

# TURKEY CITY LEXICON

## A PRIMER FOR SF WORKSHOPS

EDITED BY LEWIS SHINER  
SECOND EDITION BY BRUCE STERLING  
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### INTRODUCTION BY LEWIS SHINER

This manual is intended to focus on the special needs of the science fiction workshop. Having an accurate and descriptive critical term for a common SF problem makes it easier to recognize and discuss. This guide is intended to save workshop participants from having to “reinvent the wheel” (see section 3) at every session.

The terms here were generally developed over a period of many years in many workshops. Those identified with a particular writer are acknowledged in parentheses at the end of the entry. Particular help for this project was provided by Bruce Sterling and the other regulars of the Turkey City Workshop in Austin, Texas.

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### INTRODUCTION (II) BY BRUCE STERLING

People often ask where science fiction writers get their ideas. They rarely ask where society gets its science fiction writers. In many cases the answer is science fiction workshops.

Workshops come in many varieties — regional and national, amateur and professional, formal and frazzled. In science fiction’s best-known workshop, Clarion, would-be writers are wrenched from home and hearth and pitilessly blitzed for six weeks by professional SF writers, who serve as creative-writing gurus. Thanks to the seminal efforts of Robin Wilson, would-be sf writers can receive actual academic credit for this experience.

But the workshopping experience does not require any shepherding by experts. Like a bad rock band, an SF-writer’s workshop can be set up in any vacant garage by any group of spotty enthusiasts with nothing better to occupy their time.

No one has a Copyright on talent, desire, or enthusiasm.

The general course of action in the modern SF workshop (known as the “Milford system”) goes as follows. Attendees bring short manuscripts, with enough copies for everyone present. No one can attend or comment who does not bring a story. The contributors read and annotate all the stories. When that’s done, everyone forms a circle, a story is picked at random, and the person to the writer’s right begins the critique. (Large groups may require deliberate scheduling.)

Following the circle in order, with a minimum of cross-talk or interruptions, each person emits his/her considered opinions of the story’s merits and/or demerits. The author is strictly required, by rigid law and custom, to make no outcries, no matter how he or she may squirm. When the circle is done and the last reader has vented his or her

opinion, the silently suffering author is allowed an extended reply, which, it is hoped, will not exceed half an hour or so, and will avoid gratuitously personal ripostes. This harrowing process continues, with possible breaks for food, until all the stories are done, whereupon everyone tries to repair ruptured relationships in an orgy of drink and gossip.

No doubt a very interesting book could be written about science fiction in which the writing itself played no part. This phantom history could detail the social demimonde of workshops and their associated cliques: Milford, the Futurians, Milwaukee Fictioneers, Turkey City, New Wave, Hydra Club, Jules Verne's Eleven Without Women, and year after year after year of Clarion — a thousand SF groups around the world, known and unknown.

Anyone can play. I've noticed that workshops have a particularly crucial role in non-Anglophone societies, where fans, writers, and publishers are often closely united in the same handful of zealots. This kind of fellow-feeling may be the true hearts-blood of the genre.

We now come to the core of this piece, the SF Workshop Lexicon. This lexicon was compiled by Mr Lewis Shiner and myself from the work of many writers and critics over many years of genre history, and it contains buzzwords, notions and critical terms of direct use to SF workshops.

The first version, known as the "Turkey City Lexicon" after the Austin, Texas writers' workshop that was a cradle of cyberpunk, appeared in 1988. In proper ideologically-correct cyberpunk fashion, the Turkey City Lexicon was distributed unCopyrighted and free-of-charge: a decommodified, photocopied chunk of free literary software. Lewis Shiner still thinks that this was the best deploy-

ment of an effort of this sort, and thinks I should stop fooling around with this *fait accompli*. After all, the original Lexicon remains unCopyrighted, and it has been floating around in fanzines, prozines and computer networks for seven years now. I respect Lew's opinion, and in fact I kind of agree with him. But I'm an ideologue, congenitally unable to leave well-enough alone.

In September 1990 I re-wrote the Lexicon as an installment in my critical column for the British magazine INTERZONE. When Robin Wilson asked me to refurbish the Lexicon yet again for PARAGONS, I couldn't resist the temptation. I'm always open to improvements and amendments for the Lexicon. It seems to me that if a document of this sort fails to grow it will surely become a literary monument, and, well, heaven forbid. For what it's worth, I plan to re-release this latest edition to the Internet at the first opportunity. You can email me about it: I'm [bruces@well.com](mailto:bruces@well.com).

