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A Miéville Bestiary: Monsters as Commentary on the Hybridity of Real and Conceptual Landscapes in the Work of China Miéville.

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds

York St John University

School of Humanities, Religion and Philosophy

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Abstract

To date, China Miéville has written: 12 novels; two short story collections; four volumes of non-fiction; graphic novels; roleplaying games and numerous essays and articles in a writing career spanning since the late 1990s.

Miéville's novels are celebrated for being distinctly different from each other yet there are three concepts of landscapes which Miéville keeps revisiting: genre landscapes, urban landscapes and socio-political landscapes. This thesis will explore the theoretical approaches Miéville utilises to explore these conceptual landscapes before using the form of the bestiary to highlight how these concepts are manifested in his novels.

The most important of those fantastical elements at his disposal is the monster which naturally encourages an examination of hybridity and liminality. The Bestiary has existed in the form that is familiar to us for many centuries. The interweaving of morality and mysterious depictions of the natural world imbued historical bestiaries with a sense of the mythological. Their power as a device for world creation is particularly recognised by writers of fantasy fiction. This thesis will demonstrate that by using monsters as manifestations of these conceptual landscapes Miéville successfully utilises the hybridity and liminality of both monsters and fantastic fiction as a methodology to critique our own contemporary late-capitalist social landscape.

Key Words: Miéville, monsters, bestiary, hybridity, genre, Weird, psychogeography, Marxism.

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Introduction
Concepts of Landscape and the Role of the Bestiary in the Work of China Miéville

My first experience of China Miéville's work was *Perdido Street Station* (2000) which I read almost a decade after its publication. As a lifelong fan of fantasy fiction, Miéville's novel was a paradigm shift in my interpretation of what a fantasy novel could be. I was used to the secondary world-building of fantasy fiction but what Miéville was offering with Bas-Lag was something different. Quasi-medieval cities and magic are replaced with steam-powered urban landscapes and hard sciences. The quest narrative is superseded by an exploration of social ideas. *Perdido Street Station* clearly demonstrates the evaporation of genre borders, combining elements of fantasy, science fiction, horror and the literary Weird. Miéville himself has commented that he finds the 'bleeding of genre edges completely compelling' (Gordon and Miéville, 2003). All of this is also done with a panache and love for creating imaginative monsters. The Slake Moths and the Remade are some of the greatest examples of teratology in the past few decades - repulsive, terrifying and fascinating. His second novel, *Perdido Street Station* not only established Miéville as a writer to watch, it also established the core principles and concepts that Miéville continues to explore. Even though his novels are all distinctly different there are three key concepts which Miéville revisits: genre fictions, urban environments and socio-political commentary. Each of these concepts can be interpreted as "landscapes" which Miéville inhabits as a writer.

0.1 Concepts of Landscape

It is important to first present a definition of the term *landscape* in the context of this thesis. Dictionary definitions obviously refer to a terrain, a set of visible and distinctive features, a stretch of land. It also refers to the landscape formatting of images (as

opposed to portrait), a specific manner of presenting information, images or words. *Landscape* also has connotations with art, referring to the methodology of capturing painted interpretations of natural scenery. The term in this context emerged around the turn of the sixteenth century and is now an established and common interpretation of the word. However, there is a close association between landscape and literature too, particularly in poetry, where a focus on language and word-use produces similar intensity of expression as landscape painting. There are several strands of landscape poetry - ranging from pastoral poetry depicting an idealised countryside, to the close examination of geography in topographical poetry, to the more recognisable poets of the Romanticism period, especially the work of William Wordsworth. Gothic literature relies heavily on landscape to produce a sensation of sublime awe and wonder. More recently, the explosion creative non-fiction exploring different aspects of landscape demonstrates that this continues to be an important inspiration for the written word too.

The etymology of the word landscape reveals interesting features which suggest another, more conceptual, meaning. The word *land* is German in its origin and refers simply to "something in which people belong". However, the suffix *-scape* is interesting in its origin, being similar in meaning to the suffix *-ship*, a development of the Old English word *scapan* or *scieppan*, meaning *to shape.* This, of course, is accurate in our modern interpretation of the word *landscape* as referring to physical geographical space, inhabited by people, that has been *shaped* in some way, either through natural processes or human activity. As a verb, *landscaping*, or *to landscape*, also suggests the process of shaping, to make something more attractive or efficient through the deliberate alteration of an existing design.[1]

In the early twentieth century the geographer Otto Schlüter posited the concept of "cultural landscapes" (*Kulturlandschaft*) – a landscape created by human cultural

[1] Etymological history of the word *landscape* taken from the Online Etymological Dictionary www.etymonline.com.

activity.[2] Schlüter's concept was further developed by the human geographer Carl O. Sauer, who expressed in his 1931 essay "Cultural Geography" that 'the latest agent to modify the earth's surface is man. Man must be regarded directly as a geomorphologic agent' and that cultural geography is 'concerned with those works of man that are inscribed into the earth's surface and give to it characteristic expression' (Sauer, 2009: 129-130). It becomes clear that as well as being a result of natural processes, *landscape* is also intrinsically linked and shaped by human behaviour.

This interpretation of *-scape*, meaning *to shape*, also suggests that the word can refer to the features of a specific sphere of activity and how the interactions of people with that sphere of activity can drastically affect it. This can be seen through association with another word – *political.* The phrase "political landscape" is commonly used in the media to express the shaping of society by political activity, for example in the phrase: "This event has changed the political landscape of the country". Here, the shaping aspect of the word remains prominent, with the influence of human agency and activity still present. However, this is not a geographical landscape but something more conceptual, rather than physical. Considering Miéville's own political agency, this other interpretation of landscape becomes a useful tool for critical analysis of his work as he is an author who is keenly interested in how human activity and agency affects the world around us, particularly in terms of political and social structures.

Therefore, the use of the term *landscape* in this thesis can be associated with both *physical* and *conceptual* details; that 'the complex history and usage of the term means that, inevitably, landscape now has multiple meanings and interpretations as a region or place, as a collection of artefacts and as a representation either in another medium…or as a representation of culture through symbolic means (Dunn et al, 2003: 18). A subjective expectation also exists. For instance, when asked to picture a "coastal

[2] 'The interwar period of geographical thought was heavily influenced by German concept of *Landschaft* (generally referring to a bounded area)'. However, the concept adopted by Schlüter, and later Sauer, interpreted the natural landscape as 'a blank sheet or palimpsest to be overprinted with the impact of human activity'. This distinction was defined as *Kulturlandschaft* (Dunn et al, 2003:18).

landscape" certain elements, such as cliffs, waves, beaches, would likely be conjured, yet examples of coastal landscapes vary dramatically from country-to-country, even mile-by mile. "Coastal landscapes" and "mountainous landscapes" will share several similar features, such as rocky cliffs and water, but in different formations. In terms of literary theory, this idea can be useful as it allows for texts to be categorised by similar concepts but also allow for careful analysis of the subtle differences which exist within a specific category. Therefore, the use of the term *landscape* to critically explore Miéville's work allows distinctive features of a concept to be identified, as well as indicating how his novels, essays and non-fiction capture these concepts, *shaping* them in interesting ways. His work acts as a conduit on which the features of these conceptual landscapes can be painted.

In terms of Miéville's exploration of urban settings the use of the term *landscape* is quite literal: he explores what it means to live in urban environments, not only through the physicality of the architecture but in a more psychological interpretation of how cities affect our behaviours.

In terms of genre fiction and socio-political commentary the term *landscape* can still be applied so that is represents the distinctive features of these specific spheres of activity. However, in both cases the interpretation of landscape is more abstract in nature. Although not a physical landscape, Miéville's examination of these thematic spheres represents an exploration of a *conceptual* landscape. For example, his novels challenge perceived ideas of what constitutes specific genre categories - what is interpreted here as *genre landscapes*. The etymological interpretation of the word *landscape*, as representing a shaping of some kind, is interesting in terms of genre fiction, as the natural abilities of geographical landscapes to be recognisable in terms of features and expectation – but also shift, blur and combine – mirrors the operation of genre fictions too.

Miéville's own political and social viewpoints become part of his narratives, whether intentionally or not. When we correlate these references, we begin to establish

a *socio-political landscape* on show within Miéville's work, with specific and distinctive features. Once these features have been identified, we can then critically analyse and explore this landscape. Inspired by my initial reading of *Perdido Street Station* this thesis will expand beyond just this one novel to explore Miéville's entire oeuvre using these three concepts of landscape as a critical methodology.

As well as being a writer of fantastical fiction, Miéville is a prolific writer of non-fiction on a variety of subjects, from socialist politics, through literary criticism, to cephalopods. In many respects, Miéville's writing career is one of two distinct identities: a critical commentator and a creator of secondary worlds. To reflect this dualism in Miéville's writing, this thesis will be split into two distinct sections. The first four chapters will explore the three conceptual landscapes outlined above, primarily utilising Miéville's non-fiction but also other material as a means of supporting ideas. To reflect Miéville's creativity in his fiction, the second part – comprising an extended fifth chapter – will take the form of a bestiary and will demonstrate how these concepts of landscape are explored and expressed through the motifs of the monsters which Miéville has created in his novels.

Chapter One will explore Miéville's playfulness within *genre landscapes*, demonstrating how his work has a fluid ability to transcend boundaries. The aim of the chapter will be to determine if it is possible to apply genre categories to Miéville's work by placing it into the specific spheres of fantasy, science fiction and horror, before exploring alternative methods of genre identification too, based around the concept of hybridity. Chapter Two will take the concept of genre landscapes further by reading Miéville's work through the specific lens of Weird fiction and its contemporary cousin New Weird fiction. Miéville's work has been linked to the work of H.P. Lovecraft and he has written critically about Weird fiction. This chapter will explore these associations between Miéville and Weird fiction through the tentacle and the tentacular, a physical motif which occurs multiple times throughout Miéville's novels. Analysis will then move onto the movement known as the New Weird to ascertain whether Miéville's work could

be defined in this manner. These first two chapters will provide an overview of how Miéville's work fits within the concept of genre landscapes.

Focus will then shift to representations of physical landscapes. Chapter Three examines the depiction of *urban* landscapes in Miéville's work by showing how Miéville re-interprets psychogeography in *The City & The City* (2009) and *London's Overthrow* (2012), both of which closely analyse how urban environments intrinsically affect our consciousness and political being. Next, this chapter will move onto Miéville's multiple fictional versions of London and how Marxist urban theory and Gothic literature play an important role in his world-building methodology for portraying these "other-Londons". This chapter will ultimately evaluate how Miéville uses the urban landscape as a canvas for exploring ideas of borders, class, capitalism, socialism and connectivity.

Miéville's real-life political biography is clearly expressed in his non-fiction but has a presence in his novels too. Miéville is a socialist and a Marxist, more importantly a follower of Historical Materialism, which he claims is **'**theoretically all-encompassing: it allowed me to understand the world in its totality without being dogmatic' (Gordon and Miéville, 2003). The overriding themes of Marxist theory – which Miéville used to frame his PhD thesis on International Law – present themselves in Miéville's fiction through the depiction of social systems existing in an age of oppressive late capitalism. It would be beneficial to view Miéville's work entirely through the lens of Marxist theory and we will briefly do so next. However, although it is inevitable that Marxist theory will encroach on the concepts of landscape being discussed, it will not be the principal theoretical methodology for this thesis. Instead a variety of different theories will be explored to give the most detailed portraits of these conceptual landscapes. The intention is to demonstrate that considering Miéville's works under the concept of *landscape* invites multiple theoretical perspectives and a breadth of critical analysis.

Genre theory and an examination of classification and genre categories will be the principal methodology for exploring genre landscapes. Aspects of urban landscapes will be explored through discussion of psychogeography, Marxist urban theory and the

application of Gothic aesthetics. However, what is clear is that the third conceptual landscape – that of socio-political commentary – is deeply significant to Miéville's work, which certainly invites discussion of such themes. Therefore, Chapter Four will examine this concept of social landscapes closely by focusing on three key themes in Miéville's work: the idea of revolution; the concept of the utopian ideal; and the portrayal of law and justice. The concept of hybridisation will appear across the first four chapters, demonstrating how Miéville's work deliberately utilises the evaporation of ontological and conceptual boundaries to not only create new forms of genre but also make the reader question their own interpretations of biological, social and political structures.

0.2 China Miéville and Marxist Literary Theory

Despite the acclaim he has garnered from his genre fiction peers, Miéville has been largely ignored by the major literary awards. However, he is passionate about the state of the novel, keen to examine the hierarchy that exists between literature and genre fiction:

> I think it's something to do with a shift in late Victorian and early Edwardian culture – a certain phase of bourgeois culture. Writers had done stuff across fields before then but something shifted, and quite a strong ideology emerged of mimetic representation…I think it is the result of a certain ideological moment. (Colson: 2011)

Miéville firmly inhabits this liminal space between literary fiction and genre fiction, influenced equally by his attraction in his younger years to role-playing games – culminating in him contributing to the 2010 supplement *Pathfinder Chronicles: Guide to the River Kingdoms* – and the novels embraced by academia.[3] This attraction to both genre and literary texts places Miéville in an interesting position. He can, what I will term, *cross-inhabit* these landscapes; his application of genre motifs experiments with

[3] One novel Miéville continually claims to be his favourite is *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte. See Miéville (2010b).

evaporating the boundaries between these forms. The result is a moulding together of multiple genres into new, hybrid forms. This application of cross-inhabitation is visible in his work with traits of genre fiction existing alongside a “literary” experimentation with style and language.

One methodology of examining Miéville’s work is through the lens of Marxist literary theory. Marxism is one of the most historical perspectives in literary criticism, developing from the initial economic and political writings of Karl Marx in the mid-nineteenth century. Marxist theory can be summarised through Marx’s own words: ‘It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness’ (Marx, 1859: 2). In simpler terms, for Marxists it is the society around us that determines one’s identity and infiltrates into the imagination. David Craig recognises the importance of history in defining Marxist literary theory:

> The deepest-rooted forces acting in history - that is, the struggle between sections of society for the means of life - transform the way of life, that is, people’s relations as they work together to subsist... This transforming gives rise to new networks of communication... Out of this arises literature, the expression in words... of the new, pressing life-concerns of people in a particular place and time. (Craig, 1977: 11)

Literature is a “product” of the society in which it exists and utilises the ideas of the period in which it was created. Its affiliation with the historical period in which a text was produced and subsequently exists, means that Marxism remains relevant as a methodology of critical literary analysis. The physical text can be interpreted as being part of a “chain of production”: it is a product that is created and consumed in a similar manner to industrial products. Miéville’s work is an example of this process: the texts reflect the times in which they are produced.

Terry Eagleton describes Marxist literary theory as: ‘not merely a “sociology of literature” ... Its aim is to explain the literary work more fully... grasping those forms, styles

and meanings as the product of a particular history' (Eagleton, 1997: 3). Eagleton defines language and literary devices as being constructed within the context of a specific cultural moment. He claims that 'texts do not reflect human historical reality but rather work upon ideology to produce an *effect* of the real' (Selden et al, 2017: 87, original emphasis). Eagleton's suggestion is that the "meaning" of a text is removed twice from the "reality" in which it exists: filtered not only through the perception of the reader's own ideology, but also through the reworking of aesthetic, religious and social perceptions of the reality in which the text is produced. The text is both a "product" of ideology and a reflection on it.

Fredric Jameson associates literature with a Marxist analysis of history. For him, the only form of Marxist criticism which remains effective in the contemporary post-industrial, capitalist world is a 'dialectical criticism' which explores 'the great themes of Hegel's philosophy - the relationship of part to whole, the opposition between the concrete and abstract, the concept of totality, the dialectic of appearance and essence, the interaction between subject and object' (Jameson, 1971: xix). Under Jameson's dialectical theory of Marxism, the literary critic has no predetermined categories by which to analyse a text. Instead, these dialectical categories of analysis exist only within the cultural and historical systems in which the critic themselves exist. The 1991 work *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* solidifies Jameson's Marxist commentary regarding contemporary society. In a work which spans a variety of cultural spheres, Jameson points to Postmodernism's removal of history (through the application of simulacra and nostalgia) as being an important feature within the Marxist analysis of contemporary culture; that, in fact, in postmodern terms: '"culture" has become a product in its own right... Postmodernism is the consumption of sheer commodification as a process. The "life-style" of the superstate therefore stands in relationship to Marx's "fetishism" of commodities' (Jameson, 1991: x). For Jameson, the connections between traditional Marxist critical approaches and the late capitalist moment are an organic progression leading to 'this whole "degraded" landscape of schlock and kitsch, of TV

series and *Reader's Digest* culture, of advertising and motels, of the late show and the grade-B Hollywood film, of so-called paraliterature' (Jameson, 1991: 2). The focus on "production" which informed Marx's critical analysis in the nineteenth century is still prominent today, albeit in a different form. Literature has a cultural responsibility to represent this changing interpretation of the text as a "product" of a specific historical moment.

The historical moment in which Miéville's work is produced is a late twentieth century and post-millennial society dominated by neoliberal ideals around free market capitalism, austerity, privatisation and an increase in the role of the private sector in the economy and society. The Marxist critic Mark Fisher refers to this contemporary moment as being one of *capitalist realism*. Fisher suggests that this can be defined as: 'the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible to even *imagine* a coherent alternative to it' (Fisher, 2009: 2, original emphasis). Indeed, in interview, Miéville has expressed an affiliation for the politics of the anti-capitalist movement which has developed in the past few decades, citing on several occasions the World Trade Organisation protests that took place in Seattle in 1999, culminating in riots on the streets of the city.[4] In one interview for the website *IndieBound.org,* Miéville's opinions of this current political moment are succinctly revealed as he states that:

> The anti-capitalist movement has matured, has grown more sophisticated, more theoretical, politically harder…you've had the acceleration of imperialism from Bush and his Oil-ocracy, along with pathetic violent toadies like Blair, and at the other end the grassroots movements for social justice have got more and more exciting. As the economic crisis continues to bite, the choice is going to get starker and starker: their way of profit-mongering mass death and misery - or our way. (Grant, 2002)

[4] These protests took place on November 30th to December 1st, 1999 in response to members of the World Trade Organisation meeting at the Washington State Convention and Trade Center in Seattle for the WTO Ministerial Conference for 1999. The protests involved several groups, including non-governmental organisations, labour unions, student groups, religious groups and a small number of anarchists who formed a black bloc.

Anti-capitalist themes and structures are an important aspect of Miéville's work, both fiction and non-fiction. In terms of Marxist literary theory, it is plain to see that the political turmoil of recent times not only fuels his political work but also inspires his fictional output, providing world building concepts and plot ideas.

Miéville is a politically active writer responding to the specific cultural moment in which he exists. He is a writer who is deeply engaged with politics, whose non-fiction writing (such as *Between Equal Rights* (2006) – his PhD on Marxist international law – and published articles in the journals *Salvage* and *Historical Materialism*) and real-life political activism[5] embraces Marxist and socialist values and ideals. His novels too are underpinned with social commentary. They are a *product* of the times in which Miéville lives, exploring the pertinent issues of the contemporary moment: The Bas-Lag trilogy explores the social upheaval of post-millennial capitalist systems; *The City & The City* (2009) concerns itself with the portrayal of manipulated border controls and the psychological indoctrination of populations; *Embassytown* (2012) is a critical exploration of the exploitation of language within a capitalist system. All these principal themes within Miéville's work can be described as not only a "product" of these real-world issues and concerns but a critical reflection on them too. This is a principal definition for the world-building approach in his novels. As Mark Williams states:

> To the mediated and genre-varying extent that China Miéville's fiction as a whole can be said to have an 'essential' core, I believe we might suggest that it is something akin to the following: the place of the socially constructed individual within social collectives, or, more abstractly, about multiplicity within singularity - and vice versa (or both). Or, perhaps we could say they are 'really about' how the fantastic can help us to understand how the above (and their reversals) work *in reality*. (Williams, 2016: 177, original emphasis)

Miéville's principal concern is the existence of the individual within these highly charged

[5] See Chapter Four for more details of this.

capitalist systems. Marxist literary theory is, therefore, a useful prism through which to engage with Miéville's work as "literary texts".

It is important to distinguish the difference between Marxism as authorial intent and Marxism as a methodology for reading and analysing a text. Miéville is an interesting author when considering this dynamic. It is clear to see that Miéville has an ability to utilise literary theory and styles and that Marxist literary theory is a useful tool for critically exploring his oeuvre. The dominance of political and social themes within his work means that Marxist literary theory becomes a more effective critical tool due to its close examination of political power structures within social models. Miéville's authorial intent is a little more complicated to determine. It would be tempting to label his novels as "propaganda" as they are discussing strong, political messages such as worker's rights, consumerism and revolutionary action. He consciously explores his political ideas in two distinct methodologies - through novels and through non-fiction. His non-fiction *is* more propagandistic in tone, especially his essays in the Marxist journal, *Salvage*, which do not hold back from political commentary:

> In the first issue of *Salvage*, Neil Davidson mooted that neoliberalism may be undermining the basis for capital accumulation itself. What we inhabit, the phase we've tentatively come to term 'late' capitalism, is its senescence. With its means and relations of production so violently out of joint it's an economic, political and cultural milieu of increasing derangement and toxicity. (Miéville, 2015c)

These final words clearly express Miéville's political viewpoint, with a scathing evaluation of our current neoliberal, late-capitalist moment written in manifesto language. His fiction, on the other hand, is more of an exploration of political doctrine, an extrapolation of "what if?" scenarios taken to imaginative extremes.

