts, or perhaps it was the excitement at the convention that distracted them and they neglected to mention details? E’s game is of such caliber, the group has played together for over twenty-five years. Group members consist of family and friends—and friends of friends, but mostly women.

Four short stories, based on this game, are to be published. Panelist and author Mickey Zucker Reichert, in a discussion on how to be accepted for publishing felt that editors don’t want this kind of short story as they are seldom well written and a campaign doesn’t translate well into story form. Mickey has run, *Pendragons*, a writer’s workshop for several years, and the short story author likely has ties to this group. Iowa fandom congregate regularly because of ICON, so it’s no surprise there are connections of all kinds running in the background. I digress... E’s group is a local legend and when publishing information becomes available, I’ll pass it on.

In my research, I met three gamers, two women, and the husband of one of E’s group members. Each of these players expanded my understanding of gaming and has my gratitude. Steve T. gave me information about online gaming, which I’ll speak about next month. Lisa M. and Tasha R. candidly spoke about their experiences as women gamers.

Lisa M. said there were pitfalls in being a woman gamer, but she had never been uncomfortable. “I try to be picky with who I’ve gamed with. I’ve seen people who have acted annoying no matter what gender. The women, back in the four-hour tournament days, would throw themselves at guys. But the guys didn’t throw. A couple times I was one on one with a friend or with a guy, if they are interested in you—they might have ulterior motives for being there.

“Fewer women fall prey to ‘I have to have the best characteristics’. Munchkins—aka min-maxers—are gamers who build characters that have the best traits/potential.” Women didn’t have as much desire to create the *best* character. They were willing to use their abilities in a more rounded way, while she felt men tended to load up on a few main strengths. While women could be just as competitive, she said, “men tend to be more interested in the mechanics of the game.”

“If I could change the perceptions that are picked up from media, it is that women are there because they are girlfriends of male players. Or, they’re a “rare” commodity and treated special. Don’t expect to get special treatment because of your gender and if so, don’t be afraid to address it with the GM; just play. If in a game, you’re not enjoying it, say something, or don’t be afraid to bow out. Not every single game will be for you. Play with people you’re comfortable with. Don’t be a diva. It’s not all about you; it’s supposed to be a group thing. It’s not your story.” Her advice is to “always play female, though at tournaments, you get what you get”.

Tasha R. “My gaming friends are guys. I was once in a game where they suggested we do *Star Trek* and ‘Wouldn’t it be good if we had women Ferengis? They can’t play with clothes on or get talked to.’ Then again, I’ve been in games where the guys can’t take their eyes off boobs. Makes me afraid to game. I don’t sleep my way to the top. I’m not really playing in the same field they are—munchkins, ghetto-ized.

Con’t on page 8

The Writer's Block: Criticism Hurts

Or How I Stopped The Brutality And Came To Love Writers

In my last column I talked about choosing the correct details for a scene, and though I discussed some examples of bad writing from currently publishing writers, I didn't mention any authors' names. I thought I'd pursue that last point in my current column.

When you read a book that you don't like, how comfortable do you feel in criticizing the writer's abilities in a public forum? I don't mean when you talk to your best friend about the book. I mean, what do you say about the author in your blog, or in your discussion groups (online or not), or in an Amazon review?

Once upon a time, I would publicly blast those I considered "bad" writers without a second thought. When I was growing up I read quite a few fantasy and SF novels by Lin Carter. I read them because there were a bunch of them available and because they were mostly pastiches of Edgar Rice Burroughs and Robert E. Howard, two authors who I adored. But I never made any secret of the fact that I considered Carter a hack, even though Carter was alive at the time.

A dozen years ago I said in a number of public forums that most of the characters created by a famous writer, whose name I won't mention except to say that it was Stephen King, were predictable stereotypes. I felt not an iota of guilt concerning my words. After all, Stephen King was as rich as Croesus and as powerful in publishing as a...well, King.