Some Lexicon terms are attributed to their originators, when I could find them; others are not, and I apologize for my ignorance.

Science fiction boasts many specialized critical terms. You can find a passel of these in Gary K Wolfe's CRITICAL TERMS FOR SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY: A GLOSSARY AND GUIDE TO SCHOLARSHIP (Greenwood Press, 1986). But you won't find them in here. This lexicon is not a guide to scholarship. The Workshop Lexicon is a guide (of sorts) for down-and-dirty hairy-knuckled sci-fi writers, the kind of ambitious subliterate gutter-snipes who actually write and sell professional genre material. It's rough, rollicking, rule-of-thumb stuff suitable for shouting aloud while pounding the table.

## PART ONE: WORDS AND SENTENCES

- **Brenda Starr dialogue**

Long sections of talk with no physical background or description of the characters. Such dialogue, detached from the story's setting, tends to echo hollowly, as if suspended in mid-air. Named for the American comic-strip in which dialogue balloons were often seen emerging from the Manhattan skyline.

- **"Burly Detective" Syndrome**

This useful term is taken from SF's cousin-genre, the detective-pulp. The hack writers of the Mike Shayne series showed an odd reluctance to use Shayne's proper name, preferring such euphemisms as "the burly detective" or "the red-headed sleuth." This syndrome arises from a wrong-headed conviction that the same word should not be used twice in close succession. This is only true of particularly strong and visible words, such as "vertiginous." Better to re-use a simple tag or phrase than to contrive cumbersome methods of avoiding it.

- **Brand Name Fever**

Use of brand name alone, without accompanying visual detail, to create false verisimilitude. You can stock a future with Hondas and Sonys and IBM's and still have no idea with it looks like.

- **"Call a Rabbit a Smeerp"**

A cheap technique for false exoticism, in which common elements of the real world are re-named for a fantastic milieu without any real alteration in their basic nature or behavior. "Smeerps" are especially common in fantasy worlds, where people often ride exotic steeds that look and act just like horses. (Attributed to James Blish.)

- **Gingerbread**

Useless ornament in prose, such as fancy sesquipedalian Latinate words where short clear English ones will do. Novice authors sometimes use "gingerbread" in the hope of disguising faults and conveying an air of refinement. (Attr. Damon Knight)

- **Not Simultaneous**

The misuse of the present participle is a common structural sentence-fault for beginning writers. "Putting his key in the door, he leapt up the stairs and got his revolver out of the bureau." Alas, our hero couldn't do this even if his arms were forty feet long. This fault shades into "Ing Disease," the tendency to pepper sentences with words ending in "-ing," a grammatical construction which tends to confuse the proper sequence of events. (Attr. Damon Knight)

- **Pushbutton Words**

Words used to evoke a cheap emotional response without engaging the intellect or the critical faculties. Commonly found in story titles, they include such bits of bogus lyricism as "star," "dance," "dream," "song," "tears" and "poet," cliches calculated to render the SF audience misty-eyed and tender-hearted.

- **Roget's Disease**

The ludicrous overuse of far-fetched adjectives, piled into a festering, fungal, tenebrous, troglodytic, ichorous, leprous, synonymic heap. (Attr. John W. Campbell)

- **"Said" Bookism**

An artificial verb used to avoid the word "said." "Said" is one of the few invisible words in the English language and is almost impossible to overuse. It is much less distracting than "he retorted," "she inquired," "he ejaculated," and other oddities. The term "said-book" comes from certain pamphlets, containing hundreds of purple-prose synonyms for the word "said," which were sold to aspiring authors from tiny ads in American magazines of the pre-WWII era.

- **Tom Swifty**

An unseemly compulsion to follow the word "said" with a colorful adverb, as in "We'd better hurry, Tom said swiftly." This was a standard mannerism of the old Tom Swift adventure dime-novels. Good dialogue can stand on its own without a clutter of adverbial props.

- **Bathos**

A sudden, alarming change in the level of diction. "There will be bloody riots and savage insurrections leading to a violent popular uprising unless the regime starts being lots nicer about stuff."

- **Countersinking**

A form of expositional redundancy in which the action clearly implied in dialogue is made explicit. "Let's get out of here," he said, urging her to leave."