This duality between Miéville's non-fiction and fiction in terms of their qualities of propaganda is also effectively evoked if you compare his essay "Exit Strategy" (2013) with his novel *The City & The City.* Both texts explore the concepts of politicised borders.

Where they differ is in their presentation of this theme. “Exit Strategy” is a journalistic article recounting Miéville’s thoughts of inhabiting the interstitial space which is the border checkpoint between Bethlehem and Jerusalem. The article opens with a reference to the death of Mohammed Al-Durra, shot by Israeli forces in 2000, live on camera. The article is tinged with political commentary regarding the highly politicised border conflict in the West Bank, moving from a reflection of this atrocity, which lists the names of other people killed around the same time as Mohammed, to Miéville’s own personal musings regarding passing through the border.[6] In *The City & The City* we witness this highly politicised border dispute and the Mohammed Al-Durra atrocity mirrored and transferred into the fantastical construction of the twin cities of Beszél and Ul Qoma, as Yolanda is shot and killed, very publicly, at the border crossing in Copula Hall.[7] Even though “Exit Strategy” was published after *The City & The City,* their intrinsic connection clearly demonstrates that Miéville’s method in both texts is to extrapolate to the extreme the situation in the West Bank, and other similar politicised borders. Within the fantastical construct of *The City & The City* the reader is invited to examine and question the myriad of real-life political power structures which exist across the globe. This is a common feature of Miéville’s work: there are thematic overlaps within his two strands of writing, but it is important to recognise the authorial intent present in his non-fiction from the extrapolation and imaginative expansion of themes within his fictional output.

[6] “There was another boy at the hospital, there were no injuries, it was a trick. A blood libel to suggest he was killed by Israelis, the same day as were Nizar Aida and Khaled al-Bazyan, one day before Muhammad al-Abasi and Sara Hasan and Samer Tubanja and Sami al-Taramsi and Hussam Bakhit and Iyad al-Khashishi, two before Wael Qatawi and Aseel Asleh, three before Hussam al-Hamshari and Amr al-Rifai, but stop because listing killed children takes a long time. Keep his name out of that file” (Miéville, 2013a).

[7] This scene from *The City & The City* and its comparison with “Exit Strategy” is explored further in chapter three.

0.3 Miéville and Derrida's Theory of Hauntology

One Marxist consideration when discussing Miéville's oeuvre is the role of hauntology, a theory put forward by Jacques Derrida in his work *Spectres of Marx* (1994). Derrida ponders on the state of Marxism and looks forwards and backwards to how Marxism had and could develop. In particular, at the start, Derrida focuses on the opening statement of Marx and Engels' *The Communist Manifesto* – 'A specter is haunting Europe - the specter of communism' – and, using the ghosts of Shakespeare (in particular *Hamlet*), begins to explore the metaphor of the ghost or spectre in Marxist theory:

> *What is* a ghost? What is the *effectivity* or the *presence* of a specter, that is, of what seems to remain as ineffective, virtual, insubstantial as a simulacrum? Is there *there*, between the thing itself and its simulacrum, an opposition that holds up? Repetition *and* first time, but also repetition *and* last time, since the singularity of any *first time* makes of it a *last time.* Each time it is the event itself, a first time is a last time. Altogether other. Staging for the end of history. Let us call it a *hauntology.* (Derrida, 2006: 10, original emphasis)

The 'end of history' is significant here as Derrida's work is preoccupied with the death of communism seen after the 1989 collapse of the Soviet Union and capitalism's triumph over global political systems. For Derrida, the question becomes simple: if Marxism has always been a spectral form since those formative words in *The Communist Manifesto*, then how can it now be dead? In other words, Marxism is indeed a spectre; a ghost still present and haunting a generation of political and critical thinkers.

Derrida's focus on *Hamlet* and its ghost leads us to a significant interpretation of hauntology which can contribute to a view of Miéville's overall creative methodology. At the beginning of *Specters of Marx* Derrida quotes directly from Shakespeare's play and the interaction between Hamlet and the Ghost of his father. One part of this speech is particularly important here: 'The time is out of ioynt: Oh cursed spight/That ever I was borne to set it right./Nay, come, let's goe together. [*Exeunt*] - Act I, scene V' (Derrida, 2006: 1). For Shakespeare and for Derrida, the motif of the 'specter' creates a sense of

being ‘out of time’ (‘time is out of ioynt’), of being uncannily out of place, the past affecting the present and vice versa. For Derrida: ‘time is *disarticulated*, dislocated, dislodged, time is run down, on the run and run down [*traqué et détraqué*], *deranged*, both out of order and mad. Time is off its hinges, time is off course, beside itself, disadjusted’ (Derrida, 2006: 20). Derrida’s suggestion here is that there is no such thing as an original, or “new”, concept. Time is disjointed and everything is beholden to past iterations and ideas. They are haunted by the ghosts of history and time.

This adds weight to the idea of Marxism as a “specter” because it is plain to see that Marxist ideals of the past are still affecting the present capitalist global system, in the shape of socialist utopian ideals regarding economic and political equality. This concept of hauntology filters into the concept of landscapes within Miéville’s work in two distinct ways.

Firstly, the ideas of hauntology are important to interpretations of genre landscapes. In literature, the practice of intertextuality is the manifestation of hauntology: “specters” of past works and writers influencing the work of later writers. Genre conventions and expectations are haunted too by what has come before. Just as, for Derrida, the ‘end of history’ is problematic due to the disarticulated nature of time, so too is the “end of genres”; that is to say the formation of new genres is not at the death of others but is fundamentally “haunted” by them. Miéville is aware of this idea and the hauntological effect of previous genre writers on the works of contemporary practitioners. Where this is most prominently considered is Miéville’s association with the New Weird movement. The addition of the prefix “new” here immediately conjures associations with aspects of traditional Weird fiction. The “new” is haunted by the spectre of the original. Hauntology intrinsically encourages an interrogation of the “new”. How is it different from the original? Is it possible for New Weird fiction to be original, or is it doomed to repeat recognisable conventions? Is it possible for any aspect of fiction to be accurately labelled as “new”? Is Weird fiction dead and been replaced by the New Weird? Miéville’s work questions how

genre is haunted by past iterations. The effect of hauntology on genre landscapes will be explored further in chapters one and two.

Secondly, how is this idea presented in the *physical* urban landscape? Primarily this is through the observations of architectural styles within the city and analysis of significant historical and cultural landmarks. For example, Iain Sinclair's psychogeographical works, such as *Lights Out for the Territory* (2003), focus on 'the pattern of the living city in myth' (Acker, 2009, 59) and the deep-rooted historical and social structures that exist beneath this layer of mythology. Merlin Coverley explores psychogeography's connections with hauntology by highlighting that the shared preoccupation with urban space reflects 'a wider awareness of *genius loci* or 'spirit of place' through which landscape, whether urban or rural, can be imbued with a sense of the histories of previous inhabitants and the events that have played out against them' (Coverley, 2010a: 33, original emphasis). In other words, the urban landscape becomes the ideal medium in which to record and anthologise human experience. The landscape itself becomes crafted and haunted by Derrida's "specters of the past", the most illuminating being the remnants of the industrial revolution which still exist within urban landscapes.

Miéville poses similar socio-political questions through his hauntological descriptions of his fictional cities. His interpretation of past, present and even future urban landscapes is hauntological in nature due to his ability to have these elements of chronology bleed and interact with one another. His cities are simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar – uncanny – haunted by their own histories and potential futures, and through this hauntological effect social commentary can permeate into the reader's unconscious. Raphael Zähringer, when exploring Miéville's map of New Crobuzon, examines the significance of the names that Miéville grants to each district, claiming that they 'contribute to the map's implicit narrativity' and, in turn, the mythology of this vast urban space (Zähringer, 2015: 70). If we consider the area of New Crobuzon referred to as Bonetown, we discover the suburb is so named because of the presence of "The Ribs",

a colossal ribcage protruding from the ground: ‘Leviathan shards of yellowing ivory thicker than the oldest trees... more than a hundred feet above the earth... they curled sharply back towards each other... a god-sized ivory mantrap... *Gigantes Crobuzon*’ (Miéville, 2000: 40-41). The presence of these gargantuan remains hints at Bas-Lag’s haunted, mystical past, of the vast creatures that once ruled the world. This is a fantastical interpretation of the hauntological effect described by Derrida in *Specters of Marx*. Now, the industrial urbanisation of New Crobuzon has reclaimed the landscape, literally infiltrating and spreading through the bones of this millennia-dead creature. People walk past the giant ribs without acknowledging them, this fantastical motif merely part of the city’s arcane architecture. New Crobuzon is, metaphorically, a capitalist monster, capable of swallowing up the history of Bas-Lag itself. Yagharek’s anthropomorphism of the city becomes chillingly accurate when considering the portrayal of capitalist infiltration on this urban space.

Finally, how does hauntology feature in considerations of social landscapes in Miéville’s work? Here is where Miéville and Derrida become more aligned. Derrida’s conclusion that Marxism is a “specter” on the present capitalist system is mirrored in Miéville’s own creative interpretation of social landscapes. For him, the influence of Marxism on contemporary capitalist society is still a ghostly presence, containing political potency for revolutionary response. Chapter four will explore this idea further in terms of Miéville’s work.

Hauntology is present in all three of the conceptual landscapes under consideration in this thesis. The clue to how these elements of hauntology are manifested in Miéville’s work is delivered through Derrida’s metaphor: the “specter”. The ghost. A terrifying and haunting figure. A monstrous image. The manner of this extrapolation, achieved through the motifs of fantastical fiction, becomes interesting to explore. As Ben Gabriel highlights ‘In Miéville’s fiction we see the growth through struggle not of the individual but of the structure that provides the condition of possibility for individuals - in a word, the genre’ (Gabriel, 2012). Miéville is interested in social ideas and political systems, and how

individuals exist within them. It is genre fiction that allows him the freedom in which to explore this concept. The motif which represents this freedom, appearing most frequently in his fiction, is the figure of the monster.

0.4 Monsters and Bestiaries as social commentary

The second part of the thesis will consist of a bestiary, monsters being another common factor within Miéville's novels. This methodology represents a divergence from the traditional form of the academic thesis. In terms of exploring Miéville's work this reflects his own experimentation with genre forms. In the same way that Miéville breaks down the recognisable borders of different genres, the structure of this thesis will mirror this by presenting the work as a hybrid construction fusing academic critical analysis with a deliberate application of the imaginative bestiary form. The fusion and hybridity witnessed in the physical bodies of monsters will be replicated through the structure of this thesis, ensuring that central theoretical content is reflected in the construction of the work itself. Fusion and hybridity inform the concepts of landscape being explored here and the application of monsters as motifs to express these concepts. As this thesis will demonstrate, as well as Miéville's monsters being fusion and hybrid creations, so too are the landscapes that are being explored.

Examining Miéville's monsters in this way also encourages close reading of the texts. Each bestiary entry will outline the monster in question, providing a playful, hierarchal system around their individual "Fear Factor". By utilising the bestiary form, there is a serious point made regarding the systematisation of fantasy which Miéville alludes to in his interview with Joan Gordon:

> If you take something like Cthulhu in Lovecraft, for example, it is completely incomprehensible and beyond all human categorization. But in the game *Call of Cthulhu*, you see Cthulhu's "strength," "dexterity," and so on, carefully expressed numerically. There's something superheroically banalifying about that approach to the fantastic. On one level it misses the point entirely, but I must admit it appeals to me in its application of some weirdly misplaced rigor

> onto the fantastic: it's a kind of exaggeratedly precise approach to secondary world creation. (Gordon and Miéville, 2003)

With this quotation in mind, the bestiary presented here will do exactly what Miéville suggests and act as an 'exaggeratedly precise approach' to ascertaining which elements of the three conceptual landscapes Miéville's monsters are representing.

Let us examine the term *monster.* Its etymological roots lie with the Ancient Greeks who used the word *teras*, meaning a warning or portent, to describe any form of abnormal creature. This word gave rise to the term teratology, which as David D. Gilmore states, 'was the biological study of organic malformations, freaks and anomalous births, which attained an exalted status in the Middle Ages' (Gilmore, 2003: 9). As Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle suggest the English word *monster* is 'mutated from the Latin 'monere', to warn, related to 'monare', to show: the monster is something shown, in other words, as a warning' (Bennett and Royle, 2009: 259). All these descriptions highlight two important factors. Firstly, the word *monster* is itself a hybrid, a "Frankenstein's Creature" etymologically *sewn* together from other sources. Secondly, this description of the word highlights the reflexive nature of the monster; it is a commentator and, perhaps more importantly, a prophet. Stephen Asma declares that 'to be a monster is to be an omen' (Asma, 2009: 13). The monster is a social construction, reflecting on the society it was created by.

So why else should we use a bestiary as a tool for reading Miéville's novels? The "Bestiarum Vocabulum", or Bestiary, has existed in the form that is familiar to us since the anonymous, second century, Greek volume entitled *Physiologus*, which 'draws upon folk legends and pseudoscience common to many Eastern Mediterranean cultures' with some of the tales dating 'back to prehistory while others, as far as we know, appear in their classic form for the first time in the pages of *Physiologus* itself' (Curley, 1979: xxi). The text became immensely popular during the Middle Ages. Richard Barber declares that 'perhaps no book, except the Bible, has been so widely diffused among so many

people and for so many centuries as the *Physiologus*' (Barber, 1993: 9). This popularity is undoubtedly explained by the text's smooth transition between simply constructed folklore and mythological narrative, fantastical lore and moral instruction. Its appeal stretched across both the religious and the secular, as a collection of entertaining stories and a tool of religious scripture:

> The bestiaries were able to present a special view of human moral successes and failures by constructing the behaviors of animals and birds in order to reinforce the values important in medieval society. The use of animals instead of humans focused the moralized message more clearly... the fact that animals were employed to teach about the power of God's love and about the dangers of sin suggests a deep concern to turn the audience from its "beastly" ways and back to the behavior which would be best for the soul. (Brown, 2000: 54)

Even in the context of medieval theology, we can clearly ascertain the monster's power as a figure created to "show" and "warn", albeit to produce commentary regarding how we should behave in the context of religious doctrine and morality.

Ambroise Paré's version of the bestiary form, entitled *Des Monstres et prodiges* ('On Monsters and Marvels'), is an interesting text to consider. Paré's medical experience and his knowledge of midwifery play a significant part in his contribution to the history of the bestiary. *Des Monstres* does not approach its subject of "the monstrous" from the allegorical perspective, but rather from scientific curiosity. His title is quite deliberate, with the two separate categories being defined with clarity by Paré:

> Monsters are things that appear outside the course of nature (and are usually signs of some forthcoming misfortune), such as a child who is born with one arm, another who will have two heads, and additional members over and above the ordinary. Marvels are things which happen that are completely against Nature, as when a woman will give birth to a serpent, or to a dog, or some other thing that is totally against nature. (Paré, 1982: 3)

Paré is declaring with this definition that there are two clear ways to approach the

examination of the monstrous, both aligned with the concept of what is naturally occurring. Paré's work demonstrates a transition of teratology from a supernatural to a realist discipline. There are a lot of similarities between Paré's view and Miéville's creations with both authors approaching "the monstrous" through elements of body horror either by evolutionary or genetic means. Paré's significant shift towards scientific enquiry mirrors Miéville's attraction to the monster as a mutation, or change, in the naturally perceived order, both physically and as a social construction. Paré and Miéville's ideologies of the monstrous are closely linked through a consideration of material hybridity, biology and mutation.

Despite this shift from theological to material consideration, the bestiary as a popular form soon became stagnant, monsters struggling to find a place among the burgeoning expansion of scientific understanding and knowledge. Shifting from being an important text for theological teachings, the bestiary becomes a text of the imagination, of fantastical whimsy, albeit still tinged with social commentary and subjective meaning:

> Today, of course, much of the semantic and religious baggage has been lost, and we use the term [bestiary] to imply made-up creatures that are frightening, oversized, and repugnant, but there remains a very powerful sense in which monsters are still signs or portents of something momentous, carrying profound, even spiritual meaning beyond just frightfulness. (Gilmore, 2003: 10)

The metaphorical motif of the monster and the monstrous remains and is still an important inclusion within the modern cultural landscape. Monsters are a symbolic bridge between the fantastic and the real world: 'The monster is born only at this metaphoric crossroads, as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment - of a time, a feeling, and a place... the monstrous body is pure culture. A construct and a projection, the monster exists only to be read' (Cohen, 1996: 4). The monster's dual purpose is to not only entertain – to incite pleasure and enjoyment through horrific reaction – but to also reflect the desires, fears and concerns of society with the freedom granted by fantastical defamiliarisation.

Literature examines closely what it means to be human: 'Literature is, above all, about the human, about what it means to be human, and therefore about the non-human, about what it might mean not to be human' (Bennett and Royle, 2009: 254). The monster is an effective figure in which to embody this debate, confronting and challenging concepts of "self" and "other". Since antiquity there have been myths and tales regarding the creation of "others": artificial human life, animated statues or the crafting of man from clay in the legend of Prometheus, for instance. This has continued, *reanimating* itself with Mary Shelley's Frankenstein's monster[8] and proceeding to infiltrate our creative and cultural consciousness. The core effectiveness of the monster motif lies in its presentation of contradictory states of being, critically challenging the boundaries between "self" and "other". As Margrit Shildrick claims:

> If we know what we are by what we are not, then the other, in its apparent separation and distinction, serves a positive function of securing the boundaries of the self. And yet time and again the monstrous cannot be confined to the place of the other; it is not simply alien, but arouses always the contradictory responses of denial *and* recognition, disgust *and* empathy, exclusion *and* identification. (Shildrick, 2002: 17)

Monsters as constructs and projections of the world in which they exist are a crucial aspect of one form of contemporary bestiary that Miéville has close, personal connections to: in roleplaying games, world-building is key. A dungeon master conducts the game, creating the landscape which the other players (adventurers) traverse as they participate in a quest. With an ever-expanding world it is important that there are creatures which can inhabit these spaces, providing conflicts and obstacles for the adventurers to overcome. This is the role of the dungeon master, who creates the world in which the players interact and must decide which fantastical races and monsters that the players will face. Miéville has a personal understanding of how roleplaying games

[8] It is interesting to consider the reference to Prometheus in the subtitle to Shelley's novel, the theme of creation portrayed in *Frankenstein* mirroring the Greek myth of Prometheus crafting mankind from clay. In the context of the Prometheus myth, mankind is the "other".

work, not only as a player but as a writer. Miéville has repeatedly cited roleplaying game bestiaries as inspiration for his own fiction in interviews:

> I use AD&D-type fascination with teratology in a lot of my books, and I have the original Monster Manual, and the Monster Manual 2, and the Fiend Folio. I still collect role-playing game bestiaries, because I find that kind of fascination with the creation of the monstrous tremendously inspiring, basically. (Anders, 2005)

Miéville's youth as a roleplaying gamer encouraged him to examine the role of monsters within the world-building process. A dungeon master must consider the role of the monster not only in the narrative structure of the game, but also within the wider social construct of the world itself. Roleplaying games intrinsically encourage their players to consider monsters as social signifiers. Therefore, the form of the bestiary, and its inherent focus on monsters as integral to world-building methodologies, makes it a useful form with which to examine the social commentary present in Miéville's monsters. It is a hybrid form - the duality of the monsters reflected in the bestiary's dual purpose as a fantastical text and a social commentary. It is a form which crosses genre boundaries. The bestiary demonstrates the tension that exists between the creative and the political: 'deformed, amoral, unsocialized to the point of inhumanness, the monsters in Western fiction, for many postmodern theorists, symbolizes the outcaste, the revolutionary, the pariah' (Gilmore, 2003: 14). The monster, due to its unclassifiable construction, its resistance to power structures, is an effective motif for political revolution and a physical metaphor for outcasts living on the fringes and boundaries of society.

Monsters are not only able to show us our psychological frailties and sociological failings but also our repulsion of our own physical shell. Noel Carroll describes the physicality of monsters as 'fantastic biologies' which result from the linking of 'different and opposed cultural categories' (Carroll, 1990: 50). This means that monsters are essentially dichotomous constructions exploring and pushing at the boundaries between conflicting distinctions. These fantastic biologies are created through either fission or

fusion. Fission monsters have conflicting identities existing within the same physical body and undergo transition between the two different states, such as shapeshifters, werewolves or doppelgangers. What is important is that only one distinction can exist at any one time. Fusion monsters, however, intertwine these opposing factors into the same body, so that they exist in unison, the contrasting dualities such as the living/dead, flesh/machine, or human/animal being permanently on show. It is this dichotomous construction that makes them appealing motifs.

Most fusion monsters can be considered under the label of “hybrid”. A term often associated with mythological monsters such as the Chimera, the Manticore or the Centaur, hybrid creatures contain body parts of more than one species, quite often incorporating the human body as part of this mix. What makes hybrid/fusion monsters so effective is that their manifestation of what is both natural and *un*natural occurs simultaneously. We perceive each individual biological component for what it is, yet our consciousness is unable to process these elements combined as a whole. The effect is more pronounced if one or more of those elements are human, adding a degree of revulsion into the response. The revulsion is what we can refer to as “body horror,” a realisation of our own decaying and vulnerable biological state; as Stephen Asma states: ‘If we think about the limping, moldering state of most imaginary monsters, we can see our elderly selves in much exaggerated form’ (Asma, 2009: 266). These body horror hybrids remind us how vulnerable our own bodies are and Miéville constantly addresses this concept.