I don't feel so smug anymore. And I realize that at least some part of my criticism of King was based on jealousy. As a writer myself now, I know how much it hurts to get criticism on something you worked very hard on. I can also see, to my occasional chagrin, how comfortable most people are with giving out such criticism. Writers, like actors and politicians, are public figures and the public can be rabid in expressing their like. Or their dislike. But writers and, strange as it may seem, even actors and politicians, are also people. They have feelings, and most of them are probably trying their best even if their best isn't very good.

I find these days that I tend either to avoid public criticism of living writers (dead writers are another story), or I leave out the names and focus on the writing problems themselves. For example, I won't review a book on Amazon that I don't care for, even

though I read plenty that aren't very good. If I mention a writing error in my *Illuminata* column I usually leave out the writer's name.

Sometimes I've wondered if this is not cowardice. Shouldn't I speak the absolute truth and let the chips fall where they may? Well, after thinking about it, I don't consider myself a coward, and here's why.

If I'm writing a review that I'm paid for, I tell the honest truth as I see it, and I don't pull punches although I may seek for wording that is less than brutal. However, no one is forcing me to accept review assignments of material that I don't like. I find that I turn down assignments that would require me to really blast a writer's ineptitude. When it comes to Amazon reviews, which are unpaid, then I figure I can do whatever I damn well please. And in my own column I can choose to leave out an author's name if I want as long as I don't cheat my readers of the "lesson" to be learned in the column.

Finally, of course, criticism is merely an opinion. Too often I have found myself loving a book that a friend of mine hated, or hating one that he or she loved. Criticism can be informed or uninformed, but it can hardly be "right" or "wrong" in the objective sense. Was Hemingway a better writer than Faulkner? Is Stephen King better than Anne Rice? It depends on who you ask.

And Steve (I call him Steve because he's a public figure and I feel like I know him), I'm sorry I criticized your characters once upon a time. I'm sure you worked hard on them.

You're still as rich as Croesus, though.

At its best, science fiction has no peer in creating another universe of experience, in showing us what we look like in the mirror of technological society or through the eyes of a non-human.

—Dick Riley
Critical Encounters (New York, 1978)

Reviews

Bloodring Faith Hunter

Roc, Nov 2006, \$14.00

ISBN: 0451461088

Review by Harriet Klausner

A hundred years ago the winged seraph arrived on earth, which to the faithful meant the end of days. Instead of the apocalypse predicted by the religious tomes, the war between the angelic seraph and the demons of hell continues with no end in sight. The earth is enthralled in an ice age and plagues released by both sides devastate the populace. New beings surface: entities with the ability to perform magic. These mages live in affluent prisons used and abused by their hosts.

One stone mage, Thorn St. Croix, has remained hidden amidst the humans after escaping from a maximum confinement facility that, though luxurious, drove her crazy. Thorn crafts jewelry for a living, but hides her magical prowess, knowing that if even her friends find out she would be punished for her escape. She has little choice but to use her untrained power, as the forces of the Dark have kidnapped her former spouse while police officer Thaddeus Bartholomew accuses her of the abduction and probable murder.

The cast is incredible, making readers believe in the existence of seraphs, mages, and humans barely surviving in a world dramatically changed (not sure how the web survives) by the seemingly eternal Apocalypse war. The story line is filled with amateur sleuth action while the raging hostilities add to the excitement as much as mage-heat. Fans of post-apocalyptic fantasies will appreciate this superb interpretation of the endless end of days (in human terms) as centuries and probably millennia mean nothing to immortal combatants.

You've got to jump off cliffs and build your wings on the way down.

— Ray Bradbury

Dragon's Teeth

James A. Hetley

Ace, Nov 2006, \$14.00, 336 pp.