- **Dischism**

The unwitting intrusion of the author's physical surroundings, or the author's own mental state, into the text of the story. Authors who smoke or drink while writing often drown or choke their characters with an endless supply of booze and cigs. In subtler forms of the Dischism, the characters complain of their confusion and indecision — when this is actually the author's condition at the moment of writing, not theirs within the story. "Dischism" is named after the critic who diagnosed this syndrome. (Attr. Thomas M. Disch)

- **False Humanity**

An ailment endemic to genre writing, in which soap-opera elements of purported human interest are stuffed into the story willy-nilly, whether or not they advance the plot or contribute to the point of the story. The actions of such characters convey an itchy sense of irrelevance, for the author has invented their problems out of whole cloth, so as to have something to emote about.

- **False Interiorization**

A cheap labor-saving technique in which the author, too lazy to describe the surroundings, afflicts the viewpoint-character with a blindfold, an attack of space-sickness, the urge to play marathon whist-games in the smoking-room, etc.

- **Fuzz**

An element of motivation the author was too lazy to supply. The word "somehow" is a useful tip-off to fuzzy areas of a story. "Somehow she had forgotten to bring her gun."

- **Hand Waving**

An attempt to distract the reader with dazzling prose or other verbal fireworks, so as to divert attention from a severe logical flaw. (Attr. Stewart Brand)

- **Laughtrack**

Characters grandstand and tug the reader's sleeve in an effort to force a specific emotional reaction. They laugh wildly at their own jokes, cry loudly at their own pain, and rob the reader of any real chance of attaining genuine emotion.

- **Show, not Tell**

A cardinal principle of effective writing. The reader should be allowed to react naturally to the evidence presented in the story, not instructed in how to react by the author. Specific incidents and carefully observed details will render auctorial lectures unnecessary. For instance, instead of telling the reader "She had a bad childhood, an unhappy childhood," a specific incident — involving, say, a locked closet and two jars of honey — should be shown.

Rigid adherence to show-don't-tell can become absurd. Minor matters are sometimes best gotten out of the way in a swift, straightforward fashion.

- **Signal from Fred**

A comic form of the "Dischism" in which the author's subconscious, alarmed by the poor quality of the work, makes unwitting critical comments: "This doesn't make sense." "This is really boring." "This sounds like a bad movie." (Attr. Damon Knight)

- **Squid in the Mouth**

The failure of an author to realize that his/her own weird assumptions and personal in-jokes are simply not shared by the world-at-large. Instead of applauding the wit or insight of the author's remarks, the world-at-large will stare in vague shock and alarm at such a writer, as if he or she had a live squid in the mouth.

Since SF writers as a breed are generally quite loony, and in fact make this a stock in trade, "squid in the mouth" doubles as a term of grudging praise, describing the essential, irreducible, divinely unpredictable lunacy of the true SF writer. (Attr. James P Blaylock)

- **Squid on the Mantelpiece**

Chekhov said that if there are dueling pistols over the mantelpiece in the first act, they should be fired in the third. In other words, a plot element should be deployed in a timely fashion and with proper dramatic emphasis. However, in SF plotting the MacGuffins are often so overwhelming that they cause conventional plot structures to collapse. It's hard to properly dramatize, say, the domestic effects of Dad's bank overdraft when a giant writhing kra-

ken is levelling the city. This mismatch between the conventional dramatic proprieties and SF's extreme, grotesque, or visionary thematics is known as the "squid on the mantelpiece."

- **White Room Syndrome**

A clear and common sign of the failure of the author's imagination, most often seen at the beginning of a story, before the setting, background, or characters have gelled. "She awoke in a white room." The 'white room' is a featureless set for which details have yet to be invented — a failure of invention by the author. The character 'wakes' in order to begin a fresh train of thought — again, just like the author. This 'white room' opening is generally followed by much earnest pondering of circumstances and useless exposition; all of which can be cut, painlessly.

It remains to be seen whether the "white room" cliché will fade from use now that most authors confront glowing screens rather than blank white paper.

- **Wiring Diagram Fiction**

A genre ailment related to "False Humanity," "Wiring Diagram Fiction" involves "characters" who show no convincing emotional reactions at all, since they are overwhelmed by the author's fascination with gadgetry or didactic lectures.