As both Paré and Miéville recognise, it is the hybridity of monsters that make them the ideal motif, especially to explore the three concepts of landscape outlined in this thesis. Hybridity is represented in the monster through the act of fusion. Carroll describes fusion in this context as ‘the construction of creatures that transgress categorical distinctions such as inside/outside, living/dead, insect/human, flesh/machine and so on...The central mark of a fusion figure is the compounding of ordinarily disjoint or conflicting categories in an integral, spatio-temporally unified individual (Carroll, 1990:

43-44). The fusion present in monsters is the splicing together of contradictory elements. The fusion of different forms in the body of the monster means that it can displace definitions and question categorisations of the “self” and the “other”. As Shildrick suggests: ‘the dislocations of hybridity are, then, the surface manifestations of a much deeper uncertainty and vulnerability of the self’ (Shildrick, 2002: 17). This fusion present in the figure of the monster is a fusion of binaries, which allows immediate critical analysis of juxtaposition and opposites to occur:

> The power of monsters is their ability to fuse opposites, to merge contraries, to subvert rules, to overthrow cognitive barriers, moral distinctions, and ontological categories. Monsters overcome the barrier of time itself. Uniting past and present, demonic and divine, guilt and conscience, predator and prey, parent and child, self and alien, our monsters are our innermost selves.” (Gilmore, 2003: 194)

The hybridity of the monster mirrors our own uncertainty and vulnerability as a species. Monsters break free from binaries, breaking down established systems of identity, gender and race from the natural order. The monster as a motif becomes dangerous because of its unclassifiable nature. In short, the monster becomes free to explore the liminal spaces which exist within real and conceptual landscapes:

> The monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions…The horizon where the monsters dwell might well be imagined as the visible edge of the hermeneutic circle itself: the monstrous offers an escape from its hermetic path, an invitation to explore new spirals, new and interconnected methods of perceiving the world. (Cohen, 1996: 6-7)

Miéville’s view of the monster as a motif firmly associates with this perception of its existence on the edges of interpretation. In fact, Miéville realises the multiple interpretations that the hybridity of the monster invites: **‘**Monsters are highly polysemic - you can use them to “mean” almost anything. And the same monster can have four or five contradictory meanings in the same film or book’ (Miéville, 2005b).

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) is another example of hybridity, not only in terms of the construction of the monster itself but also as an example of the hybridity of literary form. This is a novel where the hybridity and fusion present in the monster is also manifested in the novel's structure as a "found narrative" consisting of numerous documents – or "parts" – fused together to construct a whole. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) also shares these qualities. Hybridity is not just confined to the motif of the monster but can also be associated with literary form itself, suggesting an ability to challenge normal conventions, break free from constricted boundaries in imaginative ways.

Not surprisingly, Miéville's view of the monster as a figure takes on political connotations. Miéville comments, for instance, on the monstrous figure of the zombie and its connotations with capitalism, claiming that: 'They're running in scenes of social disorder. They're post-Seattle zombies, post-capitalist zombies - and, although they are clearly the baddies, part of the joy is that you love the zombies!... This is part of a long tradition of seeing capitalism as somehow undead' (Miéville, 2005b). Associating capitalism with undead monsters presents capitalism itself as a monstrous being, sucking the very life and essence from the society in which it is contained. The brainless movements and actions of the zombie also reflect a deeper political commentary regarding the act of following certain ideologies without any thought. Miéville continues, presenting the working class as a monstrous being too:

> But our side is also the monster - the insurgent working classes have always been pictured as a monstrous thing, a many headed insurgent hydra. So somehow everyone concerned with class society conceives its enemies as the monster... I think what's going on here is that there's something about modernity and capitalism that you simply can't think about it in "realistic" ways. Instead it keeps coming back as the "return of the repressed" - you can't conceive of it except in monstrous form. (Miéville, 2005b)

Miéville's projection of capitalism as a monstrous figure highlights the metaphorical potential of the monster to represent elements of modern society. In fact, as Miéville

suggests, the metaphor of the monster allows for the effects of capitalism to be more accessibly presented, interpreted and understood. The effects of capitalism have become so ingrained that only by presenting it in a fantastical context – for instance, through the metaphor of the monster – can we effectively and critically evaluate its effects.

A society which is constantly in flux, socially and technologically, is also constantly disrupting both our internal and external orders, overturning defining limits on the human condition and establishing fresh parameters and interpretations. N. Katherine Hayles defines the *posthuman* subject as 'an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction' (Hayles, 1999: 3). Posthumanism is the examination of the impact of technologies – computer, virtual, digital, cybernetic, biomedical and bioengineering – on our psychological and biological understanding of the human body and the human condition. This movement has gathered traction since the turn of the millennium due to the continual development of technologies. Therefore, posthumanism has a close association to genre fiction, the extrapolation effect of science fiction, fantasy and horror being an ideal framework in which to explore the issues and concerns inherent in the movement. Since posthumanism is concerned with the questioning of ontological boundaries, examining the fusion of opposing parts such as the biological and the machine, then the motif of the monster and monstrosity becomes a useful metaphorical tool for communicating posthuman ideals. Posthumanism and the motif of the monster share the common methodology of questioning and assessing established binaries. In the same way that the monster scratches at the binary of "self" versus "other", posthumanism explores the binary of "human" and "technological" symbiosis.[9]

The figure of the cyborg is a manifestation of the relationship between the monster and the posthuman. A cyborg is a biological entity which has been augmented

[9] As well as N. Katherine Hayles, other eminent posthuman scholars include Donna Haraway, Cary Wolfe, Rosi Braidotti, Elaine Graham, Bruno Latour and Neil Badminton.

with technology in some way. This augmentation can be subtle, such as medical implants, or major, such as artificial limbs or cybernetic bodies. This dualism 'confounds the dichotomy between natural and unnatural, made and born' (Hayles, 1993: 321-322) in a similar fashion to the monster. In fact, the cyborg is often por trayed as a monstrous figure that runs amok, 'it really turns on the fear we have that something we control will twist around and start to control us' (Asma, 2009: 257). An early example of a fictional cyborg is Frankenstein's Monster, a creature created from the biological material of corpses through the advancement of science and technology. Frankenstein's Monster is monstrous not only because of its grotesque appearance, but because it was 'not born, but *created*' (Hayles, 1993, 321-2, original emphasis). The extrapolation of common cyborg practices, such as medical technology, into killer biological-machine hybrids demonstrates that the monster motif is a powerful tool even in contemporary cultural theory. Indeed, Stephen T. Asma's prediction of humanity's progression is "monstrous" in tone, our future bodies become 'accessorized with hardware and software improvements, our minds ready for uploading and downloading. Our intellectual aspirations will no longer be hindered by the wet sacks we currently call home' (Asma, 2009: 262).

Some of Miéville's monsters are posthuman creations, merging biological and technological agents in new, monstrous forms to explore the influence that technology is having on the human condition. The Remades are the clearest example of this in action: human criminals who are augmented with other biological or technological components, through the brutal techno-medical procedure of "remaking", as a form of penal punishment. In many cases, these augmentations physically represent their crimes. Other Miéville creations are also posthuman in nature, such as The Construct Council from *Perdido Street Station*, a sentient entity constructed of discarded machinery which takes the binary of biological and machine symbiosis to a ghastly, new dimension.[10]

[10] The posthuman elements of both the Remade and The Construct Council will be explored in their associated bestiary entries in chapter five.

As we can see, monsters are useful for they ‘are deeply disturbing; neither good nor evil, inside nor outside, not self or other. On the contrary, they are always liminal, refusing to stay in place, transgressive and informative.’ (Shildrick, 2002:4). The monster forms and changes in response to the social orders in which it is created or exists. As a result, it always exists within the liminal spaces in society, simultaneously within and removed, reflecting the society in which we exist back at us. Just as Miéville’s novels are “products” of the times in which he writes – reflecting social and political concerns which surround him – so too are the monsters within those novels “products” of the times in which they exist. In this context, we can interpret the monster as a methodology for expressing Marxist literary theory within Miéville’s novels. The monster is a narrative device which Miéville can use to mould the authorial intent of his political viewpoints into creative exploration of political doctrine. The monster allows Miéville to extrapolate his political views to the extreme in a fictional, fantastical context.

These views of the monster as a figure for metaphor and commentary align well with the examination of “landscapes” within this study. In the first two chapters exploring genre landscapes the concept of hybridity is important when considering Miéville’s playful application of genre motifs and techniques. Just as the monster is a figure of mutation and hybridity, breaking down recognisable boundaries and fusing opposing elements together into new forms, so too is Miéville’s approach to genre fiction. Miéville chooses to approach genre in a “monstrous” way: embracing the hybrid construction of genre forms in the same way that the monster is an amalgamation of physical hybridity.

In terms of urban landscapes, Miéville represents them in a monstrous fashion, either as material or psychological monsters hidden within the physical architecture (such as in the short stories “Details” and “Foundation”), or as cities anthropomorphised as monstrous beings to produce atmosphere and effect, to demonstrate the rapid growth of urbanisation as a monstrous entity (see Miéville’s depiction of New Crobuzon in the Bas-Lag novels, or the Via Ferae in the short story “Reports on Certain Events in London”).

Miéville's urban landscapes are truly monstrous, filled with hybridity and shifting borders of perception.

Finally, in terms of social landscapes, the monsters present in Miéville's novels shift into their original role as prophets: showing, warning and questioning aspects of modern society extrapolated to extremes. Miéville's monsters become politicised figures, emblems of capitalism, instigators of revolution, demonstrating the hybridity and chaos of our contemporary moment. Creations such as the Remade and the Slake Moths are not only monstrous creations but are also metaphors for capitalist society. They provide us with lessons and opinions regarding law and justice. Monsters become conduits for social commentary.

This thesis positions Miéville as a highly political writer who uses elements of the fantastic in his fiction as a device to critique contemporary social issues. The most important of those fantastical elements at his disposal are the monsters which exist in a unique liminal space. Miéville uses the monster as a motif to explore the human, the non-human, the hybrid, the alien and the "other", to engage with the generic, social and political make-up of these classifications as they are defined in the twenty-first century. Miéville critically explores how the social and political landscapes of the contemporary moment are ones of hybridity, fusion and monstrosity. Neil Gaiman describes China Miéville's work as 'Fiction for the New Century'.[11] Through critically examining the conceptual landscapes in Miéville's work and showing how his monstrous creations help to elucidate these concepts this study will demonstrate how Miéville successfully utilises fantastic fiction as a methodology for making his readers consider their place in this late-capitalist social structure of the early twenty-first century.

[11] This quotation from Gaiman forms part of the marketing material on the cover of *The City & The City* (Miéville, 2009b).

Chapter One:

China Miéville and the Landscapes of Genre Fictions

> JONES: Did I read somewhere that you wanted to do a book in every genre?
>
> MIÉVILLE: What happened there was that that was a throwaway comment I made in an interview some years ago...The more I thought about it the more I thought, "Yeah, that's a really good idea. I should probably do that." It was an off-the-cuff thing, but it's an off-the-cuff thing that has a certain truth and resonance. (Jones, 2012)

Miéville himself has been *mis*quoted as saying that he would like to 'write a novel in every genre' and each novel he has written does inhabit a different landscape of genre fiction. Miéville's ability to shift seamlessly between different tropes and themes deliberately reflects the growing category-splicing happening in early twenty-first century genre fiction texts as examined by contemporary genre theory scholars such as Gary K. Wolfe and John Rieder.

Miéville's "Bas-Lag" books contain tropes from a wide variety of genres. Each novel in the trilogy inhabits a different genre landscape: *Perdido Street Station* (2000), with the mind-eating slake-moths, is a monster-orientated horror novel; *The Scar* (2002), with its floating pirate city and colossal sea monsters, conjures up comparisons with the maritime adventure novels of Jules Verne; whereas *Iron Council* (2004) contains the key elements of the western genre, with dusty plains-travellers, railroads and gunfights. However, the whole trilogy is connected through the fantastical elements of Miéville's secondary world creation Bas-Lag, as well as the astute real-world observations regarding science, socio-political viewpoints, religion, justice and revolution. With all these themes and ideas appearing together, it is no wonder that classifying Miéville's

work proves so difficult. His work is constantly questioning genre boundaries to ascertain whether specific genre categories are breaking down or are required at all.

To support this, we must first look at genre theory itself. Genre is a term that instantly conjures images and connotations which are subjective to the individual reader. However, certain tropes are recognisable as belonging *indisputably* to certain genres. Therefore, a basic interpretation of genre *must* first focus on classification of structural properties.

John Frow describes genre as ‘a matter of discrimination and taxonomy: of organising things into recognisable classes’ (Frow, 2007: 51). The important word in Frow’s initial definition is ‘recognisable’ and this institutionalisation is the key element of genre. In other words, specific genres contain specific elements, or, as genre theorist Tzvetan Todorov claims in his work *Genres in Discourse* (1978): ‘a genre, whether literary or not, is nothing more than the codification of discursive properties’ (Todorov, 1990: 17-18). The act of classifying genres is the act of identifying characteristics within a text, to produce a recognisable code. Individual genres can be interpreted as being their *own conceptual landscapes*: each has their own defining combination of tangible features. Todorov goes further to suggest that these ‘discursive properties’ – the obligatory, structural elements – inevitably become institutionalised. The author writes within an existing generic system, even if they are opposed to those discursive properties which present themselves. On the other side of the writer-reader dynamic, the reader operates within the function of the genre in question and this process too becomes institutionalised through exposure from various sources including the publishing industry, reviews, criticism, education and hearsay. People engaged with genre are ruled by the traditions, history and development of that genre: expectation plays an important role. As Robert Eaglestone declares: ‘a science fiction novel *without one aspect* of science is...just a novel’ (Eaglestone, 2013: 36, original emphasis). To move away from, or blur, those expectations is to challenge the concept of genre categorisation, to create porous and permeable genres able to evaporate or merge.

Another method of institutionalising genre is through commercialism - the ability to classify something is vital in order to sell it to the correct market. However, this does allow writers such as Miéville to challenge definition and create something fresh and exciting. For Miéville, genre fiction is a demanding and challenging field which gives him freedom to be creative, to generate exciting, stimulating and thoughtful work. As he states in interview: 'There's simultaneously something rigorous and something playful in genre. It's about the positing of something impossible—whether not-yet-possible or never-possible—and then taking that impossibility and granting it its own terms and systematicity' (Gordon, 2003). Miéville uses genre motifs with freedom and disregard for association and convention. Critics have created new categories in which Miéville can inhabit: for example, terms such as "New Weird" and "salvage-punk" - both deriving from existing genre categories.[12] The result is that when one comes to try and accurately categorise his work, existing genre and sub-genre categories suddenly seem unsuitable, inviting you to create new alternatives. For readers of genre fiction, this deliberate pushing of boundaries and the expectations that they bring can be a fine line between satisfaction, puzzlement and infuriation. This, however, is a challenge that Miéville embraces claiming that 'in an ideal world you'd hope you're pushing readers enjoyably out of their comfort zones with all sorts of things' (SkellieScar, 2012: 5). What Miéville highlights is how genre expectations can be subverted. This deliberate breakdown of genre continues throughout his career so far. There is not a single novel by Miéville that is easy to categorise. For example, *The City & The City* (2009) contains elements of crime fiction, science fiction and political thriller. *Railsea* (2012) simultaneously pays homage to maritime adventures as well as fantasy, whilst being a novel aimed at young adult readers. *Embassytown* (2011), although clearly a science fiction novel, also displays elements of political thriller too. It is not that these elements just appear next to

[12] M. John Harrison and Jeff VanderMeer have both discussed China Miéville's work as an example of "New Weird" (see VanderMeer, Ann and VanderMeer, Jeff (eds.) 2009) and, upon publication, *Railsea* (2013) was described as "salvage-punk" in several reviews (see SkellieScar, 2012, as an example).

each other on the page in Miéville's novels. It is more to do with an intrinsic connection between these elements, a hybrid fusion of categories so that these novels become something else. Miéville continues to test the boundaries between genres, existing in the liminal and interstitial spaces between them.

It is within fantasy and science fiction that Miéville's work is generally categorised, so consideration of his role as a science fiction and fantasy writer is important. His work seems to fit most easily into these categories, using secondary world motifs to imaginatively explore the structures and hierarchies of modern, capitalist societies. However, science fiction, fantasy and horror are such broad genres to inhabit that deeper investigation needs to take place to explore how these genres' protocols manifest in his work. It is therefore important to examine how Miéville deliberately stretches our concepts of genre boundaries, hybridising them, encouraging readers to question what they perceive genre fictions to be.

On Tuesday 21st August 2012, Miéville delivered a significant closing keynote speech at the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference, talking passionately and thoughtfully about the future of the novel in cultural, political and digital terms. This was a bold choice due to the message that Miéville communicated – the need for the landscape of literature to interact with advances in technology. His speech was met with mixed reaction.[13] Miéville praises the efforts of the internet in proving that audiences for fiction stretch beyond those found in bookshops and academia. Although praising the work of several websites, he speaks of two in particular: the avant-garde archive *Ubuweb* (which examines and addresses the issues surrounding distribution of significant academic material) and *Weird Fiction Review* – firmly rooted in genre but examining the

[13] The author Blake Morrison labelled his vision 'naïve, and based on what I would call dot-communism, which is a spurious leftism based on collectivity, that we are all heading towards a world where information will be shared'. There was also challenge of Miéville's future online utopia of texts being shared and altered by future readers, picking up on his opinion that the original text will always still be there and will not be stolen. The poet John Burnside responded to this, commenting: 'You say that the text will always be there. I don't trust the state, big companies and religious nuts not to try to erase the text and replace it with their version' (Higgins, 2012). Having the text open does promote collectiveness but this still must be monitored for misuse.

work of overlooked literary authors, such as the Nigerian writer Amos Tutuola.

For Miéville, the perceived barriers that exist between literary fiction and genre fiction are evaporating - literary fiction and genre can inhabit the same space. Literary fiction itself can be expressed as a genre too, with specific aesthetics, style and language use acting as defining characteristics. Indeed, Miéville alludes to the genre-orientated traits that contemporary literature possesses; its distinct form and qualities. The label of "litfic" is a reality and has specific characteristics that Miéville labels 'recognition over estrangement' (Miéville, 2012b: 41).

Miéville's speech is not directly focused on genre, as one might expect from his creative output. At one point he declares, self-deprecatingly, that 'nerd-whines are boring' (Miéville, 2012b: 42). However, it is impossible to escape the influence of fantastical genre fictions on the landscape of contemporary publishing. Fantastical worlds and plot elements – previously exclusive traits of genre fiction – are now commonplace in the novels of "literary prize" winning authors, such as Kazuo Ishiguro and Cormac McCarthy. As Gary K. Wolfe suggests: '"Fantasy is evaporating" ... I meant to suggest not that the genre was in a state of collapse, but quite the opposite: that it had grown so diverse and ubiquitous that it seemed an essential part of the fabric of popular culture - infiltrating other genres, the literary mainstream... Fantasy, in other words, was in the air, like a mist' (Wolfe, 2011: 49). Despite this the English-novel has been, and continues to be, dominated by realism.

Miéville's speech and his place within the landscape of genre fictions cannot be properly discussed without examining what he is, or is not, achieving within this landscape. In other words: does his work belong to a specific genre category? By exploring how Miéville interacts with individual genres and their recognisable traits we can ascertain whether he is most suitably situated within a specific genre category and, ultimately, whether this is important or not.

1.1 China Miéville and Fantasy

Miéville's secondary world settings and fantastical races ally well with the traditional fantasy novels of such authors as C.S Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien and more contemporary examples such as David Eddings, Robert Jordan, Terry Brooks or George R. R. Martin. Yet when we mention these writers, we are talking about epic fantasy stories of faery, swords and heroes. This is not what Miéville's work is about. Instead, we need to consider fantasy in another way.

Rosemary Jackson defines fantasy as 'the "real" under scrutiny', that it is representative of a 're-placed and dis-located' version of the world which 'is neither entirely "real" (object), nor entirely "unreal" (image), but is located somewhere indeterminately between the two' (Jackson, 1981: 19). As Jackson points out, even the etymological roots of the word "fantastic" highlight a glaring ambiguity; the Latin word *phantasticus*, meaning to make visible or manifest (Jackson, 1981: 13), an interesting similarity to the earlier etymological definition of the word *monstere* - to "show" or "warn". This translation of the word demonstrates how the fantastic acts as a conduit to make the unthinkable a reality, to transform the unreal into something tangible, something to be presented before our eyes. The fantastical stories examining ghosts and the afterlife reflect this. They create a feeling of foreboding and uncertainty manifested by our unconscious wariness of anything we do not understand. They transfer the concept of the afterlife into something real and tangible, the figure of the ghost. For Jackson, fantasy relates to narratives that portray this liminal quality.

