

POSTSCRIPT (2014) [to reprint of „Estrangement and Cognition“ in the electronic publication *Strange Horizons*]

All of us on the planet Earth live in highly endangered times. Perhaps the richer among us, up to 5% globally but disproportionately concentrated in the trilateral U.S.A.-western Europe-Japan and its appendages, have been cushioned from realizing it by the power of money and the self-serving ideology it erects. But even those complain loudly of the "criminality" and in general "moral decay" of the desperately vicious outside their increasingly fortress-like neighbourhoods. We live morally in an almost complete dystopia—dystopia because anti-utopia—and materially (economically) on the razor's edge of collapse, distributive and collective.

In a look backwards to my writing of the 1960s from this most endangered cusp of history, I see a main limitation to my "Poetics of SF" essay in its innocently and naively Formalist horizon. That is, I presupposed the tide of history was flowing, even if with regrettable eddies, towards socialism or democratic communism, and concentrated on the problems of understanding, pleasure, and form within that tide. Thus I seem to have felt I could freeze or even freeze out history, as all pursuits of aesthetics do: transcending the moment. I was wrong.

"Poetics" as a term comes of course from Aristotle. In 1971 I held a graduate seminar, "Aristotle after Brecht and Marx." Brecht's "estrangement" is perhaps well suggested here. But there is far too little Marx. Therefore I have later amended my definitions to indicate that *what is* cognition (and in particular the defining factor of SF, the Novum) cannot be answered in a vacuum but only within an explicated value system wedded to the labouring, exploited and dominated, classes—that is: from their standpoint (as guessed at by the critic).

In a nutshell, we've got to get the good old class struggle back as a key factor of our considerations: especially today, when it is conducted from above, by the rich rulers, against the impoverished people, who seem to go on struggling—where are you, Lenin?—each all alone or in powerless little groups.

Ah yes: on Fantasy. The lay of the land has changed here: I wrote before the Deluge. I've looked anew at it in my essay "Considering the Sense of 'Fantasy' or 'Fantastic Fiction'," [Extrapolation](#) 41.3 (2000): 209-47. It does not simply deny but it supersedes (as Hegel would say) what is written here. Please look at it. Though I'm having a hard time publishing books these years, it may soon be included in a new book in the [Ralahine Utopian Studies](#) series by Peter Lang (UK) Publishers.