- **You Can't Fire Me, I Quit**

An attempt to diffuse the reader's incredulity with a pre-emptive strike — as if by anticipating the reader's objections, the author had somehow answered them. "I would never have believed it, if I hadn't seen it myself!" "It was one of those amazing coincidences that can only take place in real life!" "It's a one-in-a-million chance, but it's so crazy it just might work!" Surprisingly common, especially in SF. (Attr. John Kessel)

## PART THREE: COMMON WORKSHOP STORY TYPES

- **Adam and Eve Story**

Nauseatingly common subset of the “Shaggy God Story” in which a terrible apocalypse, spaceship crash, etc., leaves two survivors, man and woman, who turn out to be Adam and Eve, parents of the human race!!

- **The Cozy Catastrophe**

Story in which horrific events are overwhelming the entirety of human civilization, but the action concentrates on a small group of tidy, middle-class, white Anglo-Saxon protagonists. The essence of the cozy catastrophe is that the hero should have a pretty good time (a girl, free suites at the Savoy, automobiles for the taking) while everyone else is dying off. (Attr. Brian Aldiss)

- **Dennis Hopper Syndrome**

A story based on some arcane bit of science or folklore, which noodles around producing random weirdness. Then a loony character-actor (usually best played by Dennis Hopper) barges into the story and baldly tells the protagonist what’s going on by explaining the underlying mystery in a long bug-eyed rant. (Attr. Howard Waldrop)

- **Deus ex Machina or “God in the Box”**

Story featuring a miraculous solution to the story’s conflict, which comes out of nowhere and renders the plot struggles irrelevant. H G Wells warned against SF’s love for the deus ex machina when he coined the famous dictum that “If anything is possible, then nothing is interesting.” Science fiction, which specializes in making the impossible seem plausible, is always deeply intrigued by godlike powers in the handy pocket size. Artificial Intelligence, virtual realities and nanotechnology are three contemporary SF MacGuffins that are cheap portable sources of limitless miracle.

- **The Grubby Apartment Story**

Similar to the “poor me” story, this autobiographical effort features a miserably quasi-bohemian writer, living in urban angst in a grubby apartment. The story commonly stars the author’s friends in thin disguises — friends who may also be the author’s workshop companions, to their considerable alarm.

- **The Jar of Tang**

“For you see, we are all living in a jar of Tang!” or “For you see, I am a dog!” A story contrived so that the author can spring a silly surprise about its setting. Mainstay of the old *Twilight Zone* TV show. An entire pointless story contrived so the author can cry “Fooled

you!” For instance, the story takes place in a desert of coarse orange sand surrounded by an impenetrable vitrine barrier; surprise! our heroes are microbes in a jar of Tang powdered orange drink.

This is a classic case of the difference between a conceit and an idea. “What if we all lived in a jar of Tang?” is an example of the former; “What if the revolutionaries from the sixties had been allowed to set up their own society?” is an example of the latter. Good SF requires ideas, not conceits. (Attr. Stephen P. Brown)

When done with serious intent rather than as a passing conceit, this type of story can be dignified by the term “Concealed Environment.” (Attr. Christopher Priest)

- **Just-Like Fallacy**

SF story which thinly adapts the trappings of a standard pulp adventure setting. The spaceship is “just like” an Atlantic steamer, down to the Scottish engineer in the hold. A colony planet is “just like” Arizona except for two moons in the sky. “Space Westerns” and futuristic hard-boiled detective stories have been especially common versions.

- **The Kitchen-Sink Story**

A story overwhelmed by the inclusion of any and every new idea that occurs to the author in the process of writing it. (Attr. Damon Knight)

- **The Motherhood Statement**

SF story which posits some profoundly unsettling threat to the human condition, explores the implications briefly, then hastily retreats to affirm the conventional social and humanistic pieties, ie apple pie and motherhood. Greg Egan once stated that the secret of truly effective SF was to deliberately “burn the motherhood statement.” (Attr. Greg Egan)

- **The “Poor Me” Story**

Autobiographical piece in which the male viewpoint character complains that he is ugly and can’t get laid. (Attr. Kate Wilhelm)

- **Re-Inventing the Wheel**

A novice author goes to enormous lengths to create a science-fictional situation already tiresomely familiar to the experienced reader. Reinventing the Wheel was traditionally typical of mainstream writers venturing into SF. It is now often seen in writers who lack experience in genre history because they were attracted

to written SF via SF movies, SF television series, SF role-playing games, SF comics or SF computer gaming.