Brian Attebery has developed a definition of fantasy too, which includes but also develops Jackson's thoughts. In *Strategies of Fantasy* (1992), he attempts to unpick the characteristics of fantasy fiction, concluding that 'It is a form that makes use of both the fantastic mode, to produce the impossibilities, and the mimetic, to reproduce the familiar' (Attebery, 1992: 16). Successful fantasy uses this element of the unreal to help us see things in a new way. However, where Jackson and Attebery differ is that Jackson's

definition of fantasy - as texts that explore the unreal and the forbidden - excludes and limits texts that, in the twenty-first century, are strongly associated with the fantasy genre. She concludes that such authors as Tolkien and Le Guin 'belong to that realm of fantasy which is more properly defined as faery, or romance literature' (Jackson, 1981: 9). Attebery proposes that we view fantasy as a collective of texts that share common narrative and thematic tropes, focused around the unreal. In the centre are the texts easily recognisable as belonging to the genre but it is the outer fringes which are more interesting, with texts that contain only a few fantasy tropes or construct these tropes in a questionable manner. What Attebery is applying here is an example of "fuzzy-set" theory, which suggests that genres are 'defined not by boundaries but by a center' (Attebery, 1992: 12). Describing genres in this manner, with texts exhibiting strong genre motifs at the centre of a decreasingly-formulaic outer zone, is a useful tool when it comes to defining texts. It allows texts to be compared easily and for problematic texts with blurred genre traits to be brought into the collective.

Miéville's work fits into both Jackson and Attebery's definitions of the fantasy genre. His work strikes a fine balance between the real and the unreal - either through the addition of unreal elements to a real-life recognisable setting or the transference of real-world politics and social issues onto a secondary world setting. Although an admirer of Tolkien's world creation – and the way he made it central to the project of fantasy literature – Miéville has been critical of Tolkien's influence. Tolkien suggests that the highest function in fantasy is a movement towards a consolatory happy ending, redemption, or what he labels in "On Fairy Stories" as "eucatastrophe". Miéville perceives Tolkien's view as being problematic, resulting in 'a theory of fantasy in which consolation is a matter of *policy'* (Newsinger, 2000: 4). To Miéville, Tolkien's influence is that 'he's *defined* fantasy as literature which mollycoddles the reader rather than challenging them' (Newsinger, 2000: 4). Miéville's work directly opposes Tolkien's theory of consolation, aligning itself more with Rosemary Jackson's critical approach and, in addition, the work of Mervyn Peake, author of the *Gormenghast* trilogy - which, similarly to Miéville,

challenges genre expectations. What makes this challenge of genre expectations politically engaging is that it encourages the reader or audience to challenge other boundaries and structures, to break the rules and question social and political structures. Miéville admires Peake's ability as both a political and fantastical writer who 'doesn't fit neatly into the [fantasy] genre - though he's revered by fantasy fans - and didn't have the sense of writing in genre tradition, unlike most fantasy writers. He's inside and outside fantasy at the same time' (Newsinger, 2000: 4). Miéville strives to emulate this himself. Despite Miéville's views regarding Tolkienesque popular fantasy, it is this emulation of Peake that aligns Miéville with Attebery's view of fantasy. Miéville is more concerned with the outer reaches of Attebery's fuzzy set of fantasy texts. For him, the boundaries of fantasy are fluid and easily broken down.

Miéville's work is filled with references to mythology, folklore and other traditional tales of a fantastical nature. Take, for instance, the races that inhabit Bas-Lag: the Khepri are named after an Egyptian god, the Garuda are taken from Hindu mythology and the frog-like Vodyanoi are present in Russian folklore. Miéville is concerned with combining elements from different cultures and literatures into a cohesive form that is relevant for a twenty-first century readership. He can fuse literary and mythological references with modern and pop culture, such as the update of the Pied Piper myth in *King Rat* (1998). Attebery points out the historical, connective thread between fantasy and myth by focusing on their etymological origins: 'story (*mythos*) and vision (*phantasia*)' (Attebery, 2014: 9). He continues to examine the work of fantasy writers as being strictly in the realm of a *phantasia* vision, looking at how 'writers use fantasy to reframe myth: to construct new ways of looking at traditional stories and beliefs' (Attebery, 2014: 2-3). Miéville adopts this view of fantasy fiction, using secondary world-building as a methodology for not only introducing a modern readership to traditional mythologies but also utilising these fantastical creations as socio-political metaphor, as will be seen in the bestiary entries later in this thesis.

A more recent evaluation of the fantasy genre is Farah Mendlesohn's *Rhetorics*

of Fantasy (2008). Even though she adopts Attebery's fuzzy set theory, Mendlesohn abandons the need to classify the genre and instead focuses on what she defines as the four modes of fantasy literature. What Mendlesohn's theory of modes is concerned with is how the unreal fantastical elements enter a text and the perspectives required for building the worlds depicted. She lists her four modes as: the Portal-Quest Fantasy; the Immersive Fantasy; the Intrusion Fantasy and the Liminal Fantasy; as well as including a sneaky acknowledgement of 'The Irregulars' which subvert the genre.

The *Portal-Quest Fantasy* is perhaps the most easily recognisable of Mendlesohn's four modes. Texts in this mode make use of the common doorway motif - the secondary world is entered through a portal of some description; the elements of fantasy are learnt and acquired through a point of entry. The quest narrative is included here too as the protagonist leaves the comfortable surroundings of their normal existence and enters a new, unfamiliar territory. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) are famous examples of this type. It is interesting that these examples given by Mendlesohn are both children's novels - Miéville's two novels aimed at young adults also firmly fit within this category. *Un Lun Dun* (2008) depicts a mirrored version of London existing through portals which appear in imaginative locations, such as at the top of a bookcase in a library. *Railsea* (2013) depicts a desert world criss-crossed by endless railways with a rumoured "portal" consisting of a single track to a legendary, hallowed land.

The *Immersive Fantasy* invites the reader to share the world depicted and the assumptions of that world. The fantastic is presented as normality for both the characters within the text and the reader themselves; no explanatory narrative is provided. The fantasy is assumed throughout and, as a result, soon appears as reality. One example of this immersion fantasy type is Gregory Maguire's novel *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* (1995) which re-tells the familiar story of *The Wizard of Oz* from a different perspective. In *Wicked*, as Mendlesohn highlights, Oz is 'told as if the world is known to us: the plates of saffron cream at wakes are *of course* what one does,

just as social hierarchies are racial, and Animals are not the same as animals' (Mendlesohn, 2008: 100).

The *Intrusion Fantasy* portrays the fantastical elements as an "invading chaos" upon a normal world. At its core is the assumption that predictability returns when the fantastical elements dissipate, although the world may be significantly changed in some way. The character of Dracula is a good example of this intrusion of the fantastic on the status quo (Mendlesohn, 2008: 128).

The *Liminal Fantasy* is the least common of Mendlesohn's modes and concerns narratives of being on the border between the normal and the fantastic and choosing not to cross. The result is quite often that the 'fantastic leaks back through the portal' and that 'the tone of the liminal fantasy could be described as blasé... while liminal fantasy casualizes the fantastic with the experience of the protagonist, it estranges the reader' (see Mendlesohn, 2008: xxiii - xxiv). Mendlesohn cites Hope Mirlees' 1926 work *Lud-in-the-Mist* – a novel set in the early modern rather than medieval period and concerned with faeries and farmers rather than elves and princesses – as a good example of this type, offering 'a quite different model of fantasy than the grandeur of Tolkien' (Mendlesohn, 2008: 184). Mendlesohn's approach is an interesting one - circumnavigating the problems of genre classification, even within one specific genre category, focusing instead on the structure of the narratives concerned.[14]

Once again, this approach suits Miéville's ability to cross-inhabit different genre landscapes. Instead of using conventional genre classification, his work is most effectively categorised by Mendlesohn's mode of Immersive Fantasy. In all of his works we are introduced to his world with little or no explanation: insect-headed humanoids and gigantic cactus-men exist side by side with more accepted races in *Perdido Street*

[14] This is a similar approach to Christopher Booker's *Seven Basic Plots* (2004) which tries organising texts not by commercial factors of genre but by common plot elements across all forms of narratives. Both Mendlesohn and Booker have realised the problems associated with genre classification and have tried to approach the idea of categorisation in another way.

Station, The Scar and *Iron Council;* the immersive concept of two cities existing in the same space is immediately introduced to the reader in *The City & The City*; the ocean existing as an inhabitant of a semi-detached house in London is witnessed without question in *Kraken* (2010). Since these are normal occurrences to Miéville's protagonists (or at least some of his principal characters) they become normal to us. We accept them without question and Miéville does not provide any explanation. More importantly, none is required. We have already accepted the world that is being portrayed. Therefore, Miéville's work is successful fantasy - we do not enter it, but are assumed to be a part of it, privy to the social and political systems of the world in question. We are not observers, we are *citizens*. Due to the immersion of Miéville's fantasy elements, his texts can produce a feeling of what we could call *familiar otherness*; the capacity to view what would be strange to us as normal and matter-of-fact. The use of such words as 'thaumaturgy' (Miéville, 2000: 81), 'unsaw' (Miéville, 2009b: 21), and 'Remade' (Miéville, 2004: 11) in Miéville's novels challenges our perception of their linguistic meaning and definitions. Within the fictional context of the novel these words appear "normal", yet the reader knows that they are actually being used in an "unfamiliar" context when considering real conversation. These words become uncanny.[15] At the same time, this uncanny context for such words highlights to the reader that this world Miéville describes is different to our own, even if in a subtle way.

Despite this immersive dexterity, we are still unable to avoid the sword-and-sorcery connotations associated with "fantasy fiction" in the twenty-first century. What literary critics, such as Jackson and Attebery, would recognise as fantasy is different to how the genre is perceived now. Miéville's work does not sit side-by-side with sword-and-sorcery tales and therefore, the sole classification of his work as fantasy becomes problematic despite the immersive elements that it possesses. As a novelist concerned with contemporary ideas, Miéville's work does lean towards science fiction, a genre

[15] The term "uncanny" and how Miéville utilises this effect is explored later in this chapter.

primarily concerned with the examination of the world around us and, as Hugo Gernsback defined, the 'prophetic vision' of how it may develop in the future.[16]

1.2 China Miéville and Science Fiction

Science fiction is one of the most popular forms of genre fiction. However, the genre has become redefined to encompass a whole selection of different modes of storytelling. It is a genre that is under constant reinvention and reinterpretation. Its name alludes to this: as science expands and develops then so do new strands, or sub-genres, of science fiction. Out of all the genres that exist, science fiction is the one that can be most easily sub-categorised. This is what makes the science fiction genre such an appealing one for writers such as Miéville to explore.

Just consider all the different elements that science fiction stories now incorporate – spaceships, aliens, time-travel, quantum physics, mind control, telekinesis, robots, cyborgs and sentient machines, virtual reality – the exploration and development of technology results in new themes and ideas. This is the defining characteristic of science fiction and what makes it different from fantasy. James Gunn claims that: 'fantasy takes place in a world in which the rules of everyday experience do not apply, and science fiction in the world of everyday experience extended' (Gunn and Candelaria, 2005: 9). Science fiction, no matter how far in the future it projects, has its grounding in the rules and scientific laws of our own natural world. Even though science fiction has been cautiously considered by literary critics, some academics have suggested that it does in fact have its roots in the second wave of Gothic literature of the nineteenth century. In the wake of technological advancement due to railways and steam technology, the popular form of Gothic Literature evolved to accommodate the effects

[16] There is much debate about when science fiction began. In the April 1926 issue of "Amazing Stories", the magazine's editor, Hugo Gernsback, used the term 'scientifiction' to describe 'a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision'**.** Gernsback's description is one of the 'sixteen separate definitions' which make up John Clute and Peter Nicholls' entry on 'Definitions of SF' in their *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (see Adam Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction*, 2).

these changes had on the reader's psyche. Popular motifs from Gothic fiction began to morph into new forms. As Brian W. Aldiss and David Wingrove declare in the introduction to their book *Trillion Year Spree*, 'the archetypal figures of cruel father and seducing monk were transformed into those of scientist and alien' (Aldiss and Wingrove, 1986: 16).

The most famous example from this period is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), a novel championed by Aldiss and Wingrove as being one of the first examples of what would become the science fiction novel.[17] The mad scientist and the monster take centre stage and the fantastical elements of the story all explore the burgeoning science of the period and what effects these developments would have on the philosophical question of what it means to be human. Mary Shelley's novel is interesting to consider in terms of Miéville's own approach to genre categories. *Frankenstein* is not only a precursor of modern science fiction but is also a horror story and a love story, as well as a Gothic novel. As Graham Allen highlights '*Frankenstein*, through this clash of generic forms… radically disrupts a series of oppositions upon which human beings tend to establish their sense of reason, logic and order: the rational and irrational, the real and the fantastic, the plausible and the implausible, fact and fiction, the empirical and experiential against the imaginative and immaterial' (Allen, 2008, 32). Miéville emulates Mary Shelley's playful ability to splice genres together, ignoring the boundaries which exist between them and creating oppositions and dichotomies for his readers to consider.

This idea of engagement with new ideas is explored by Darko Suvin in *The Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979), one of the seminal volumes of science fiction theory. By utilising the theories of destabilisation and estrangement posited by the Russian Formalists, Suvin can establish a pattern of non-naturalistic storytelling

[17] Brian W. Aldiss and David Wingrove, in their book *Trillion Year Spree*, identify not only Gothic fiction as the birthplace of science fiction but also Mary Shelley as 'the author whose work marks her out as the first science fiction writer' (Aldiss and Wingrove, 1986:25). They also highlight the academic argument against this declaration, referring to David Ketterer's response that '*Frankenstein* cannot be SF since SF was not a category in 1816. Nor, in 1816 did the word scientist exist: yet the world has adopted Frankenstein as the model of the irresponsible scientist' (Aldiss and Wingrove, 1986: 51).

throughout the history of literature. Formalism approached the concept of “literary language” as being distinguishable from other forms of discourse because: ‘it ‘deformed’ ordinary language in various ways … because of this estrangement, the everyday world was also suddenly made unfamiliar … By having to grapple with language in a more strenuous, self-conscious way than usual, the world which that language contains is vividly renewed’ (Eagleton, 1996: 3). The Russian Formalists also understood that language was constructed from a wide range of complex discourses that are all affected by social and chronological context, or ‘it was estranging only against a certain normative linguistic background, and if this altered then the writing might cease to be perceptible as literary’ (Eagleton, 2002: 5). The estrangement in literary fiction is an aesthetic, emotional and stylistic function which can be influenced and interpreted across different historical periods and social contexts.

Suvin’s argument for science fiction is that it has existed in the form of myth and fantasy since the classical era, that ‘although it shares with myth, fantasy, fairy-tale, and pastoral an opposition to naturalistic or empiricist literary genres, it differs very significantly in approach and social function...I will argue for an understanding of SF as the *literature of cognitive estrangement*’ (Suvin, 1979: 3-4, original emphasis).

Suvin’s definition of science fiction as ‘cognitive estrangement’ is slightly different to the interpretation of estrangement in a formalist context. In terms of “literary style” then the formalist definition still stands, with some science fiction novels utilising the same style of estranging language as we witness in literary fiction. More importantly, the *cognitive estrangement* in science fiction is an estrangement of cerebral ideas, most commonly portrayed through the device of extrapolation. Science fiction’s estrangement is, principally, a world-building device: the focus of science fiction is always to encourage new ways of discussing society and the human condition that challenge the status quo. Therefore, science fiction is a genre for the rationalist, hence the heavy presence of scientific motifs. However, technology, for Suvin, is not the defining characteristic of science fiction. It is merely a conduit through which cognitive estrangement successfully

happens. Our inevitable scientific curiosity continues to encourage us to challenge our normality.

Miéville's story "The Rope of the World" is a fine example of this effect of cognitive estrangement. The story extrapolates to the extreme mankind's skill as engineers, imagining "space elevators" stretching far into the atmosphere, built as docking stations for space travel. Miéville imagines the fate of the communities which inhabit these unimaginable spokes straining free from the confinement of planet Earth, generations of families who have never set foot on the ground. In this story we not only witness the estrangement of Formalism, with Miéville adopting a literary style of language as defined above – 'deformed' and 'self-conscious' – but also a science-fictional estrangement through the extrapolation of current engineering capabilities to an extreme:

> Ranging from the size of city blocks to the silkiest skyscraper thin, the tracks and reinforced columns, the unspeakable tons of matter, studded with windows, extrusions of opaque purpose, satellite dishes, cables and airlocks, rose and kept going. Up through the measly few kilometres of breathable air; past the Kármán line where space is; past the space stations orbiting at their paltry three, four hundred kilometres; into the permanent night, adding the glimmers from their speck-windows to the light pollution. (Miéville, 2015a: 122)

This mixture of estrangement of form and estrangement of cognition invites the reader to imagine something extremely different to their recognisable status quo.

A similar estrangement is also witnessed in the short story "Covehithe", with the imaginative depiction of oil rigs as living entities, coming ashore like turtles to lay their eggs:

> The metal was twisted. Off-true and angular like a skew-whiff crane, resisting collapse…The towerwork was on a platform, In the glow of the thing's own flame they saw edificial flanks, the concrete and rust of them, the iron of the pylon barnacled, shaggy with benthic growth now lank gelatinous bunting. (Miéville, 2015a: 341)

Once again, this central premise challenges and destabilises our standard cognitive

understanding, as well as exploring estrangement of language on a formal level. In fact, all Miéville's novels and a large majority of his short stories utilise this dual function of estrangement, experimenting with forms of language and estranging familiar cognitive concepts such as technology, science and biology.

Suvin's definition is a productive one because it signifies that science fiction is not limited to stories of technology and science but is a form that wants to explore the development of the human condition, including social and political structures. However, where it differs is that science fiction estranges itself from the here and now in order to extrapolate these thoughts about human society effectively, whereas literary fiction is concerned with a more grounded realism. Miéville's novels certainly seem to fit into the categorisation of cognitive estrangement: the presence of rational, scientific ideas demonstrates that Miéville is aware of this defining facet of science fiction. His work is focused on ideas and philosophies that, at first glance, appear fantastical but upon closer examination reveal something fundamentally important about our own society and the technology we are developing. Good science fiction extrapolates ideas, expanding and projecting into unknown scenarios and structures to not only construct an image of a possible society but reflect present trends and ideologies back at us too.

Miéville chooses to deliberately destabilise recognisable contexts within his novels so that the reader notices this estrangement and questions it, therefore, by association questioning their own real social structures. *The City & The City* depicts a very recognisable urban scenario with contrasting zones, social laws and rules. However, the estrangement of the "dual city" premise of Besźel and Ul Qoma actively engages the reader in political thought regarding border control and indoctrinated populations. In *Embassytown* we witness not only an estrangement of language in a formalist sense but also the estrangement of language in a *cognitive* sense - as a central theme of the novel. The concept and presentation of the dual-voiced Ambassadors in *Embassytown* is a strong destabilising effect; the strength of this concept comes from its estranging power and juxtaposition from the normal reception of language. Miéville

changes the focus of cognitive estrangement in the context of science fiction. Whereas, historically, this focus of estrangement was on what Suvin referred to as the *novum* – the scientific or technological innovation, connected plausibly to our reality, that encourages the estrangement – Miéville, although still occasionally embracing novums, chooses to apply his cognitive estrangement through concepts more political, philosophical or linguistic in nature.

Cognitive estrangement has become the key defining factor of science fiction and is also the genre's self-imposed problem. The sub-genres created by the saturation of science fiction have become more dominant and science fiction as a category now, in the twenty-first century, is used more effectively in describing films and TV shows than it is literary texts. As Mark Bould and Sherryl Vint highlight:

> SF is increasingly a generic label for media other than print, and for many now their first or formative experience of SF will be in film, television, or games. Often the most profitable strategy for such media is to try and reach the widest audience possible, leading to the creation of texts to which various generic labels can be attached as different elements are foregrounded'. (Bould and Vint, 2009: 50)

The contemporary science fiction novel needs further sub-categorisation to be accurately identified. No longer is a novel a "science fiction novel"; it would be described more precisely as a "space opera", or an "alternative history" or a "cyberpunk" novel. In other words, science fiction has slipped to be a mere category within a commercial power-structure. The science fiction writer Bruce Sterling picked up on this change, confirming that a category is distinct from a genre, which is 'a spectrum of work united by an inner identity; a coherent aesthetic, a set of conceptual guidelines, an ideology if you will' (Sterling, 1989). Due to the vast sub-categorisation of science fiction it is impossible to declare that all science fiction novels share the same ideology and conceptual guidelines. They clearly do not. Yet novels found within sub-genres do share similar ideologies. Science fiction has been refined by its own popularity and replaced by the

sub-genres it created.

This is not necessarily a bad thing. The embracing of science fiction tropes by contemporary “literary” authors suggests that the barriers between genre and literary fiction are evaporating. However, some degree of literary hierarchy still exists. The most famous example of this must be Margaret Atwood’s comments regarding science fiction in an exchange with Ursula K Le Guin. In her 2009 *Guardian* article review of Atwood’s novel *The Year of the Flood*, Le Guin posited that:

> To my mind, *The Handmaid’s Tale, Oryx and Crake* and now *The Year of the Flood* all exemplify one of the things that science fiction does, which is to extrapolate imaginatively from current trends and events to a near-future that’s half prediction, half satire. But Margaret Atwood doesn’t want any of her books to be called science fiction...she says that everything that happens in her novels is possible and may even have already happened, so they can’t be science fiction, which is “fiction in which things happen that are not possible today.” This arbitrarily restrictive definition seems designed to protect her novels from being relegated to a genre still shunned by hidebound readers, reviewers and prize-awarders. She doesn’t want the literary bigots to shove her in the literary ghetto. (Le Guin, 2009)

Le Guin’s opening paragraph of her review seeks to question Atwood’s choice to distance herself from the category of science fiction and she is perhaps right to do so. After all, Atwood’s novels in question do employ science fiction tropes such as genetics, apocalyptic epidemics and dystopian, future societies. Atwood is keen to defend herself against Le Guin’s questioning, aligning herself with the work of Jules Verne, whose books examine ‘things that really could happen but just hadn’t completely happened when the authors wrote the book.’ (Atwood, 2011: 6) Atwood too recognises the multi-layered diversity of science fiction and its ability to cross-inhabit other genres easily. For her: ‘when it comes to genres, the borders are increasingly undefended, and things slip back and forth across them with insouciance. Bendiness of terminology, literary gene-swapping, and inter-genre visiting have been going on in the SF world - loosely defined - for some time’ (Atwood, 2011: 7).