ISBN 0441014313

Review by Harriet Klausner

Stonefort, Maine is an unusual town because of the two prominent families that live there. The female Haskells are witches, and The Witch Alice lives in the House, a living entity that has rules, changes form and influences the actions of people who live there. The Morgans are selkie shapechangers who possess a magical dragon that gives a tear to those Morgans it deem worthy. The tear is magic in its purest form and allows the Morgans to communicate with others.

When Alice's lover Kate is driving through the woods, she finds a body in a stone circle with its heart cut out. Kate, who doesn't believe in magic even though she used magic to help kill, feels the stones strengthen her. Another corpse in the same condition is found on Ben Morgan's grave even though Ben is alive. He is fascinated by a Peruvian artifact of dark magic and wants to get a hold on him. Kate is seeing the body of her dead daughter Jackie who was never found. When someone near and dear to Kate disappears and will be sacrificed, Kate must suspend her disbelief, retrieve the artifact and stop the killer.

This sequel to *Dragon's Eye* is a magical urban fantasy that combines loyalty, trust, love and acceptance into a plot that is filled with enhancements, dark and white magic and sorcery. The people who populate the town listen to Alice because they know Haskell witches can help them and never will tell because of the Morgan shifter. There is danger in trying magic and love and learns that on a life of their own. James A. Hetley is an extraordinary writer who writes a very original and entertaining story.

Reviews

Across the Nightingale Floor (Tales of the Otori, 1) Lian Hearn

Riverhead Books, 2002, 287 pgs

ISBN 1-57322-225-9

Review by D. L. Parker

What is there about the ninja that holds such an allure for so many people? I can understand without difficulty the fascination of the kung-fu monk: he, like the mythical Knight of the Round Table, is a spiritual warrior who combines a code of chivalry with an extraordinary ability to kick ass. But the allure of the ninja is a darker one. There is no chivalry here; the ninja is the hand that strangles in the dark, that poisons the cup, that leaps from ambush upon the unsuspecting. There is no honor in the ninja: only the terrible pride of skill; the dark fascination with the gurgle of the strangled; the hands that cannot be cleansed even with the gold they palm in payment. The ninja is the killer that strikes in the night and gets away with it. He owes more to Ted Bundy and the Green River Killer than to the knight in either his Oriental or Occidental forms.

The protagonist of Hearn's story, young Tomasu/Takeo, ponders the allure of both the ninja and the knight archetype in turn, and finds himself drawn, seemingly against his own volition, to his darker side. Young Tomasu is one of the Hidden, Christian-like, gentle people who have become the scapegoat for the viscous warlord Iida of Clan Tohan. One day he returns from a mushroom-gathering expedition to find his village smoking and filled with murderers. His stepfather lies dead in the pathway.

Tomasu manages to escape, by virtue of his fleet feet and a seeming miracle, the slashing sword of Iida himself. In the hills he encounters a stranger who saves his life by killing Tomasu's pursuers. He is the Otori Shigeru, a lord of the Tohan clan's rivals, the Otori. He takes young Tomasu under his wing and gives him his new name, Takeo. But why was lord Shigeru so far from home, disguised and at risk in enemy territory? What is his *real* purpose with young Takeo, who bears an uncanny resemblance, in turn, to the mysterious tribe of ninja-like assassins known as the Kikuta?

Takeo soon finds himself drawn into a web of intrigue. Shigeru's mysterious friend, a dangerous old man named Kenji, shows up and begins to teach Takeo the ways of the assassins. Lord Shigeru, brave and kind, has a secret use for him; so do the Kikuta. Takeo has some choices to make.

The first part of this story was wonderful. I enjoyed the unusual setting of a mysterious alternate-Japan; the prose is simple, clean, and poetic. But I lost sympathy for the protagonist later on. It's the dark he chooses; the fatal allure of the ninja's mastery of death over the bright but sacrificial role of the knight. And it's hard to be sympathetic with a character who, smitten with the tragic beauty held hostage by evil lord Iida, first deflowers her, then refuses to marry her in spite of her heart-felt, desperate pleas... and then promptly goes on to have a homosexual encounter with a priest. *Cad! Bounder! Jerk!* Those are the words that occurred to me – that I am allowed to print here, anyway.