- **The Rembrandt Comic Book**

A story in which incredible craftsmanship has been lavished on a theme or idea which is basically trivial or subliterate, and which simply cannot bear the weight of such deadly-serious artistic portent.

- **The Shaggy God Story**

A piece which mechanically adopts a Biblical or other mythological tale and provides flat science-fictional “explanations” for the theological events. (Attr. Michael Moorcock)

- **The Slipstream Story**

Non-SF story which is so ontologically distorted or related in such a bizarrely non-realist fashion that it cannot pass muster as commercial mainstream fiction and therefore seeks shelter in the SF or fantasy genre. Postmodern critique and technique are particularly fruitful in creating slipstream stories.

- **The Steam-Grommet Factory**

Didactic SF story which consists entirely of a guided tour of a large and elaborate gimmick. A common technique of SF utopias and dystopias. (Attr. Gardner Dozois)

- **The Tabloid Weird**

Story produced by a confusion of SF and Fantasy tropes — or rather, by a confusion of basic world-views. Tabloid Weird is usually produced by the author’s own inability to distinguish between a rational, Newtonian-Einsteinian, cause-and-effect universe and an irrational, supernatural, fantastic universe. Either the FBI is hunting the escaped mutant from the genetics lab, or the drill-bit has bored straight into Hell — but not both at once in the very same piece of fiction. Even

fantasy worlds need an internal consistency of sorts, so that a Sasquatch Deal-with-the-Devil story is also “Tabloid Weird.” Sasquatch crypto-zoology and Christian folk superstition simply don’t mix well, even for comic effect. (Attr. Howard Waldrop)

- **The Whistling Dog**

A story related in such an elaborate, arcane, or convoluted manner that it impresses by its sheer narrative ingenuity, but which, as a story, is basically not worth the candle. Like the whistling dog, it’s astonishing that the thing can whistle — but it doesn’t actually whistle very well. (Attr. Harlan Ellison)

## PART FOUR: PLOTS

- **Abess Phone Home**

Takes its name from a mainstream story about a medieval cloister which was sold as SF because of the serendipitous arrival of a UFO at the end. By extension, any mainstream story with a gratuitous SF or fantasy element tacked on so it could be sold.

- **And plot**

Picaresque plot in which this happens, and then that happens, and then something else happens, and it all adds up to nothing in particular.

- **Bogus Alternatives**

List of actions a character could have taken, but didn't. Frequently includes all the reasons why. In this nervous mannerism, the author stops the action dead to work out complicated plot problems at the reader's expense. "If I'd gone along with the cops they would have found the gun in my purse. And anyway, I didn't want to spend the night in jail. I suppose I could have just run instead of stealing their car, but then . . ." etc. Best dispensed with entirely.

- **Card Tricks in the Dark**

Elaborately contrived plot which arrives at (a) the punchline of a private joke no reader will get or (b) the display of some bit of learned trivia relevant only to the author. This stunt may be intensely ingenious, and very gratifying to the author, but it serves no visible fictional purpose. (Attr. Tim Powers)

- **Idiot Plot**

A plot which functions only because all the characters involved are idiots. They behave in a way that suits the author's convenience, rather than through any rational motivation of their own. (Attr. James Blish)

- **Kudzu plot**

Plot which weaves and curls and writhes in weedy organic profusion, smothering everything in its path.

- **Plot Coupons**

The basic building blocks of the quest-type fantasy plot. The "hero" collects sufficient plot coupons (magic sword, magic book, magic cat) to send off to the author for the ending. Note that "the author" can be substituted for "the Gods" in such a work: "The Gods decreed he would pursue this quest." Right, mate. The author decreed he would pursue this quest until sufficient pages were filled to procure an advance. (Dave Langford)

- **Second-order Idiot Plot**

A plot involving an entire invented SF society which functions only because every single person in it is necessarily an idiot. (Attr. Damon Knight)



## PART FIVE: BACKGROUND

- **“As You Know Bob”**

A pernicious form of info-dump through dialogue, in which characters tell each other things they already know, for the sake of getting the reader up-to-speed. This very common technique is also known as “Rod and Don dialogue” (attr. Damon Knight) or “maid and butler dialogue” (attr. Algis Budrys).