Atwood uses the term “speculative fiction” to describe her works, highlighting the

social prediction of “what if?” narratives. It is important to note that the use of the term “speculative” in discussions of science fiction is not a new phenomenon. Atwood is developing arguments previously put forward by the likes of Robert A. Heinlein and Judith Merrill. In his 1947 essay “On the Writing of Speculative Fiction”, Heinlein outlines tips and rules for writing and defines speculative fiction as something specific: ‘In the speculative science fiction story accepted science and established fields are extrapolated to produce a new situation, a new framework for human action’ (in Gunn and Candelaria, 2005: 16). The anthologist and writer Judith Merrill, who was an advocate for the literary merit of the genre, consistently campaigned for the term science fiction to be replaced with speculative fiction.[18] Although Atwood claims that acceptance from the literary establishment is not her overall aim for abandoning the term science fiction, the re-labelling of certain novels as speculative fiction does help to cast off certain genre associations. Not only did Atwood’s use of this label grant permission for new literary writers to explore science fiction tropes in a literary novel, it also became a means of classifying several novels written by Atwood’s contemporaries during the 2000s.[19] Atwood’s use of the term “speculative fiction” does highlight the difficulties that arise from genre classifications. An individual’s interpretation of genre traits can have a dramatic effect on the classification. As Atwood highlights, what she calls *speculative fiction* is interpreted by Le Guin as *science fiction* and some of what Le Guin classes as *fantasy* would be interpreted by Atwood as *science fiction*. Boundaries between the genres are not as rigid as one might originally think.

Miéville appears to be embracing this notion, enjoying the act of deliberately questioning genre classification. *Perdido Street Station* was published before Atwood’s

[18] In the introduction to her anthology *SF: The year’s Greatest Science Fiction and Fantasy* Merril playfully lists her loose interpretation of the individual letters “SF”, such as “S” referring to such diverse subjects as ‘Space’, ‘Sociology’ or ‘Serendipity’ and “F” referring to ‘Fantasy’, ‘Fiction’, ‘Fable’ or ‘Farce’. Her conclusion is that what it really stands for is ‘*Speculative Fun’*. (Merril, 1959, original emphasis)

[19] Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* (2006) are perhaps the most prominent examples of “literary authors” adopting “speculative fiction” motifs around this time period. A more contemporary example of this technique would be Emily St John Mandel’s *Station Eleven* (2014).

Oryx and Crake (2003), therefore making it a vital counterpoint to Atwood's position. By reclaiming the genre label "speculative fiction" Atwood could be seen to be attempting to apply her own classification onto her novel to provide an academic context for the work or avoid being put into a genre category that does not win major literary prizes. Miéville's novels, on the other hand, are deliberately avoiding classification, playing with preconceived ideas of what a science fiction or fantasy novel should be, relishing the problems that classification brings. Miéville accepts that classification is becoming more and more redundant and meaningless: that, more importantly, inhabiting the liminal spaces between different genres of fiction is stimulating.

Miéville's view regarding the boundary between science fiction and fantasy – something which he considers to be disintegrating – is most effectively described in his essay "Cognition as Ideology: A Dialectic of SF Theory" which serves as a conclusion to the text *Red Planets: Marxism and Science Fiction* (2009). In this essay Miéville expands upon previous Marxist approaches to genre, such as those of Darko Suvin and Frederic Jameson. Miéville unpicks Suvin's conclusion that science fiction is the literature of 'cognitive estrangement' and attempts instead to consider fantasy fiction's worthiness for academic consideration:

> The distinction between SF and Fantasy continues to be pertinent, and that there are specificities to the fantastic, as well as the science-fictional, side of the dyad (the deployment of magic, most obviously), which theory would do well to investigate further. It is perfectly plausible, then, that SF and fantasy might still sometimes be usefully distinguished: but if so, it is not on the basis of cognition, nor of some fundamental epistemological firewall, but as different ideological iterations of the 'estrangement' that, even in high Suvinianism, both sub-genres share. (Miéville, 2009c: 243)

Miéville implies that the discussion regarding the ideological properties of science fiction and fantasy has become misplaced. Instead of focusing on science fiction's aim to be a *cognitive* version of estrangement, we should in fact consider how both genres *create* and *deploy* estrangement, as this is what both unites and separates them from one

another. Miéville suggests that a more productive means of characterisation both science fiction and fantasy is as both being *genres of estrangement.* They are achieving the same final goal – defamiliarization for the reader and destabilisation of the status quo – through different means but also share a lot of common characteristics and techniques. This opinion is most effectively portrayed within Miéville's Bas-Lag trilogy where the shared estrangement of fantasy and science fiction is expressed using monsters and magic intertwined with concepts of hard science.

This examination applies to Miéville's fiction overall, as it allows novels to be considered as both science fiction and fantasy. This is useful as moments of estrangement which occur can be examined for elements of both genres. The depiction of thaumaturgy in Miéville's Bas-Lag books is a good example of this: the fantastical, magic-like, miracle-working being explained using references to the hard sciences. At one point in *Perdido Street Station* Isaac's list of scientific research designed to solve Yagharek's problem of being unable to fly recognises that Bas-Lag is a world of both hard science and miracle-magic: '*Flight i) natural ii) thaumaturgical iii) chymico-physical iv) combined v) other*' (Miéville, 2000, 68). There is no barrier in Bas-Lag between magic and science: in fact, they can be *combined*. Miéville summarises this new way of considering science fiction and fantasy further in the conclusion to the essay:

> The boundaries between them also - if anything at an accelerating pace - continue to erode. Where that has hitherto been seen as pathological in SF theory, it is to be hoped that, by undermining the supposedly radical distinction between the two as being on the basis of cognition, that erosion can now be seen as perfectly legitimate. (Miéville, 2009c: 244)

Miéville shows how science fiction and fantasy tropes now appear more commonly in literary fiction, as writers explore the general concept of *estrangement* in their work. The resurgence of magic realism (a category of literary fiction focused on the blending of a primarily realistic view of the world with magical elements) reflects this trend. The result is a much more blurred boundary between the genres that deal with this effect.

1.3 China Miéville and Horror Fiction

One final recognisable *genre of estrangement* to consider for Miéville's work is that of horror fiction. Horror shares common features with other genres already discussed, operating around specific characteristics towards specific aims. In *The Philosophy of Horror* (1990), Noel Carroll describes this connection succinctly: 'Like suspense novels or mystery novels, novels are denominated horrific in respect of their intended capacity to raise a certain *affect'* (Carroll, 1990: 14, original emphasis). Just as fantasy fiction aims to make visible the unreal, and science fiction is perceived as the literature of cognitive estrangement, so too does horror fiction aim to create the effect of the "horrific", the Latin root *horrere* meaning to tremble, or shudder.[20] This concept of "trembling" or "shuddering" is an effective metaphor for Miéville's technique of shifting between genres, shuddering across their borders and boundaries. Horror is a genre that aims to engage with its audience on a physiological and psychological level. Yet, for this reason, horror fiction can be interpreted as the most divisive of the genres being considered here due to its subjective nature: what one person views as horrific, another may view otherwise.

Therefore, a definition of horror becomes a much more problematic exercise than first considered. What constitutes a generalised consideration of the horrific? In what ways is this manifested in literature? After all, several different forms of narrative can be considered under the horror fiction label: monster stories, ghost stories, serial killers, supernatural and paranormal are all possible interpretations of horror narratives. Xavier Aldana Reyes takes Noel Carroll's idea of *affect* a stage further, suggesting that it is something specific:

> Horror fiction may be best understood as the literature that actively, and predominantly, seeks to create a pervasive feeling of unease and which, consistently, although not necessarily always successfully, attempts to arouse the emotions and sensations we would normally ascribe to feeling under threat. (Aldana Reyes, 2016: 10)

[20] As defined in Xavier Aldana Reyes, 2016: 7.

Therefore, under Aldana Reyes' definition, horror fiction becomes much more focused around motifs of "unnaturalness", which leave their audience feeling as if their status quo is under *threat* in some way. This concept of threat is a lot clearer to comprehend and interpret and accounts for every member of the horror audience who, regardless of whether they are horrified or not, understand the threat which is being displayed. In this context, a reader can find a book "horrific" without feeling the physiological effect – "the shudder", the raised heart-beat and increased levels of adrenalin – which other people may experience. Even though some horror readers will not be horrified themselves, they are able to recognise the genre conventions designed to create such an affect.

Horror fiction is a deep-rooted examination of the human condition, specifically our deepest, darkest desires and fears. The central consideration of the horror genre is the psychological and physical makeup of the human form faced with extreme threat which moves beyond our understanding of the world around us. As Fred Botting explains: 'Horror constitutes the limit of reason, sense, consciousness and speech, the very emotion in which the human reaches its limit. Horror is thus ambivalently human' (Botting, 1995: 131).

The uncanny, a term explored by Sigmund Freud, is a significant aesthetic affect which is utilised in horror fiction. In his essay *The Uncanny* (1919), Freud describes *das Umheimliche* as: 'in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression' (Freud, 1919: 944). What Freud is suggesting here is the return of that which has been repressed, the familiar made strange in some way. The unconscious, that which is repressed psychologically, coming back into consciousness. More importantly, the power of the uncanny lies in its definition as 'something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light' (Freud, 1999: 944). The result is that familiarity is *destabilised*. Once again, this links to the methodology of both fantasy and

science fiction to estrange the reader from their status quo in some way. It also reflects Miéville's objective as a genre writer, to destabilise the expectations of specific genre categories and to fuse them together in "uncanny" new forms - familiar yet also unfamiliar to the seasoned genre reader.

Freud developed his theory of the uncanny using real-life situations and examples from literary texts, most noticeably the short story "The Sandman" by E.T.A Hoffman (1816). This story contains two key examples of the uncanny affect. First is the automaton, Olimpia, who the main character falls in love with, despite his uncanny feeling towards her. Olimpia is recognisable as a human but the knowledge of her true nature turns her physicality into an uncanny body. Second are the horrific dreams of The Sandman removing and stealing eyes, leaving behind an uncanny, physical body. Freud links this removal of eyes to a fear of castration. However, Freud's critical focus is on the symbols within Hoffman's story and he does not focus on the uncanny effect of the story's narrative techniques, its structural form and narrative voice, which are the actual devices which Hoffman uses to produce his destabilised feeling of the uncanny. Whether we subscribe to Freud's analysis or not, the uncanny and its connection to defamiliarisation is a useful tool through which to "read" horror narratives. Most often this physiological response to the "horrific" is a reaction to "uncanniness". What horrifies is simultaneously recognisable and yet "other".

The uncanny act of defamiliarisation links to Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject body. The opening statement of Kristeva's 1982 work *Powers of Horror* jumps immediately into succinct and powerful definition:

> There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. (Kristeva, 1982: 1)

For Kristeva, the abject body is in direct opposition with the *I*, and this opposition is what

the abject shares with the uncanny. However, there is a distinct difference in the two terms which Kristeva discusses at length. Whereas the uncanny, although opposed to the *I*, does bear some familiarity to the observer (this is where its power lies), the abject body is a much more violent interjection, 'elaborated through a failure to recognize its kin; nothing is familiar, not even the shadow of a memory' (Kristeva, 1982: 5). Therefore, the abject contains no schema of reference for the observer at all and, as a result, it is banished and repressed, our conscious mind unwilling to accept its existence. Here is where Kristeva's development of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis work becomes prominent. Lacan's "mirror stage" is a moment of apperception in the development of an infant: the moment of realisation that the reflection that they see in the mirror is them but also, crucially, *not* them. It is an important stage of development because it is the first time when they turn their physicality into an *object* which the child can view from outside of themselves. The mirror-image becomes a kind of idealised version of themselves as they see that they are a coherent whole instead of the fragmented body they perceive as themselves. Crucially, the child is unable to unify the two: they misrecognise the image in the mirror with their own confused understanding of their physical body. The more coherent image in the mirror is an unattainable ideal. Kristeva's theory of the abject is a violent realisation that what we see before us is not a "mirror" of ourselves but of something completely unrecognisable. The result is the repression of the object: in fact, Kristeva declares that '*The abject would thus be the "object" of primal repression*' (Kristeva, 1982: 12, original emphasis). This is where the abject and horror intertwine. Our physiological reaction to the abject is one of horrific perversion, born out of our instinct to be wary of what we do not know and our evolutionary mechanism to survive.

The abject is lawless and beyond definition and this is its most powerful trait: 'The abject is perverse because it neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or a law; but turns them aside, misleads, corrupts; uses them, takes advantage of them, the better to deny them' (Kristeva, 1982: 15). The abject is unpredictable and could strike at any moment. It is beyond our control and is (referring to Aldana Reyes' earlier definition) our

greatest psychological “threat”. Yet it is us simultaneously: the abject is a disruption of physical boundaries too, Kristeva’s famous “skin on milk” effectively describing this concept. Both the physical normality (the rules and laws) of the milk itself and the psychological reaction of the drinker form the abject effect.[21] This image becomes about the boundary that exists, the liminal space between the two states which should be kept separate - liquid and solid. This boundary is fragile and easily broken, consumable and dissolvable. Kristeva’s theory of the abject is reflected in Miéville’s work: just as Kristeva’s abject *turns aside* expectations, rules and laws, so too does Miéville’s approach to genre fictions. Miéville’s approach to genre classification could be described as abject in nature. He dissolves the boundaries between genres in the same way that the skin of the milk can be broken.

The uncanny and the abject become central to the motifs of horror fiction through renditions of the monstrous: dolls, robots and automata are uncanny due to their human likeness;[22] the indescribable monstrous blob that devours humans is abject, beyond comprehension, as is the ravenous alien with its inhuman anatomy; zombies are *abject* due to their ability to break down the borders between life and death. Kristeva is keen to highlight that abjection is not *just* about disease, difference and deformity (although this is, of course, a common component) but, more importantly, ‘what disturbs identity, system, order’ (Kristeva, 1982: 4). The abject is the unnatural and the incomprehensible in one body, unable to be classified by normal, *natural* means. It disobeys all normal perceptions of genre, politics and social structure.

Both the uncanny and the abcanny are distant relations to the Gothic concept of

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[21] Kristeva describes the loathing of food as ‘the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection’ (Kristeva, 1982: 2) and uses the interaction with the skin on milk as her example to effectively demonstrate the physiological conditions that the abject creates, such as raised heartbeat, tears, bile and perspiration. Of course, the skin on milk represents an “unnatural” disruption in the physical form of the milk itself.

[22] This relates to the much-discussed concept of the uncanny valley, first posited by robotics professor Masahiro Mori in 1970. Mori’s hypothesis is that as robots are given more strikingly human features then reactions will be more positive and empathetic, until a certain point when strong revulsion will kick in. However, continued development of the robot’s appearance, to a point where it becomes undistinguishable from humans once again, will result in returned positivity approaching human-to-human levels of empathy. This dip of strong revulsion is referred to as the “uncanny valley”.

the sublime. In his 1757 treatise on aesthetics, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Edmund Burke refers to the sublime as 'the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling' (Burke, 1990: 36), achieved through what Fred Botting refers to as 'combined delight and horror, pleasure and terror… a disrupted sense of order and a discombobulation of reason, imagination and feeling: intensities, magnitudes and violent contrasts overwhelmed mental faculties – evoking terror, awe, wonder – and threatened the eclipse of any subjective unity (Botting, 2014: 7). Gothic texts utilised the sublime, primarily through the protagonist of the text, to subject the reader to the vast terror and awe of the world. Burke's seven "obscurities", developed from his definition of the sublime, are common generic features of the Gothic novel, from the mid-eighteenth century to the present day. These obscurities act as a methodology for detaching the reader and creating a sense of awe-induced terror.[23] The uncanny and the abcanny can be interpreted as types of obscurity too, both disrupting the natural order in a similar manner. However, where they differ from the sublime is that the outcome is to induce feelings of uncertainty, unfamiliarity and repulsion in the reader, whereas the sublime, although dealing with terror and horror, produces 'feelings of a positive nature' (Freud, 1999: 930).

We can use the uncanny and the abject as useful concepts through which to read Miéville's novels. Monsters appear again and again within his work in order to entice horrific response. This response is primarily gained through moments of uncanny realisation and abjection, most frequently constructions of body horror. Miéville's utilisation of horror imagery is interesting here as it embraces these two elements *simultaneously*. The augmentation of the human body produces new forms composed of elements which are familiar alongside elements which are unfamiliar, such as prosthetics, machinery and animal-physiology or bioengineered limbs. This, therefore,

[23] Meteorological (mists, clouds, rain), topographical (forests, mountain, oceans), architectural (towers, castles), material (masks, disguises), textual (riddles, folklore), spiritual (religious mystery, allegory, rituals) and psychological (dreams, visions, madness) – see Groom, 2012: 77-78. All such features help to destabilise reality in a disturbing fashion.

makes these bodies uncanny as they are within our field of reference but are altered from our common perception. However, the repulsion of body horror, which Miéville achieves through graphic description, pushes these bodies into the sphere of the abject. We are repulsed by the cruel augmentation on show, especially the vicious combinations concocted by the punishment factories, which churn out the Remade criminals of Bas-Lag.[24]

This attraction to body horror – both in terms of manipulation of the human body and the "horror" of the monstrous body – demonstrates Miéville's understanding of and appreciation for the horror genre. He revels in the genre's creativity. He uses the psychological effect of horror fiction as a useful narrative tool. It builds tension and a feeling of foreboding. The reader becomes aware that the protagonist has something to lose - their mind, their body, their life. For Miéville, this has always been an attractive factor of horror fiction. In an interview describing his most influential books, Miéville refers both to *Jane Eyre* (1847) and to *Creepy Creatures* (1978) – the fabulous anthology of children's horror stories edited by Barbara Ireson – as important in the creation of his appreciation for horror. He reveals that 'since I was two I have loved monsters, octopuses, spaceships....and tension. The reason I like horror is this sense of increasing tension' (Miéville, 2010b). Miéville's own uncanny and abject creations succeed in creating this same tension which he experienced as a child reading *Creepy Creatures*.

Miéville's manipulation of horror motifs moves beyond his portrayal of monsters. Both Freud and Kristeva are interested in how the uncanny and the abject produce an aesthetic effect. The application of these two concepts offers a lens through which Miéville can experiment with his own politically tinged aesthetic; the aesthetics of fiction allowing models of politics to be creatively communicated. Miéville's overspill of political ideas is most effectively realised in the realm of the speculative and the uncanny and the abject are two vital tools Miéville can use to articulate these political ideas.

[24] The Remade will be discussed in further detail later in this thesis.

The novel *The City & The City* (2009) is a fine example, demonstrating how Miéville uses descriptions and language to produce an uncanny effect. Consider this extract from the opening chapter of the novel as the protagonist, Borlú, inspects a gruesome crime scene:

> As I turned, I saw past the edges of the estate to the end of GunterStrasz, between the dirty brick buildings. Trash moved in the wind. It might be anywhere. An elderly woman was walking slowly away form me in a shambling sway. She turned her head and looked at me. I was struck by her motion, and I met her eyes. In my glance I took in her clothes, her way of walking, of holding herself, and looking.
>
> With a hard start, I realised that she was not on GunterStrasz at all, and that I should not have seen her. (Miéville, 2009b: 14)

At first glance this scene appears to be innocuous: the description of place, the movement of the elderly woman and Borlú's recognition of her gait and clothing. However, the final statement – 'I should not have seen her' – suddenly infuses the previous description with a sense of the uncanny. There is something not right about this woman. It is only when we begin to learn about the role of "unseeing" in the novel – that the citizens of the opposing cities of Besźel and Ul Qoma must repress recognition of the other city's inhabitants – that we begin to understand why this woman was uncanny to Borlú. What he was witnessing was the literal materialisation of that which has been repressed. The character of the elderly woman in this scene is the manifestation of Freud's definition of the uncanny.

The use of language in *The City & The City* also produces uncanny effect. This is achieved using the prefix "un-". Immediately after noticing the elderly woman, Borlú *un*notices her. At this stage, as readers we do not fully comprehend what this means, but the dual association of the prefix – as a suggested nod towards the word "uncanny" and the deliberate act of destabilising language to make the word familiar and unfamiliar simultaneously – does incite an uncanny effect. As a reader, we find the very language of the novel itself to be uncanny, as well as the concept of unseeing. These uncanny

effects are also skilfully amplified through Miéville's use of narrative voice, focusing all the uncanny effects through one perspective.