Maybe Takeo, in the two sequels to this story, pulls out of his flirtation with the dark side. Or maybe the dark side seduced the author, too – because I don't think the author intended the reader to form a dislike of the protagonist. In any case, I would have happily gone on to read the sequels if the protagonist had learned more from his savior and foster father, the knight-archetype, Shigeru Otori. But it's Kenji the assassin who proves to be his true spiritual father. Having made conflicting vows to both the Otori and the Kikuta, it's the vow to the latter Takeo honors, at least in *this* story. (And did I mention that it's *Takeo* who actually beheads noble lord Shigeru?)

The author has written two more stories in the *Tales of Otori*: *Grass for his Pillow* and *Brilliance of the Moon*. In spite of my annoyance with the protagonist, this first in the series is unusual, original, and cleanly, almost poetically written. Recommended for *that*, at least.

Just *tell* me, though, that Kaede, the deflowered and spurned former maiden, whacks off her anti-hero's dangling parts and tosses them to the dogs in the sequels. *Then* I'll read those other two books!

Reviews

Hinterland

James Clemens

Roc, Nov 2006, \$24.95

ISBN: 0451461134

Review by Harriet Klausner

Tylar Ser Noche has been called many things in his life including Shadowknight, murderer, and Godslayer. Warden Fields pursued Tylar until caught and sold him into slavery, where Tylar was broken in body and spirit. After providing comfort to a dying goddess he is healed. Now he returns to the stronghold of the Shadowknights where Fields and Tylar's treacherous ex-lover live in order to be inducted back into the order.

When Tylar and his entourage arrive at the stronghold of Tashijan, everyone inside knows they are trapped. Ulf the God of Eyrie sends a storm that will kill everyone unless they hand over Tylar. He believes that Tylar is an abomination because a mortal must never carry a God's Grace. At the same time beneath the building, the former castellan has joined the dark and wants everyone inside Tashijan dead so she can rule as the First Land. Tylar is caught in a tug of war between godly forces that could devastate a world.

Hinterland an action oriented sword and sorcery saga as James Clemens creates an intricately detailed fantasy world that readers will easily visualize. Similar to Greek mythology, the realm is an interesting place where gods live and interact with humans on a daily basis. The protagonist and the key support cast are fully developed and critical to this fine tale. It is easy to understand what motivates them though at least Tylar is quite a deep character. As readers learn who is arranging for a full second God War, questions left dangling concerning the plot should be answered in the next *Godslayer Chronicle*.

70% of published books

don't make a profit.

(Jerrold Jenkins, 15 May 1999)

(One can only wonder what the hundreds of independent presses formed since 1999 have done to this statistic)

Talent in cheaper than table salt.
What separates the talented individual from the successful one is a lot of hard work.

— Stephen King

Spellbinder

Melanie Rawn

Tor, Oct 2006, \$24.95, 400 pp

ISBN 0765315327

Review by Harriet Klausner

Witches exist and are spread out all across the world in small numbers with each area having a magistrate who administers justice to the witches in his coven. In New York City, hidden in plain sight is Elias's coven. He is also is a federal judge guarded by U.S. Marshal Evan Lachlan. Elias also has one of the few spellbinders in existence as part of his coven, a witch whose blood guarantees someone else's spell will work. In addition to being a spellbinder, Holly McClure is also wealthy and a well known author.

Through a mutual friend, Holly and Evan are introduced, and it isn't long before the pair fall in love. They plan to get married until an action Evan takes shatters his career and he leaves Holly. It takes a tragedy to bring them together, but their lives are unsafe because a practitioner of the dark arts will do whatever it takes to bring the spellbinder to him. Holly, who has virtually no power of her own, somehow find a way to strengthen her prowess to save the man she loves and her friends in the coven.