- **The Edges of Ideas**

The solution to the “Info-Dump” problem (how to fill in the background). The theory is that, as above, the mechanics of an interstellar drive (the center of the idea) is not important: all that matters is the impact on your characters: they can get to other planets in a few months, and, oh yeah, it gives them hallucinations about past lives. Or, more radically: the physics of TV transmission is the center of an idea; on the edges of it we find people turning into couch potatoes because they no longer have to leave home for entertainment. Or, more bluntly: we don’t need info dump at all. We just need a clear picture of how people’s lives have been affected by their background. This is also known as “carrying extrapolation into the fabric of daily life.”

- **Eyeball Kick**

Vivid, telling details that create a kaleidoscopic effect of swarming visual imagery against a baroquely elaborate SF background. One ideal of cyberpunk SF was to create a “crammed prose” full of “eye-ball kicks.” (Attr. Rudy Rucker)

- **Frontloading**

Piling too much exposition into the beginning of the story, so that it becomes so dense and dry that it is almost impossible to read. (Attr. Connie Willis)

- **Infodump**

Large chunk of indigestible expository matter intended to explain the background situation. Info-dumps can be covert, as in fake newspaper or “Encyclopedia Galactica” articles, or overt, in which all action stops as the author assumes center stage and lectures. Info-dumps are also known as “expository lumps.” The use of brief,

deft, inoffensive info-dumps is known as “kuttnering,” after Henry Kuttner. When information is worked unobtrusively into the story’s basic structure, this is known as “heinleining.”

- **“I’ve suffered for my Art” (and now it’s your turn)**

A form of info-dump in which the author inflicts upon the reader hard-won, but irrelevant bits of data acquired while researching the story. As Algis Budrys once pointed out, homework exists to make the difficult look easy.

- **Nowhere Nowhen Story**

Putting too little exposition into the story’s beginning, so that the story, while physically readable, seems to take place in a vacuum and fails to engage any readerly interest. (Attr. L. Sprague de Camp)

- **Ontological riff**

Passage in an SF story which suggests that our deepest and most basic convictions about the nature of reality, space-time, or consciousness have been violated, technologically transformed, or at least rendered thoroughly dubious. The works of H. P. Lovecraft, Barrington Bayley, and Philip K Dick abound in “ontological riffs.”

- **Space Western**

The most pernicious suite of “Used Furniture”. The grizzled space captain swaggering into the spacer bar and slugging down a Jovian brandy, then laying down a few credits for a space hooker to give him a Galactic Rim Job.

- **Stapeldon**

Name assigned to the voice which takes center stage to lecture. Actually a common noun, as: “You have a Stapledon come on to answer this problem instead of showing the characters resolve it.”

- **Used Furniture**

Use of a background out of Central Casting. Rather than invent a background and have to explain it, or risk re-inventing the wheel, let’s just steal one. We’ll set it in the Star Trek Universe, only we’ll call it the Empire instead of the Federation.

## PART SIX: CHARACTER AND VIEWPOINT

- **Funny-hat characterization**

A character distinguished by a single identifying tag, such as odd headgear, a limp, a lisp, a parrot on his shoulder, etc.

- **Mrs. Brown**

The small, downtrodden, eminently common, everyday little person who nevertheless encapsulates something vital and important about the human condition. "Mrs. Brown" is a rare personage in the SF genre, being generally overshadowed by swaggering submyth types made of the finest gold-plated cardboard. In a famous essay, "Science Fiction and Mrs. Brown," Ursula K. Le Guin decried Mrs. Brown's absence from the SF field. (Attr: Virginia Woolf)

- **Submyth**

Classic character-types in SF which aspire to the condition of archetype but don't quite make it, such as the mad scientist, the crazed supercomputer, the emotionless super-rational alien, the vindictive mutant child, etc. (Attr. Ursula K. Le Guin)

- **Viewpoint glitch**

The author loses track of point-of-view, switches point-of-view for no good reason, or relates something that the viewpoint character could not possibly know.

## PART SEVEN: MISCELLANEOUS

- **AM/FM**

Engineer's term distinguishing the inevitable clunky real-world faultiness of "Actual Machines" from the power-fantasy techno-dreams of "Fucking Magic."

- **Consensus Reality**

Useful term for the purported world in which the majority of modern sane people generally agree that they live — as opposed to the worlds of, say, Fortean, semioticians or quantum physicists.

- **Intellectual sexiness**

The intoxicating glamor of a novel scientific idea, as distinguished from any actual intellectual merit that it may someday prove to possess.

- **The Ol' Baloney Factory**

"Science Fiction" as a publishing and promotional entity in the world of commerce.

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