In *The City & The City*, Breach are also instilled with *ab*canny qualities their ability to move between different planes of existence and their lack of grounded, physical definition breaking them free from the natural order. [25] However, by the end of the novel, their abcanniness is explained and dispelled. Miéville is so keen on the uncanny and the abject that his use of 'un-' and 'ab-' begins to infiltrate into his narratives, such as in *Un Lun Dun* (2007) where the un- (not) "other" London is denoted using these prefixes, immediately creating a sense of defamiliarisation and detachment. In fact, it is this aspect of defamiliarisation which Miéville continuously manipulates in order to produce a sense of threat and uncertainty within his work. Monsters have already been mentioned (and will be explored further) but Miéville also utilises ghosts ("The Ball Room" and others), fog (*Un Lun Dun*), architecture ("Foundation" and "Details"), landscapes (*This Census-Taker* [2015]) and even Surrealist art (*The Last Days of New Paris* [2017]) to create the effect of the uncanny or the abject or both simultaneously.[26] What is ultimately significant here is that Miéville uses horror in a similar fashion to science fiction and fantasy - as a genre landscape to explore the social structures which exist around us. Miéville has a close affiliation with the fantastical nature of horror:

> For me, the horrific, in the shape of the dark uncanny, the monstrous, the unholy, is one of the most fascinating aspects of fantastic literature, and it's for that reason, I think, that though I'm not normally thought of as a horror writer, I'm a writer of SF and fantasy heavily influenced by the weird, grotesque horror tradition. (Satyamurthy, 2004)

Miéville recognises that the interpretation of horror is an important element of his writing

[25] Abcanny is a term Miéville uses to refer to the 'unrepresentable and unknowable, the evasive of meaning' (Miéville, 2012f: 381). Many of his creations are abcanny bodies, such as The Hosts from *Embassytown* (2012) and repeated references to tentacled monsters in many of his works.

[26] All these examples will be considered in greater detail throughout this work.

but acknowledges that he would not be called a “horror writer”. This is an astute statement: in the marketing of genre categories, Miéville’s work is more likely to be considered fantasy or science fiction due to his use of secondary worlds. Horror (and the creative interpretation of Freud’s theory of the uncanny and Kristeva’s theory of the abject) is a clear influence on Miéville’s work but is not enough to classify his entire oeuvre as belonging to the specific genre of horror. Indeed, the combined effect of the abject and the uncanny will be explored further in chapter two. In conclusion, we can safely declare that horror motifs play an important, but not defining, role in Miéville’s world-building methodology.

1.4 China Miéville and the Evaporation of Genre Boundaries

This leaves us one important question to consider: if we were to try and categorise Miéville’s work, which genre category would be the closest fit? His work contains elements from a wide variety of genres. The estranging stylistics and Marxist theory of literature, the cognitive estrangement and extrapolation of science fiction, the marvel of fantasy and the threat and repulsion of horror all feature heavily in his work but none of these genres *definitively* categorise Miéville’s fiction and its range of creativity, thematic exploration and experimentation with ideas. As a conclusion to this consideration of Miéville’s place within the landscape of genre fictions, let us consider two classifications which may hold the answer - “fantastika” and “slipstream”.

Fantastika is a genre term which was first used by the Canadian-born author and critic John Clute to describe ‘fictional work whose contents are *understood* to be fantastic’ (Clute, 2011: 20, original emphasis). Essentially, it is a collective of other genres including fantasy, science fiction, horror and Gothic. Fantastika incorporates a wide variety of story-types and sub-genres, including mythology and legends, fairy-tale, folklore, utopia and dystopia, the supernatural, “God-stories” and ghost stories. More importantly, Clute limits the range of fantastika to post-1750; a significant point when the

genres that fantastika incorporates were developing into their own conscious forms and 'began tentatively to use the planet itself (past, present and particularly the future) as a default arena conceived both spatially and, far more significantly, temporally' (*Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction*, 2015). The development of story classification coincided with an increased consideration of our own world's history, status and future possibility. Genre fiction grew as a response to increased scientific understanding seen in the nineteenth century which dramatically altered our own understanding and subjectivity: innovations and theories such as telephones; electricity; evolution and combustion. As Clute highlights:

> So science takes the ground from underneath our feet; and fantastika, with its heated cartoon immediacy of response to instability and threat, responds instantly to the vertigo of this new knowledge. It vibrates to the planet. Fantastika is the planetary form of story. (Clute, 2011: 24)

Clute's definition of fantastika is an all-encompassing acceptance of the power that the fantastical must tell the narratives regarding our contemporary world. By bringing together the most popular genres under one comprehensive terminology, Clute has created a genre label which covers the full spectrum of fantastical storytelling. The historicising of fantastika (Clute suggesting the 1750s and *The Castle of Otranto* as defining origins) aligns it with the birth of the modern world. It shows that fantastika is aware of its own identity.

Fantastika is a genre label which defies classification boundaries, declaring itself openly as a mixture of more recognisable genre archetypes. Slipstream Fiction is another, defined by Bruce Sterling in his 1989 essay of the same title. Sterling wrote his essay as a response to the growing concern for science fiction's dwindling identity after the glory of the "Golden Age" of science fiction during the 1940s and 1950s.[27] Sterling's

[27] Adam Roberts prescribes these dates to this term in chapter 10 of his book *The History of Science Fiction* (2005), writing that 'to describe the science fiction published in the 1940s and 1950s as 'Golden Age' is – obviously – not to use a neutral or value-free description' (Roberts, 2005: 195).

observation was that the “Hard Sci-Fi” which defined the Golden Age writers had lost its core ideological identity and slipped into the realm of a marketing category rather than the ‘coherent social vision’ which it had provided during this period: ‘"Hard-SF", the genre's ideological core, is a joke today; in terms of the social realities of high-tech post-industrialism, it's about as relevant as hard-Leninism’ (Sterling, 1989). Instead, Sterling discusses the growing number of authors – mostly from outside the genre of science fiction – that had begun to use science fiction and fantastical elements in their storytelling, the most prominent example from around the time of Sterling’s essay being Margaret Atwood’s 1985 novel *The Handmaid’s Tale.* Noticing that these kinds of stories were on the increase, Sterling playfully called them “slipstream” - not only to emphasise their slippery nature in terms of classification, but also as juxtaposition to the “mainstream” literary text. He defines Slipstream succinctly as an important reflection on the contemporary world:

> It is a contemporary kind of writing which has set its face against consensus reality. It is a fantastic, surreal sometimes, speculative on occasion, but not rigorously so. It does not aim to provoke a "sense of wonder" or to systematically extrapolate in the manner of classic science fiction. Instead, this is a kind of writing which simply makes you feel very strange; the way that living in the late twentieth century makes you feel, if you are a person of a certain sensibility. (Sterling, 1989)

The central premise of slipstream fiction, therefore, is to use the strangeness of the fantastic to highlight, discuss and critically explore the strangeness of life during contemporary times. Science fiction novums (such as dystopian worlds) may feature but, ultimately, elements of the genre do not need to be embraced. “Hard Sci-fi” – which Sterling identifies as the original, ideological heart of the genre, focusing on technological aspects – is certainly never the principal focus in the world-building of slipstream and the extrapolation that science fiction encourages is secondary to slipstream’s desire to “make strange” the normal and every day. Slipstream does, however, hold some interest for the

science fiction community and readership as a form of “soft” science fiction or speculative text.

Pawel Frelik critically evaluates Sterling’s definition, claiming that Sterling’s work is ‘yet another attempt to legitimize science fiction through a partial merger with mainstream literature within a newly invented field’ (Frelik, 2011). For Frelik, slipstream is not an act of legitimization but has always existed in some sense as a classification depository for writers and texts which have ‘failed to contain themselves within the envisioned borders of the genre’:

> Slipstream, as the very designation implies, has no fixed or even provisionally demarcated boundaries. Whether named or not, slipstream is what falls through the cracks of exclusionary definitions of sf—regardless of whether they are constructed on the opposition of sf and mainstream or on the difference between genre sf and non-genre sf. (Frelik, 2011)

Slipstream is a hybrid genre, mirroring the motif of the monster. It is a fusion of different literary and generic forms. Frelik describes Miéville’s novel *The City & The City* as a contemporary example of slipstream fiction. For him, the novel’s ‘warped geography reflects the problematic topography of genres within which slipstream is located’ (Frelik, 2011). Just like Besźel and Ul Qoma existing together in the same space, so too does slipstream bring together those novels that have “slipped” free from more recognisable genre categories. Frelik’s assessment of Miéville as a slipstream writer is, therefore, accurate as his work does not abide by boundaries or categorisation but ‘falls through the cracks’ of genre definitions. For Frelik, slipstream is a genre category that has formed as a result of postmodern sensibilities, the movement’s self-aware dismantling of hierarchies and promotion of popular culture resulting in the formation of boundary discourses, such as slipstream and fantastika, which find themselves able to operate within these liminal spaces.[28]

[28] Another such genre boundary discourse is the New Weird which will be discussed in chapter two.

Both Clute and Sterling acknowledge that fantastika and slipstream will never replace the more recognisable genre labels of science fiction, fantasy and horror. Yet, in the case of attempting to classify Miéville's work, these two terms become significant. Fantastika and slipstream share two common features which Miéville embodies: firstly, the fluidity of recognisable genre boundaries; and, secondly, the deep-rooted, central desire to discuss what Clute refers to as 'the world storm' - the tumultuous twists-and-turns of the contemporary society in which the text exists (Clute, 2011: 23). Clute recognises that fantastika's original conception coincided with the 'world storm' of the scientific, and then the Industrial, revolutions during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Now, in the early twenty-first century, we face, as Clute describes, a *new* 'world storm' of social uncertainty: global economic crisis, civil unrest and social revolution. For Clute, as well as for Miéville, fantastika offers an opportunity to explore this significant historical period: 'I think that articulating this terror at the sighting of the end of things is the central true task of fantastika in the twenty-first century. It is where fantastika must start. The only way to achieve the future is to tell it' (Clute, 2011: 54).

The slippery nature of genre boundaries in both slipstream and fantastika reflects a common theoretical viewpoint in the critical study of contemporary genre fictions. In his book *Evaporating Genres* (2011) the scholar Gary K. Wolfe concludes that the boundaries between traditional genre fictions are seemingly evaporating and disappearing in a manner reflective of Sterling's and Clute's observations. For Wolfe, writers of fantastic genre fictions are subverting their use of genre materials and style:

> The signal development of the last few decades has been the emergence of a generation of writers… whose ambitions lay in what we might call recombinant genre fiction: stories that effectively deconstruct and reconstitute genre materials and techniques together with materials and techniques from an eclectic variety of literary traditions, even including the traditions of domestic realism. (Wolfe, 2011:21)

This approach of deliberate deconstruction and reconstruction of genre expectations inevitably results in a re-evaluation of genre landscapes and taxonomies. New writers are probing boundaries established by previous texts and re-evaluating what constitutes the use of specific genre labels. As Wolfe concludes: 'in each field the dialectic seemed to offer two possible routes for later writers: expansion of discourse to the edges of genre and beyond or collapsing of the discourse into an increasingly crabbed and narrow set of self-referential texts. Both kinds of results tend to promote the dissolution of the original genre – the one by integration with other fiction, the other by implosion – and both are abundantly in evidence in each genre today' (Wolfe, 2011:30). This could be viewed as a portent of genre fictions losing their identities and dramatically expiring amongst a flood of novels which overuse clichéd generic motifs, but in fact one can view this process differently, with enthusiasm. These genres may appear to be threatened by integration or implosion, but rather, through the exploration of their edges by fresh authors acknowledging previous works and writers, they are becoming misty, permeable, and able to shift easily. For Wolfe, a genre with unstable edges can morph with others and the new generation of genre writers are assisting with this process:

> The writers who contribute to the evaporation of genre, who destabilize by undermining our expectations and appropriating materials at will, with fiction shaped by individual vision rather than traditions and formulas, are the same writers who continually revitalize genre: A healthy genre, a healthy literature, is one at risk, one whose boundaries grow uncertain and whose foundations grow wobbly. (Wolfe, 2011: 50)

Miéville is a writer we can certainly associate with Wolfe's remarks here: he is a writer who is more than willing to destabilise and subvert the reader's genre expectations. His work reflects Wolfe's motif of evaporation not only through its disregard for genre boundaries but also through a respect of their history and heritage. Miéville's knowledge

as a scholar, reader and fan of genre fictions acts as a protocol which influences his work. He has acknowledged this process in an interview for the science fiction magazine *Locus*:

> Any act of artistic labelling is as much to do with reclamation as with categorization. To look at past writers in a new way, to reclaim writers that have been forgotten, to announce the necessary forgetting of writers who have been remembered - this is part of the process. It is as much argumentative archaeology as it is ongoing taxonomy. (Wolfe, 2011: 152)

For Miéville, writing effective genre fiction does not only involve the use and repetition of recognisable taxonomies in a shifting fashion but also the deliberate excavation and recognition of what has come before, an acknowledgement of a genre's backstory. It is only through this process of 'archaeology' and reclamation that genre boundaries can be challenged, evaporated and fresh interpretations allowed to be constructed.

This reclamation of previous work which both Wolfe and Miéville advocate as an important factor of genre identity suggests that this identity is very specific to the period in which the genre currently exists, meaning that genre identities and boundaries naturally fluctuate over time. This is a perspective also expressed in the work of John Rieder, especially in his book *Science Fiction and the Mass Cultural Genre System* (2017). Rieder embraces the work on the rhizomatic developed by Deleuze and Guattari[29] to help define the term "genre" and the way they grow and subdivide. In this schema, Rieder compares genres to spreading systems of roots:

> The most important feature of the rhizomatic assemblage in relation to genre theory is that it is an "antigenealogy" that "operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots.... It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (*milieu*) from which it grows and which it overspills". The movement of texts and motifs into and through SF does not confer a pedigree on them, then, but instead merely connects one itinerary to another... one is not looking for the appearance of a positive entity but rather for a practice of drawing similarities and differences amongst texts. (Rieder, 2017:20-21)

[29] See Deleuze and Guattari (2013) *A Thousand Plateaus.*

What Rieder posits is that genres are defined by formal conventions, yes, but more importantly are systems of growth and 'overspill', encouraged by the 'variation, expansion, conquest, capture and offshoots' of previous texts within that genre category. In other words, in line with Wolfe, genres rely on new writers interpreting and reacting to previous textual examples in order to develop them and move them forwards.

The title of Rieder's work is an interesting reflection on this idea of defining genre. There is a distinct difference between what Rieder labels the 'classical and academic genre system' and the 'mass cultural genre system' (Rieder, 2017:1). The former is a system focused around formal conventions which have been present throughout the history of literature, such as 'the epic, tragedy, comedy, satire, romance, the lyric and so on.' In contrast, Rieder presents the mass cultural genre system – including the recognisable categories such as science fiction, fantasy, horror and crime – as being 'associated with large-scale commercial production and distribution of narrative fiction in print, film and broadcast media' (Rieder, 2017: 1). This is an important distinction as not only does it question the emphasis of the concept of narrative formal conventions being the principal defining factor of these genres, but it also suggests that these genres are very much dependent on the influence of media production, something which has developed over the course of the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. In other words, genres are constantly redefining themselves as a result of changing times, social conditions and distribution technologies. Rieder's argument is that these two systems of recognising genre need to be considered in relation to each other,[30] that there is a constant tension between these two systems, a tension which new writers can exploit and explore: 'definition and classification may be useful points of departure for critical and rhetorical analysis, but if the version of genre theory offered here is valid, the project of comprehending what SF has meant and currently means is one to be accomplished

[30] Not in opposition, as originally done by early academics of science fiction (see Rieder, 2017:1)

through historical and comparative narrative rather than formal description' (Rieder, 2017:31).

An example of this effect in action is the shift that the mass cultural genre system is having on our perception of literature. Rieder suggests that 'mass culture relentlessly insists on telling us who we are, and who we ought to be... the early twentieth century's antagonism between modernism and mass culture has faded into the early twenty-first century's postmodernist irreverence for the canonical and the ongoing disintegration of the prestige of "literature"' (Rieder, 2017:43). The use of the word "disintegration" is interesting: a more robust and violent interpretation of Gary K. Wolfe's "evaporating" of genres, but essentially the same principal. Here, Rieder is reporting on the contemporary attitude towards mass culture genres in relation to the academic "integrity of literature", of the strong questioning of the established hierarchy.

Rieder's definition of the mass cultural genre system allows us to more effectively define the concept of genre as an expression of formal conventions affected dramatically by their place within the current social structure in which they are produced. As he points out, this relationship between expectations of form and the historical context in which the text exists is a relationship of inter-dependence and flux:

> To deny that genres have any formal essence, as I do, is not to reject the notion of an ideology of form, then, but rather to contend that relation of formal strategies to ideologies is a constantly moving target, and that the ideological power of a genre at any point in its history has less to do with its formal precedents than with the positions occupied by its practitioners within the set of resources and opportunities currently available. (Rieder, 2017: 169-170)

Rieder's definition of genre, therefore, is the result of both the classical and academic genre system and the mass cultural genre system working as one unified whole rather than separate entities, of generic formal conventions being considered within the context of the historical moment in which they are produced. In many ways this is a similar methodology to that of Marxist literary theory described earlier in the introduction to this

thesis: genres, like the idea of the text in Marxist literary theory, are products of the time in which they are created and exist. As Rieder points out: 'When "we" point to a story and say it is SF, therefore, that means not only that it ought to be read using the protocols associated with SF but also that it can and should be read in conversation with other SF texts and readers' (Rieder, 2017:26). Genres are not confined by fixed and stable formal conventions but are in constant flux, shifting discursive constructs whose boundaries are slipping, disintegrating, and evaporating under the influence of social, cultural and historical factors.

This is Miéville's methodology within the landscapes of genre fictions. The perceived boundaries of genre are concepts which Miéville challenges. Instead, genre is useful for critically engaging with contemporary society during the times of the text's composition. Genres are important to Miéville (as a writer) as a tool for him to unpick and explore the critical social issues of our contemporary times, such as borders, individual identity, politics and economics. Even though his work appears to be focused on genre, it is, in fact, concerned with much more *primal* social concerns. Sterling says that slipstream has no '"real" genre identity at all' (Sterling, 1989). Arguably, neither does China Miéville. However, where he differs from Sterling's consideration of slipstream is that Miéville's "slippery" genre identity is created through the engagement with *several* different genres simultaneously, the *cross-habitation* of genres so that their classification is challenged and explored. This can only be achieved by having a deep knowledge of genre and how it operates (in order to evaporate the borders between) and an astute understanding of the social context in which those individual genres were created and how they can be utilised for social commentary.

So, what position does Miéville inhabit within the landscape of literature and genre? The answer is that he is positioned outside of this landscape and, simultaneously, deep within it. He aims to challenge a genre category within one paragraph and then embrace a specific genre's fluidity and creativity within the next. Yet, in interviews, he expresses his admiration and love for a wide variety of classic literature alongside the

terrifying horror of *Creepy Creatures*. In terms of the landscape of literature and genre, Miéville is a paradox. Yet his work is a paradox which inevitably challenges the landscape of genre and literature itself. Miéville writes with the freedom that comes from knowing the expectations of genre combined with the understanding that, ultimately, it is the social core of the story which matters the most. Fantastika and slipstream, due to their unwillingness to be defined, are useful genre categories with which to associate Miéville's work. However, his principle aim is always to utilise the hybridity of genres as a tool. His novels embrace *all* varieties of the fantastical as a methodology for exploring the wider concerns of our contemporary culture. His aim is to deliberately estrange the political, make us consider such issues through the looking glass of the extrapolated, the strange, the mythical and the horrific. This is Miéville's greatest skill as a writer - to utilise the extrapolation of genre fictions to imaginatively explore the important social issues of this contemporary world. John Clute declares that: 'fantastika is planetary dread is made storyable...It exposes the world; it does not cure it... The central job of fantastika today is to stare down amnesia. It is that simple. It's stare back or be eaten' (Clute, 2011: 55-68). Miéville's position within the landscape of genre mirrors Clute's sentiments. He embraces the tools of fantastical genres to expose the world to us, present it in a way which awakens the reader to the political and social landscape of the contemporary moment.

Chapter Two:

Embracing the Tentacular and the Abcanny Monstrous:

China Miéville and (New) Weird fiction

> The Weird...punctures the supposed membrane separating off the sublime, and allows swillage of that awe and horror from "beyond" back into the everyday - into angles, bushes, the touch of strange limbs, noises etc. The Weird is a radicalized sublime backwash. (Miéville, 2009a: 511)

China Miéville wrote an entry in *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction* (2009) entitled "Weird fiction", which sought to succinctly define the grouping of texts most associated with the work of H.P. Lovecraft. In this brief essay, Miéville defines the characteristics of Weird fiction as being different from horror and Gothic in its ability to view the everyday through the lens of the sublime and the numinous. The sublime is the movement towards a positive feeling of awe and wonder, created primarily through using the defamiliarizing effect of obscurity. In Gothic and horror fiction the sublime can be obtained through the application of terror. The result is a specific transitional effect, the rational human psyche moving towards the fantastical.

Miéville's suggestion here is that the Weird is the reverse: fantastical awe being projected *back* on the real world. Weird is the sublime *invading* our everyday space. Due to this 'backwash' in Weird fiction, the sublime progresses beyond aesthetic value and becomes an interpretation of social realities, with everyday objects, people, architecture and spaces becoming imbued with awe and numinosity, leading to critical, social examination. Miéville's reference to 'strange limbs' is deeply significant for this reason. The concept of strange body parts, most purposefully symbolised through the tentacle and the tentacular, represents the conjoining of the recognisable physiology of the human body with the unfamiliar concept of an "other" biological entity. It is, therefore, no surprise that the tentacle is a common occurrence within the landscape of Weird fiction.

Not only that, but the tentacle becomes the ideal motif for exploring the invasion of the sublime into the real world which Miéville depicts as being a key defining factor of Weird fiction.