This is very different than anything Melanie Rawn has written but fans who love Mercedes Lackey Diana Tregarde tales or the urban fantasies of Kelly Armstrong will love *Spellbinder*. This is one of the best romantic urban fantasies of the year and readers will hope they have not seem the last of the spunky, eccentric and larger than life heroine who can always be counted on to help her friends and family.

Reviews

Spirit Gate

Kate Elliott

Tor, Oct 2006, \$25.95

ISBN 0765310554

Review by Harriet Klausner

When the Guardians ruled the Hundred, justice was the norm for everyone. Their lieutenants the Reeves kept the peace. Prosperity hit every corner of the land as everyone fell under the safety net provided by the Guardians and enforced by the Reeves. But when the Guardians vanished and the Reeves lose interest in justice and maintaining the peace, malevolence takes charge of the Hundred and its neighbors. However after enjoying the hedonism bestowed on the Reeves, Joss feels guilty that he has failed his homeland. At the same time that Joss gains a conscience and decides he must act, Outlanders led by Captain Anji and his wife Mai under the protection of his Qin soldiers arrive in the Hundred as a last resort because a pandemic disaster seems imminent.

The first tale of the Crossroads is a complex fantasy in which prosperity that was once everywhere is limited to an elite few, and whereas judicial enlightenment was the rule of law, terrorism is now the norm. Those in power neglect those who are not. In this realm a hero begins to emerge so that readers obtain a fully developed society filled with elaborate purposely convoluted belief systems that sets the stage of what looks like will be a tremendous saga.

Science fiction is essentially a kind of fiction in which people learn more about how to live in the real world, visiting imaginary worlds unlike our own, in order to investigate by way of pleasurable thought-experiments how things might be done differently.

— Brian Stableford

(from his GOH speech, ConFuse 91)

Illuminations 2006 Writing Contest

The deadline for the 2006 Speculative Fiction Contest is rapidly approaching. We've gotten a number of good submissions, but we want more. Our goal remains the same: to help talented but unknown writers gain exposure in the field, skyrocketing them to the fame, fortune, and artistic recognition they deserve. If you or someone you know likes to write, but you haven't been able to find an outlet for your creative energies, visit our website and learn more about this contest! The top ranked story wins a \$25 prize, and all entrants are considered for inclusion in the next volume of *Beacons of Tomorrow*, T-Press' short fiction anthology. This is an opportunity no burgeoning writer should pass up.

Women in Gaming (con't)

Women are more interested in the story/feelings. It's a bad stereotype that you enjoy the story." Tasha mentioned that she had played with Gay gamers. "The gay guys were all touchy-feely. But it was the best gaming I've ever had!"

My mentor and former GM, Scott Maehner, explained. "I've always considered it to be 'A player is a player.' and I try to put a little extra detail in because I think it gives a player more to react to and thus, more interest, regardless of gender."

I've discovered that there are gender biases in fandom and that most fen don't see it as a problem. There is a single-mindedness when participating. It's not bone jumping or flirting behavior or attraction, it's focusing on something that is puzzling, creative and rewarding, often in a group setting of some kind be it conventions, rpg or like-minded groups. Overall, my research indicated that women were more sensitive than male gamers to detail, though not less competitive. Women were more likely to preserve a character and had less inclination to hack-n-slash or munchkin-ize their characters than men were. As in the real world, women gamers acted like women, men, like men. I was disappointed—I wanted a new epiphany about women. In the end, I fear Scott was right, "A player is a player".

Reviews

Remakes (con't)

and may keep enough hints of the original for an "I remember that!" factor, but these movies are geared toward modifying a proven formula to steal from (I mean capitalize on) a different market segment, usually a minority one. *Can't Buy Me Love* becomes *Love Don't Cost A Thing*. *The Bishop's Wife* with Cary Grant becomes *The Preacher's Wife* with Denzel Washington. *The Honeymooners* television show becomes *The Honeymooners* movie. For some reason, Cedric the Entertainer seems to star in a large percentage of this type of movie.