One genre landscape which Miéville has been firmly associated with is “New Weird” fiction. First used in critical debate in 2003 by the writer M. John Harrison the New Weird has become a slippery terminology for the growing number of writers becoming less concerned by recognisable genre boundaries. An amalgamation of horror, science fiction and fantasy motifs, the word “New” also suggests homage to the earlier literary genre of Weird fiction alongside a fascination with exploring recent concepts. For instance, there is an interest in themes around biotechnology, the science of genetics and growing environmental concerns.

Miéville himself has often described his work through the lens of New Weird fiction, initially declaring a critical interest in the definition of the term, before choosing to distance himself from the growing debate. In early discussions regarding the New Weird, Miéville’s Bas-Lag novels were cited as an example of this movement, their genre-splicing and linguistic style encouraging critics and scholars to reach out to old literary genres to classify his work. Of course, Miéville is not the only writer to be considered under the label of the New Weird but he has become one of the most widely read and identified as such.[31]

When considering Miéville’s own scholarly output, it soon becomes clear that Weird fiction has had a significant influence on not only his writing career, but on his general appreciation for genre too. Four of his essays focus particularly on the characteristics of the genre. As well as the essay “Weird fiction”, Miéville wrote “M. R. James and the Quantum Vampire” (2008), originally published in the journal *Collapse*, which critically examines the differences between the uncanny (so important to Gothic fiction, a close relation to the Weird) and the nature of fear in Weird fiction itself. He gave

[31] Other writers whose work is classified under the New Weird category include M. John Harrison, Jeff VanderMeer, Justina Robson, Clive Barker, Steph Swainston, Paul DeFilippo and K. J. Bishop.

a keynote speech at the 2012 Conference of the Fantastic in the Arts focused on new interpretations of the weird monster, suggesting a divergence away from Freud with the development of the category entitled the “abcanny” - more clearly defined later in this thesis. Finally, he wrote a manifesto for the New Weird entitled “Long Live the New Weird” for the magazine *The Third Alternative* (2003) and a follow-up (of sorts) essay “New Weird” for the 2005 *Nebula Awards Showcase* anthology. Miéville’s opinions regarding Weird fiction will be discussed here to demonstrate how connections between his theoretical conclusions regarding Weird fiction’s defining characteristics bring clarity to his own fictional world-building methodology and approach to conceptual landscapes.

With these qualities in mind, what is “new” about the New Weird genre? Does it share the same characteristics as H.P. Lovecraft ascribes to Weird fiction, or is it a contemporary reconfiguration of Weird fiction’s motifs? Miéville is the perfect writer to examine these questions due to his position as a scholar of Weird fiction and a recognised practitioner of New Weird fiction. His conceptual understanding of hauntology also acts as tool to analyse this question. Once again, the motif of the tentacle becomes an important shared feature between Weird fiction and its contemporary counterpart. This examination is most effectively achieved by exploring the use of the tentacle and the tentacular monster as a (New) Weird fiction motif within Miéville’s novels. The focus here will be on Miéville’s own description of Weird fiction alongside other scholarly definitions, the role of Lovecraft as a source of inspiration, and a comprehensive examination of the New Weird genre and Miéville’s role within it.

It is vital to expand beyond Miéville’s interpretations to ensure that we avoid a “closed loop” methodology or an intentional fallacy. Although his critical appreciation of Weird fiction does provide an interesting meta-textual reading for his novels, it is important to analyse his novels using the work of other Weird scholars as well to ensure that Miéville’s approach is given some wider context. It becomes necessary to analyse the wider critical reception of Weird fiction. As well as Miéville himself, the most notable contemporary scholars to explore this topic are S.T. Joshi – who has written extensively

about H. P. Lovecraft and Weird fiction – and Michel Houellebecq, whose 1991 essay *H. P. Lovecraft: Against the World, Against Life* is an important examination of the author's life and work. Framing the whole debate is the motif of the tentacle and the tentacular.

2.1 Miéville, Lovecraft and the Tentacle in Weird Fiction

A definition of Weird fiction is notoriously hard to pin down. Even Miéville's attempt to define it highlights the problematic nature of Weird fiction's generic identity:

> If considered at all, Weird fiction is usually, roughly, conceived of as a rather breathless and generically slippery macabre fiction, a dark fantastic ("horror" plus "fantasy") often featuring nontraditional alien monsters (thus plus "science fiction") (Miéville, 2009a: 510)

Miéville's initial definition is useful but demonstrates the multi-layered aspect of Weird fiction and how it blends with other, more recognisable, genres. It is only when we take a closer examination of Weird fiction texts and criticism that we begin to establish a more definitive understanding of the genre, with its intricate characteristics most effectively symbolised by the tentacle. Not only does the tentacle feature heavily as a motif in Weird fiction, it also symbolises defining features of the genre.

Weird fiction is a cult genre that attracts a loyal readership and occupies the central space in the Venn diagram between horror, fantasy and science fiction, in terms of its narrative content. It is most commonly associated with the work of H. P. Lovecraft and his creation Cthulhu, a vast creature incorporating a variety of different biological components, including bat wings and tentacles. This biological splicing once again mirrors Miéville's deliberate splicing of genre fictions outlined in the previous chapter. Cthulhu is a monstrous body of hybridity, of multiple interpretations. In many respects, Cthulhu is the perfect body with which to represent Weird fiction itself, highlighting the genre as a hybrid creation born from the fusion of science fiction, fantasy and horror.

Lovecraft was careful to separate the weird tale from the more recognisable ghost

story or horror narrative for this reason. Although the weird tale can contain the same elements of shock found in horror or ghost stories, it is more clearly described as “a sense of dread” within Lovecraft’s definition of Weird fiction’s motifs. Lovecraft’s aim is to produce a sense of deep foreboding. More importantly, it is the source of this foreboding that is significant - the unknown dread of the greater cosmos:

> It is man’s relation to the cosmos - to the unknown - which alone arouses in me the spark of creative imagination. The humanocentric pose is impossible to me, for I cannot acquire the primitive myopia which magnifies the earth and ignores the background. (Lovecraft, 1921: 155)

For Lovecraft, the attraction of the weird tale was an examination of the greater cosmos that exists on the periphery of human existence and understanding. For Lovecraft, this greater cosmos is that which is unknowable and is incomprehensible to humankind; to focus on worldly matters is a short-sighted task and the greater wonders of what exists around us are where the true wonderment lies. His tales, particularly of the Cthulhu Mythos, engage this sense of dread at the overwhelming size of the universe, and examine the insignificant place humanity has within the wider cosmos. The weird tale and its teratological focus on the wider universe invite us to move importance away from an anthropocentric view to something which engages other, wider concerns. Miéville’s methodology is similar in that his central concern is to examine the effects of capitalism on society, how humanocentric concerns regarding wealth, power and social structures affect the individual. Weird teratology allows Miéville to skew and breakdown perspectives and approach these problems of anthropocentric modernity from a different viewpoint. His tentacular monsters act as a lens through which to view alternatives to our normality.

The sense of dread created in Weird fiction – although personified through the physiology of the *tentacled monster* as a motif – is not supernatural. It is philosophical in its nature. The ghost and the monster appear in Weird fiction only as a reminder of the

awe which exist within the greater cosmos, to remind us of everything that is beyond our comprehension, to remind us of the sublime. It is due to this consideration of the "Great Outside"[32] that the tentacle and the tentacular monster becomes a central figure of the weird aesthetic. For example, the form of the squid is a physical manifestation of the "Great Outside" here on Earth: a biological entity which defies all human understanding. It is certainly uncanny - familiar, yet unfamiliar at the same time.

Tentacles have sexual connotations too, being found in many erotic and pornographic texts as a physical manifestation of sexual invasion and exotic desire. The history of the tentacle as erotic symbolism is long and established, especially in Japanese culture where it appears in famous cultural works such as Hokushai's 1814 woodcut "The Dream of the Fisherman's Wife" (depicting an Ama pearl-diver erotically entwined in the tentacular embrace of two octopi) to the popular multi-volume Anime saga *Urotsukidoji* (1987-1996), originally adapted by Hideki Takayama and significantly changing Toshio Maeda's manga source material. In Takayama's adaptation the tentacle as an object of violent sadomasochism is much more prominent. As Amanda Gannon comments in her article "Sucker Love: Celebrating the Naughty Tentacle":

> Tentacles are physically so well suited to the penetration of human orifices, and many people find the idea of being sexually violated by a tentacle-bearing creature, be it from outer space or the ocean, sentient or mindless, to be incredibly erotic... The thought of such strange and intense sensations is beguiling… It crosses gender and orientation lines as if they did not even exist. It is perhaps the ultimate penetration fantasy, and if it's a bit outré, well, that's part of the fun. (Hannon, 2009)

The tentacle exists on the boundaries of our knowledge, simultaneously representing the body of the "other" (being different from our perception of "self") and the body of the

[32] As S.T. Joshi declares, this shift, for Lovecraft, was 'something he gradually realized was as in tune with his materialism as anything could possibly be' (Joshi, 1990: 179) and that his project with Weird fiction was to 'transfer the locus of fear from the mundane to what he called the "Great Outside" - the illimitable voids of outer space' (Joshi, 2001: 2). For Houellebecq, 'every weird story presents in it the collision of monstrous entities hailing from unimaginable, forbidden worlds with the plane of our ordinary existence' (Houellebecq, 2005: 81).

“alien” (being unfamiliar and disturbing, from another world). This accounts for the dual attraction towards the tentacles of the squid equally seen in horror and science fiction narratives, which are constantly examining theoretical concepts of “otherness”. It is a monstrous figure which crosses boundaries and expresses ideas in different generic spectrums.

The tentacular monster is a physical manifestation of “Weird” rather than Gothic aesthetics. Miéville posits in his essay “M. R. James and the Quantum Vampire” that the ‘spread of the tentacle’ signals an ‘epochal shift’ from the Gothic monster to the alterity of ‘Weird culture’ (Miéville, 2008b: 105). Lovecraft’s portrayal of Cthulhu and the Elder Ones supports Miéville’s reading of Weird fiction and its insistent exploration of both the historicity and real-life alterity of the tentacular monster. Just as Weird fiction occupies the liminal space between mythological and realist interpretation of the world (in other words between science and fantastical-horror), so too does the tentacular monster exist on the same theoretical spectrum. They become an effective metaphor for Weird fiction’s theoretical explorations. In other words, the squid is such a popular monstrous motif because of its ability to imbue all other genres with weird aesthetics.

Tentacles implicitly represent multiplicity and in the concept of genre theory this makes them a powerful symbol. The mass of writhing tentacles reflects an amalgamation of numerous parts, symbolising the defiance of genre boundaries that is present in Weird fiction, New Weird fiction and, most importantly, Miéville’s own approach to genre writing. The vastness of the unknown depths of the ocean is a liminal space which reflects the concept of the “Great Outside” here on Earth; in other words, an ideal space for weird monsters to inhabit.

Cthulhu is not a creature from the realms of fantasy, but science fiction: The Elder Ones are revealed as an alien race which has existed amongst us for millennia. Lovecraft’s teratology is different from other genre fiction and it is this factor that is a defining principle behind his project to establish Weird fiction as a specific genre. After Lovecraft’s death in 1937, other writers continued to produce stories inspired by the

Cthulhu mythos, but these all became submerged within the growing landscape of horror fiction. S.T. Joshi recognises this:

> We now find ourselves facing the ominous and blunt term “horror” as the general designation for the weird... the term “horror” also suggests (falsely, to my mind) that the arousal of fear is somehow the prime concern of weird writing. (Joshi, 2001: 3)

Weird fiction does not rely on the concept of shock to achieve its effect. Yet, with the decline of Weird fiction and the growth of commercial horror, it was inevitable that what remained of the Weird fiction canon – what Miéville refers to as ‘Haute-Weird’ in his critical work on the genre – would be assimilated. All Weird fiction is imbued with a sense of timelessness and mythological history, supported by a cast of monsters that twist and distort our understanding of biology and physiology.

Weird fiction is a specific genre landscape full of world-building details, clear understanding of genre conventions and application of literary style. It is also different from the fantasy or horror story, something which Lovecraft himself comments on in his essay “Supernatural Horror in Literature” (1927):

> The true weird tale has something more than secret murder, bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains according to rule. A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be a hint, expressed with a seriousness and portentousness becoming its subject, of that most terrible conception of the human brain--a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space. (Lovecraft, 1927: 426)

There is a tension between the natural and the unknown – once again, manifested in the biology of the tentacle – which always haunts the narrative in Weird fiction, and it is this relationship that creates the atmosphere of dread that permeates these stories. For Lovecraft, true horror does not lie in the supernatural elements of spectral manifestations, but in the corporeal form symbolised by his more visceral creations. Michel Houellebecq

discusses this Lovecraftian approach to horror, declaring that 'by introducing materialism… It is no longer a question of believing or not believing, as in certain vampire or werewolf tales; there is no possible reinterpretation, there is no escape. There exists no horror less psychological, less *debatable*' (Houellebecq, 2005: 46). The indescribable entities from Lovecraft's work do not leave any room for spiritual interpretation - they are visceral, biological nightmares which cannot be ignored. Miéville's work mirrors this approach, shifting from a psychological to a material form of horror, examining indescribable biological entities such as the Hosts from *Embassytown* (2011), the Avanc from *The Scar* (2002) and Mr. Motley from *Perdido Street Station* (2000).

In his work defining Weird fiction, Miéville clearly understands this relationship between what he calls 'revolutionary teratology' and Weird fiction's detachment from the return of the repressed witnessed in the uncanny. For him, the monsters of Weird fiction represent a break from folkloric, even Gothic, traditions and this is most effectively represented by the indescribable biomass of the tentacle. He recognises the growth of popularity in contemporary popular culture for more Weird-oriented teratological entities:

> Paradigmatic is Weird fiction's obsession with the tentacle, a limb-type absent from European folklore and the traditional Gothic, and one which, after early proto-Weird iterations by Victor Hugo, Jules Verne and H. G. Wells, viralled suddenly in Haute Weird fiction until it is now, in the post-Weird debris of fantastic horror, the default monstrous limb-type... the awe that Weird fiction attempts to invoke is a function of *lack* of recognition, rather than an uncanny resurgence, guilt-function, the return of a repressed. It is thus as much a break from as an heir to traditional Gothic. (Miéville, 2009a: 512)

Miéville's contribution to the literary criticism of Weird fiction is this disassociation of Weird fiction's sense of awe from the psychoanalytical evaluation of the uncanny in Gothic fiction. Even though these two genres share similar aesthetic qualities, Miéville's critical work on Weird fiction moves it away from the common descriptions of the uncanny as first prompted by Freud and more recently by the work of Nicholas Royle.

Borrowing the prefix from the renowned Weird fiction writer William Hope Hodgson, Miéville refers to the Weird as being 'suffused with abness' following Hodgson's use of the prefix "ab-" in many of his stories to help describe the nonhuman characters and his monstrous creations. Miéville develops his idea further:

> The monsters of the abcanny are teratological expressions of that unrepresentable and unknowable, the evasive of meaning. Hence the enormous preponderance of shapeless, oozing gloopiness in the abcanny monstrous, the stress on formlessness, shapes that ostentatiously evade symbolic decoding by being all shapes and no shapes. (Miéville, 2012f: 381)

The idea of the "abcanny" – the expression and physical manifestation of the unknowable, rather than the return of the repressed which defines the *un*canny – becomes a useful manifesto for describing the effect of Weird fiction. If the un- canny is the token of repression, the symbol of that which has been hidden but become revealed, then the ab- canny is the token of liminality, the symbol of that which is incomprehensible, that which is "away" as the prefix suggest. If one evaluates Miéville's description of the abcanny above, then the body of the squid or cephalopod (represented by the tentacle) quickly establishes itself as the "avatar of abcanniness", its unique physiological ability to change form, colour and shape reflecting most effectively Weird fiction's abcanny teratology.

For Miéville, the tentacle has shifted from being the symbol of Weird fiction's exploration of the greater cosmos to representing fantastic horror generally in popular culture. The use of new interpretations of the tentacular in *New* Weird fiction therefore becomes important, as these texts reinstate the tentacle as the physical manifestation of weird awe, of a "*lack* of recognition". Within horror narratives, teratology is used as a methodology for inducing threat or repulsion. In the structure of Weird fiction, the monster's effective abcanniness is created through its ability to be devoid of comprehension, for there to be no conceptual understanding of its existence. The tentacle most effectively demonstrates this state of awe due to its "alien" physiology.

Miéville highlights Tennyson's poem "The Kraken" (1830) as an early example of the abcanny being expressed. Tennyson's short and dynamic poem evokes the unknowable entity of the mythical leviathan of the deep, with its 'shadowy sides', 'enormous polypi' and 'giant arms' (Tennyson, 1985: 17). Indeed, the description of the Kraken in Tennyson's poem is deliberately opaque and minimal, with these descriptive elements not actually clearly ascribed to the Kraken itself. The poem concludes by picturing the Kraken's ascent to the surface:

> Until the latter fire shall heat the deep;
> Then once by man and angels to be seen
> In roaring he shall rise and on the surface die. (Tennyson, 1985: 17)

This ending is a powerful evocation of the maritime legend, the giant abcanny body dying as it breaches into the human world. The poem's structure is an effective metaphor for Weird fiction itself, the final fifteenth line breaking free from the restrictive form of the traditional sonnet like the Kraken's chaotic tentacles: the abcanny body represented by form itself. Miéville appreciates Tennyson's creation as a body which expresses the 'essential antimeaningness at the core of the abcanny' but does not include the poem as an example of Haute-Weird, claiming that: 'I think it is an interstitial, rather than absolutely Weird text. Yes, it is about an abcanny unknowable, but there is also something very specific about the beast's abyssalism, its benthic essence, that makes us shiver' (Miéville, 2012f: 382). Miéville proposes that Tennyson's poem (and the tentacular Kraken itself) exists between genres and it is this property that makes it so disturbing. However, this lack of Weird-recognition seems a little unfair considering the number of underwater creatures which exist in Weird fiction, but Miéville suggests that the diminishing stature of the Kraken in the final moments of Tennyson's poem make it different from the classic sea monsters of Weird fiction which 'retain every scrap of their enormity and power above the waves' (Miéville, 2012f: 382). For him, the Kraken needs to maintain its physical grandeur to compete with the likes of Cthulhu and Dagon, the underwater leviathans from

Lovecraft's stories. Miéville does not consider the poem's symbolic breaking-free from traditional form, which clearly links Tennyson's tentacled monster with Weird fiction's "lack of recognition" regarding both teratological physicality and the use of language. The tentacular in Weird fiction – and its abcanny nature – also represents the aesthetic effect of the texts themselves; one of a "lack of recognition" towards traditional genre categories.

Weird fiction's lack of recognition is also instigated through its historicity. Even though the scope of Weird fiction could be argued to stretch back to the 1880s, the majority of Lovecraft's self-proclaimed Weird fiction appeared after the end of the First World War, a visceral conflict which left countless numbers of deformed and mangled weird bodies in its wake. This is an interesting factor which Miéville explores, suggesting that this monumental global event had a dramatic effect on the perception of the monster in fantastic fiction. Whereas before the war the fantastic was used to explore social commentary, after the war horror became the new methodology:

> The fantastic has always been indispensable to think and unthink society, but traditional monsters were now profoundly inadequate, suddenly nostalgic in the epoch of modern war. Out of this crisis of traditional fantastic, the burgeoning sense that there is no stable status quo but a horror underlying the everyday, the global and absolute catastrophe implying poisonous totality, Weird fiction's revolutionary teratology and oppressive numinous grows. (Miéville, 2009a: 513)

Post-war reality is so horrifying that the monsters of fantasy literature no longer have any capability for social commentary and, instead, develop a sense of nostalgic reflection of past cultural periods. Therefore, Lovecraft's tentacled Weird-teratology proves so effective. The disbelief of what had happened during the First World War's atrocity is symbolised by the indescribable horror of Lovecraft's creations. The tentacle becomes a physical manifestation of trauma. Awe is no longer a product of numinosity – an acceptance of divinity – but of an inability to process what has happened in recent history and how society ever reached this tipping point. After such self-destruction and atrocity,

the only means of escaping from the horrors of the real world are to escape into the realm of the “Great Outside”, the mysterious unknown, in order to find numinous understanding. As Joshi suggests, ‘It could be said that the Weird tale is an inherently philosophical mode in that it frequently compels us to address directly such fundamental issues as the nature of the universe and our place in it’ (Joshi, 1990: 11). Lovecraft’s self-proclaimed Weird fiction is certainly a product of the significant psychological shift seen after the end of the First World War. Monsters needed a new form and the unknown greater cosmos, represented most effectively on Earth by the “alien” cephalopod and its tentacles, held greater attraction than folklore and mythology. This shift was summarised by Lovecraft as “cosmic indifference”, which Joshi highlights as a metaphysical and ethical stance involving ‘the minimization of human self-importance’ (Joshi, 1990: 175). Indeed, Weird fiction’s strongest feature is a questioning of the structures of society and religious doctrine. As Miéville concludes, ‘The focus is on *awe*, and its undermining of the quotidian. This obsession with numinosity under the everyday is at the heart of the weird’ (Miéville, 2009a: 510). One might perceive the Weird as the dark cousin of the sublime.