I mention these two categories for completeness, but to bring the topic back to SF we must look at the horror movie genre. Remakes of horror movies are almost as popular as sequels to horror movies. They are created (to make money notwithstanding) to take an already creepy idea and improve upon the outdated special effects, making it creepier. In the process, two loyal subgroups come out in droves to devour them: fans of the original and fans of the genre, a fresh generation eager to see something new (even though it's really something old).

Though originally adaptations, classic horror movies such as *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, and the *Wolf Man* have been remade several times over the last few decades. Other examples of horror movies redressed for the times abound. *The Blob*. *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. *Psycho*. *The Thing*. *The Fly*. *13 Ghosts*. *House on Haunted Hill*. *The Haunting*. *House of Wax*. *The Omen*. *The Amityville Horror*. *Night of the Living Dead* (and the other zombie remakes). *The Hills Have Eyes*. *When A Stranger Calls*. The list goes on and on. Other creature movies too tame to be considered true horror have also tasted the sweet nectar of the remake. *Godzilla*. *King Kong*. *Mighty Joe Young*.

That many of these remakes don't live up to their predecessors is rarely the concept's fault (though the passage of years and our exposure to ever-increasing real-world terrors make some concepts less horrific). The fault that remakes such as these more often fit into the *Cash Cow* or *Poser* categories falls squarely at the feet of the producers and directors who think Paris Hilton would be perfect for a role in *House of Wax*, or that what the original *The Haunting* lacked was Owen Wilson's unique comic styling.

No discussion of the *Homage* would be complete without a look into one of the newest horror crazes: remaking Japanese horror movies into American films. Some may argue that these are adaptations and not remakes, done to break down the language barrier

and deliver a more easily understandable movie to the American viewing public. I disagree. These movies are remakes, and moreover, they are remakes that often tone down the horror, repugnant imagery, and overall grotesqueness the Japanese achieve (sometimes without showing any of it on screen). Most of America just isn't ready for what the Japanese horror film makers considers average fare. I don't know what happened to that proud and honorable people—maybe it was the bomb, maybe it's just the result of enforcing our self-centric ideology on a culture that once placed the life of its Imperial Family above that of its citizenry. Whatever happened, the results creep me out.

Dark Water. *The Grudge*. *The Ring*. *Pulse*. With the success of these films, you can expect the number of Japanese remakes to grow. And the ones that haven't been remade yet are the really scary ones!

The goal of a successful *Homage* is to resurrect the emotions of the original or instill the same emotions into a new audience. The former is done by revisiting things from the original; the latter by encapsulating the ideas of the original in a new package, one more easily digestible by the new generation (or market segment).

This idea ties into writing as well, specifically into the much loved (but rarely published) world of fan fiction. With fan fiction, writers often take familiar characters out on new adventures or follow new characters through a familiar world. If the goal of one's fan fiction is self-gratification, there are no rules; if however, the goal is to appeal to others, then an effort must be made to incorporate things about the fictitious universe (be it people, places, or things) that those readers like. Do it well, and you have a *Reinvention*. Do it poorly, and you have a *Poser*. (Since publication of fan fiction is rare and often illegal, it's unlikely you'll get a *Cash Cow* out of your tasteful and artfully done Kirk, Deanna Troy, and Quark picnic sequence.)

In my next article, we'll examine the category that comprises the bulk of all remakes: the *Cash Cow*.

RPG Corner (con't)

through the medium of the game. None of this can be accomplished if you sit alone in front of a computer monitor or television and play a game that cannot reward you as a person. The traditional table-top RPG could be on its way out, as more and more young gamers turn to these games like *World of Warcraft* in their free time. It's a slippery slope, and one that existing GMs and Players must fight against!