Miéville comments on the timing of Weird fiction’s rise in relation to the development of science fiction as a genre. Hugo Gernsback founded *Amazing Stories*, the first magazine dedicated to science fiction, in 1926, three years after the founding of the magazine *Weird Tales*. The similar developmental timing of these genres is significant due to the shift in the perception of the fantastic as a result of the First World War. Miéville describes Weird fiction as ‘the bad conscience of the Gernsback/Campbell sf paradigm’ (Miéville, 2009a: 510), reflecting Weird fiction’s parallel development but opposing direction to Gernsback’s publication. Historicity explains the rise of New Weird fiction at the turn of the millennium too, another moment of significant psychological shift as social structures are challenged and reassessed. Although not the result of war, this point in history is, nevertheless, still a turbulent moment and the embracement of Weird fiction’s ability to approach the question of our existence in the universe encouraged

genre writers to once again examine the stylistic and narrative elements expressed by Lovecraft eighty years before.

At the turn of the millennium, the tentacle – at that point assimilated as a symbol of fantastic horror in popular culture – became a teratological tool for re-exploring weird aesthetics in contemporary literature. As well as Miéville's later academic work in the field of Weird fiction, it becomes clear that Miéville's novels experiment in the use of weird aesthetics, albeit from a fresh (*New*) perspective of body horror. His Bas-Lag novels and *Kraken* most effectively demonstrate this critical analysis of Weird fiction and its potential for social commentary at the turn of the millennium. Houellebecq's examination of Weird fiction is prophetic: 'it is somewhat curious that among Lovecraft's numerous disciples none has been struck by this simple fact: the evolution of the modern world has made Lovecraftian phobias ever more present, ever more *alive*' (Houellebecq, 2005: 116). At the turn of the millennium there was a noticeable shift amongst the writers of the fantastic in response to what Houellebecq is talking about here. Many writers (to be highlighted later) began to understand the power of Weird fiction to comment on a drastically changing cultural landscape.

2.2 New Weird Fiction: A Slippery Term

The New Weird is the manifestation of this understanding. The New Weird is hard to define as a genre category: a slippery beast, a millennial generic tentacle. As discussed, Weird fiction, and Miéville's critical exploration of it, break down Freud's interpretation of the uncanny and demands a new terminology. In "The Uncanny" Freud theorised about his subject thoroughly but is unable to identify definitive characteristics; both the uncanny and the New Weird demonstrate an unwillingness to be clearly categorised. Miéville demonstrates how "weirdness" opposes the repression which Freud describes, resulting in what he refers to as the "abcanny".

So, what separates the New Weird from more familiar Lovecraftian Weird fiction?

What qualities do they both share? The abcanny becomes vitally important when considering these questions. The tentacle is still a common feature, but New Weird writers have started to utilise the abcanny in a more extreme fashion, exploring how the 'oozing gloopiness' and shapelessness, which Miéville depicts in his definition of the abcanny, can be creatively represented through imagery of body horror and other metaphorically "tentacular" motifs.

Let us consider in what ways New Weird fiction can be defined. In 2003, the renowned speculative fiction author M. John Harrison, posed an interesting question on his *The Third Alternative* message board that sparked a lengthy discussion regarding the existence, orientation and ever-changing facets of the term "New Weird". Later, in response to this growing debate, Ann and Jeff VanderMeer edited the collection *The New Weird* (2009) in order to try and collate some of the vast theoretical discussion and evidence that inform this term. Their collection includes the start of the online conversation which Harrison initiated. The author's starting question seemed simple:

> M. John Harrison (Tuesday, April 29, 2003 - 10:39 am): The New Weird. Who does it? What is it? Is it even anything? Is it even New? Is it, as some think, not only a better slogan than The Next Wave, but also incalculably more fun to do? Should we just call it Pick 'n' Mix instead? (VanderMeer and VanderMeer, 2009: 317)

Harrison's questions do invite consideration of Derrida's theory of hauntology. In *Specters of Marx* Derrida reminds us that hauntology insists that there is no such thing as an original "new" idea. That everything is inevitably haunted by history and what has come before. Harrison is therefore right to challenge the "New" prefix. Indeed, the New Weird does share some clear connections to its older cousin, Weird fiction, especially its love for the tentacular, albeit in a gloopier, abcanny form. However, the difficulty experienced by the New Weird movement to establish a credible definition is due, in part, to its hauntological association to Weird fiction which the New Weird has found difficult to push aside.

However, what developed from Harrison's initial question was anything but simple: a rhizomatic, tentacular, network of response and theoretical discussion between authors, literary scholars, readers and anonymous bloggers. The VanderMeer collection struggles to find clarity, only printing a tiny proportion of the overall debate, which was chronicled in its entirety by the author Kathryn Cramer on her website *The New Weird Archive* (2007). What this debate indicates is twofold: firstly, the interest that Harrison's term created amongst scholars and readers; and secondly the tricky nature of effectively identifying the definitive traits within this new brand of speculative fiction.

Several recognisable contemporary names in the world of genre fiction – such as Justina Robson, Steph Swainston, Jeff VanderMeer and China Miéville himself – answered Harrison's request, all trying to articulate their own interpretation of the term. Swainston's response is one of significant note:

> The New Weird is a wonderful development in literary fantasy fiction… [it] is a kickback against jaded heroic fantasy which has been the only staple for too long... It borrows from American Indian and Far Eastern mythology rather than European or Norse traditions, but the main influence is modern culture - street culture - mixing with ancient mythologies. The text isn't experimental, but the creatures are... There is a lot of genre-mixing going on, thank god... The New Weird is secular, and very politically informed. Questions of morality are posed. Even the politics, though, is secondary to this sub-genre's most important theme: detail. (VanderMeer and VanderMeer, 2009: 318-319)

There are a lot of elements to consider in Swainston's thoughtful definition. First is the reference to experimental monsters and this is clearly the case. Even though Lovecraft's Cthulhu was an indescribable hybrid collection of different biological components, the teratology of the New Weird is even more so, the "tentacular" elements emulating the creativity and bizarreness of Lovecraft's creation. The New Weird monstrous includes sentient fungi, oozing biomasses, machine and biological constructs, animal and human hybrids, alien bodies consisting of unrecognisable parts, examples of body horror and mutilation. Through all this the tentacle remains as a steady motif, whether it be the recognisable tentacles of the cephalopod or something more representative in nature,

reaching appendages demonstrating the chaotic creativity of the New Weird movement, the fluid 'genre-mixing' that Swainston is so thankful for. The New Weird tentacular embraces the materiality of the tentacle, yes, but also introduces it in other, more unstable and interesting ways - such as through gelatinous, gloopy hybrid constructions, the rhizomatic tentacles of fungus, or more posthuman expressions of the tentacle such as the connectivity of information networks and artificial intelligence.

The second consideration here is the deliberate kickback against heroic fantasy. The recognisable and established secondary world construction of fantasy novels such as those by J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, based on fairy tale and Norse mythologies, is now superseded by references to Far Eastern, American Indian and African myths and storytelling, which Miéville employs through his use of mythological figures such as the Vodyanoi, Golems, Garudas and Khepri, all of which utilise hybridity in their construction. However, as Swainston points out, what makes New Weird identifiable is its transference of new inspirational sources to a world that is more recognisably contemporary, usually communicated using urban or architecturally-dominant landscapes. There is also a deeper examination of political structures and social concerns. However, as Swainston concludes, the focus in New Weird fiction is on the detail. World-building and immersion, as defined by Farah Mendlesohn, becomes central.

It is this focus on detail which makes the New Weird an engaging and theoretically interesting consideration. The style of New Weird texts is dense and constructed of many layers of literary description which aim to create a sense of destabilisation. As Darja Malcolm-Clarke suggests:

> All of those elements we could say defamiliarize the way we see our own world, and ask us to re-envision what we know about, or rather, how we conceptualize, the metaphysical makeup of our own world... But the grotesquerie of the New Weird wasn't the extreme cosmic horror of Lovecraft, or even supernatural horror, but one of *degree* - grotesquerie of exaggeration. New Weird had the sense of unease that is found in Horror, but that unease wasn't resolved in a moment of terror. Instead, that grotesquerie was part of the secondary worlds' aesthetic as a whole. (Malcolm-Clarke, 2009: 338)

The dense, descriptive detail regarding characters, architecture and, more importantly, monsters, introduces a sense of the grotesque which seeps into the aesthetic of the world-building process of New Weird writers. These elements of the grotesque exist within the spectrum of the uncanny and the abcanny, the unfamiliar existing simultaneously with the familiar. The uncanny and the abcanny are not just moments of effect within a novel. They are integral to the world construction of the New Weird. Once again, the New Weird tentacular is an important methodology for establishing this grotesque aesthetic, with repulsion created by the abcanny monstrous taken to exaggerated extremes. New Weird worlds shake our perception of the real world around us in a fundamental and visceral manner.

This, as Malcolm-Clark concludes, is the New Weird's creative and critical power: 'as with its apparent interest in the urban and the corporeal as an arena for power struggle, alongside its weird aesthetic, the New Weird seems to have a built-in faculty for social critique (or access to it, in any case)' (Malcolm-Clarke, 2009: 340). The social critique in New Weird is far-reaching: the experiences of transient communities (*Iron Council*), political power struggles (New Crobuzon), environmental concerns, (the extinction of the Stiltspear in *Iron Council*) and colonial commentary (*Embassytown*) are just a few elements to consider.

Miéville himself, when he does enter this debate regarding the New Weird, acknowledges the genre's ability to create social commentary through immersion. His responses to Harrison's debate focus on the technical aspects of the New Weird form and how 'it is genuinely and lengthily destabilising and alienating' (Cramer: 2007). The New Weird's success lies in its ability to immerse and destabilise simultaneously, to introduce a detailed, grotesque and engaging secondary world whilst inviting the reader to consider the similar destabilising structures which exist within their own.

The dense, literary style adopted by Miéville and other New Weird writers helps to create this sense of alienation in a literal and material manner. This aesthetic arises from

the New Weird's examination and appreciation of a variety of genres. The Finnish critic Jukka Halme explores this connection in the introduction to his 2006 anthology titled *Uuskummaa?* (or *New Weird?*):

> New Weird is a form of speculative fiction that tries to blur the borders between various genres (science fiction, fantasy, horror, mainstream, etc.) while aiming for a more literary style of writing...with an overwhelming tendency to play with the form. It wants to create something new, both linguistically and literally. It is not a movement per se, since when a movement takes shape it establishes itself, stops moving and thus changes into something academic - and New Weird stands for change. It needs constant interaction between the Reader and the Writer as well as bold, new ideas. (Halme et al, 2009: 355-356)

In this schema, New Weird plays with the idea of genre itself, utilising the freedom from boundaries and constraints to use whichever motifs and styles it wants. The result is a new interpretation of the fantastic which reflects the attitudes and concerns of the modern reader. Under this analysis, the prefix "New" becomes significant. Halme suggests a deep-rooted interaction between the New Weird and its readership, as well as a constant shift and change. This argument holds weight when considering the myriad of definitions for the New Weird. Halme's suggestion that the New Weird is 'not a movement per se' is supported by this inability to conceptualise the New Weird in a critical, academic context, as well as Miéville's reluctance to fully engage with the term over time, eventually saying that 'personally, I don't think I'm going to say too much about New Weird any more. As a great person once (nearly) said in a different context "It is more pleasant and useful to go through the 'experience of the New Weird' than to write about it"' (Miéville, 2005c: 51). Halme's definition highlights the slippery nature of the "New Weird" as a descriptive category. Its desire to constantly adapt in line with modernity makes a firm classification of the New Weird a difficult proposition.

Halme's definition is helpful in showing the New Weird's playful approach to genre classification. New Weird texts contain recognisable elements from a variety of different genres, primarily focusing on the interplay between science fiction, fantasy and horror

through the depiction of the uncategorisable details seen in earlier Lovecraftian Weird fiction. However, there is a significant difference between Weird and New Weird fiction in terms of genre appreciation. For Lovecraft (who, as previously discussed, was the only writer who actively admitted his intention was to write “Weird” tales) his project was very clearly to establish Weird fiction as a new genre, to discuss the *differences* between Weird fiction and its direct counterparts, science fiction, horror and fantasy. For writers of *New* Weird fiction, the aim is to celebrate the *similarities* between these genres, to highlight how they blur and interact with each other. For Lovecraft, these genres were separate entities, involving unique approaches to their construction. For Miéville, they can all be considered within the same text, with motifs and characteristics being shared and combined. Weird abcanny teratology can easily mix with the cyberpunk motifs of science fiction, the elements of Steampunk world-building and the repulsive grotesquerie of horror, all within the same novel (*Perdido Street Station* clearly displaying these elements).

Even though on an aesthetic level, New Weird writers adopt a more literary tone than more commercial genre fiction, their disregard for genre boundaries does indicate a rebellious unwillingness to embrace mainstream recognition and the popularity that more recognisable genres such as science fiction and crime fiction enjoy. As Kathryn Cramer indicates, ‘writers of the New Weird enjoy playing with genre boundaries for their own sake, because they are a good toy’ (Cramer: 2007). The New Weird revels in the pleasure of its own unwillingness to conform to expectations. This subtle difference in genre appreciation is another reason why the prefix “New” is important. The New Weird recognises Lovecraftian influence upon genre, but approaches this in a loose, more refreshing manner. The weird is present but expressed in a fundamentally “new” way through deliberate genre-splicing rather than genre difference. The New Weird differs from other movements of fantastic fiction, such as Magic Realism, due to its willingness to surrender to the weird itself. The presentation of weirdness is the New Weird’s endgame. As Miéville summarises:

> A (New) surrender to the Weird isn't an act of untheoretical naivety, but is a deliberate engagement. We know – of course we know – that this is "just fiction," but in loving, debasedly loving, the weird, in literalizing, not metaphorizing, the impossible, we perform an act of *radical forgetting*. I am the Weird's Bitch. We know the fantastic will always-already be metaphorical, but it also has its own integrity. (Miéville's, 2005c: 50, original emphasis)

The New Weird may be lovingly embracing the Haute-Weird of Lovecraftian tales but it is its own monster; its own hybrid creation full of potential.

This genre-splicing that occurs in New Weird fiction is effectively demonstrated through Miéville's consideration of magic and science. In traditional fantasy novels, magic systems are portrayed as miraculous and as an elemental power that defies logic, even if there is some sort of physical price for spell-casting. In Miéville's Bas-Lag novels, the boundary between magic and science is permeable and the two are intrinsically combined. An indication of this can be found in Miéville's etymology. What we may call "magic" is referred to as 'thaumaturgy' in Bas-Lag, a word which sounds much more scientific yet is rooted in the Greek word for *marvel*. Miéville's treatment of magic and science in his Bas-Lag novels has much to do with the historical connotations of his steampunk setting: his secondary world reflects the ideological shift from the "old ways" to a more scientific understanding of the world, reflective of the real-life Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century. As a scientist, Isaac, the protagonist in *Perdido Street Station*, stands on the cusp of expanding knowledge as we are shown a world that is in flux in terms of its own metaphysical understanding. This can be seen in this extract that Isaac reads from a Bas-Lag scientific textbook:

> The vodyanoi, by means of what is called their *watercræft*, are able to manipulate the plasticity and sustain the surface tension of water such that a quantity will hold any shape that the manipulator might give it for a short time. This is achieved by the vodyanois' application of a *hydrocohesive/aquamorphic energy field of minor diachronic extension*. (Miéville, 2000: 36, original emphasis)

This passage shows an application of Weird fiction's use of scientific etymology as a tool for simultaneous immersion and destabilisation of expectations. The elemental magic of the vodyanoi is explained not through wonderment, but by using pseudo-scientific terminology, attempting to destabilise the fantastical effect of *watercræft*. Miéville achieves this through the use of literary stylistics that sound familiar to the reader yet are fantastical linguistic constructions: terms such as "aquamorphic", "thaumaturgy", "crisis engine", "chymical" when used immersively, without explanation, leave the reader to decipher them and make approximate translations. These terms also lend a sense of authenticity in Miéville's world building. Scientific terms are used as a means of trying to explain fantastical occurrences, just as Lovecraft's fascination with science infiltrates the descriptions of his monsters and creations. Bas-Lag is a world in a state of scientific discovery during *Perdido Street Station*, and this "(New) Weird-Science" continues to develop as the trilogy progresses through *The Scar* and *Iron Council*. However, despite Isaac's clear aptitude for science and engineering, his attitude when reading this extract summarises the role of science in trying to explain the fantastical: 'It brought home to him, again, how much mainstream science was bunk... Benchamburg had no more idea how the vodyanoi shape water than did Isaac, or a street urchin, or old Silchristchek himself' (Miéville, 2000: 36). Despite all the scientific acuity that can be acquired, to Isaac there are still some fantastical elements in the world which defy all knowledge. Lovecraft experienced the same dilemma and his Weird fiction tales were the result.

What this shows is the problem of categorising the New Weird. The weird aesthetic interferes with the reader's genre expectations. Its fluidity and unwillingness to conform makes the New Weird difficult to classify as a genre at all, as boundaries and motifs are ignored and broken down. The chaotic form of the tentacle becomes metaphorically significant once again.

Miéville is keen to bring a level of critical evaluation into Harrison's debate. For Miéville, the realism that New Weird fiction portrays is what stands it apart from other

fantastical genres:

> Where much traditional sf/f thinks of itself as 'escaping' something (reality), New Weird knows there is no escape, and *gets on with the weird anyway*. So it *knows* that its paranoid fantastic will riff and reverberate inevitably and tellingly with the real - and it trusts itself and its readers to get on with the political job of mapping the cross-hatching… This is also why New Weird is radically opposed to narrow 'utopian' or 'dystopian' or (god help us) 'metaphoric' fiction, in which supposed weirdnesses are marshalled to make metaphorical political points. (Cramer, 2007, original emphasis)

The New Weird does indeed seem to capture the new uncertainty that identified the turn of the millennium; growing concerns over capitalist, political, technological and social structures and their effect on the population, as well as the uncertainty of how the population would respond to such factors. The New Weird reacted to the growing revolutionary response of the period, firstly inspired by the Post-Seattle movement and then later by Neoliberal ideals, the global financial crisis and the implementation of austerity and disparity of wealth distribution. Miéville's views of New Weird fiction confirm this viewpoint. As well as describing the New Weird as 'the pulp wing of surrealism' (Miéville's, 2005c: 48) – highlighting Miéville's affection for the use of strange and juxtaposed motifs and, arguably, their revolutionary associations – he also highlights that the role of the New Weird is not to provide a fantastical escapism from such issues of social uncertainty but to present them clearly to the reader:

> New Weird is secular and political. It's my opinion that the surge in the unescapist, engaged fantastic, with its sense of limitless potentiality and the delighted bursting of boundaries, is an expression of a similar opening up of potentiality in "real life", in politics. Neoliberalism collapsed the social imagination, stunning the horizons of the possible. With the crisis of the Washington Consensus and the rude grass-roots democracies of the movements for global justice, millions of people are remembering what it is to imagine. That's why New Weird is post-Seattle fiction.
>
> This is emphatically not to suggest that all the authors share a particular political (or (non-)religious) viewpoint, but to stress that the fiction *itself* is messy, problematic and problematising – it's a reaction against moralism and consolatory mysticism. (Miéville, 2005c: 50)

This acceptance of ‘no escape’ or ‘unescapist, engaged fantastic’ which Miéville refers to here is the New Weird’s key underlying thematic message and the reason why it is such an effective aesthetic for contemporary social commentary. The New Weird’s manifesto is not to provide escapism for the reader, but to thrust them into their own social realities.

Instead of thinking of the New Weird as a genre of its own, it therefore feels more effective to define the New Weird as an aesthetic and thematic canvas on which motifs from other genres can be painted. It is true that New Weird texts do share common motifs, but it is restrictive to suggest that the presence of these shared motifs should constitute the definition of “New Weird” as a genre landscape. After all, as soon as such a label is applied, the texts immediately become restrained. The philosophy of the New Weird – the freedom that comes from an unwillingness to conform (in short, to become “tentacular”) – is therefore an important factor when considering the application of a genre label. What is more useful is to apply these shared motifs as brushstrokes to other genre texts. Polish scholar, Konrad Walewski, also explores this concept of the New Weird:

> New Weird [is] a literary strategy, a way of thinking about writing and understanding imaginative fiction, and, above all, a way of practicing it, which has turned out to be innovative not at the level of narrative technique... but rather at the level of setting and characters. Constructing baroquely lush cityscapes and eclectic, astounding locations, filling them up with multicultural and multiethnic societies of humans, monsters, and all kinds of hybrid forms, creating complex characters and subjecting them to the dilemmas of the world they live in - these are all characteristics of the New Weird practice. (Halme et al, 2009: 359)

As well as agreeing with Swainston’s earlier allusions to modern street culture and urbanism, Walewski’s definition here suggests that the New Weird is different from its earlier iteration due to an embracing of different class, ethnicity and cultural structures within its world building methodology. The New Weird is more open to representing minorities in a fashion which is representative of the increasing hybridity and multiculturalism present in modern social landscapes.

The New Weird should not be perceived as a genre at all, but as a key tool within the world-building process, a practice or strategy adopted by the writer. This approach does make sense, as it accounts for New Weird aesthetics being present within a wide variety of texts across different genres. Miéville's own work suddenly shifts into generic focus when viewed under this schema. The Bas-Lag books have been consistently described as "New Weird" texts. However, when seen through the lens of "New Weird *practice*", *Perdido Street Station* becomes a monster-horror novel, *The Scar* a maritime adventure and *Iron Council* a western, all delivered with New Weird aesthetic flourishes.

However, how "new" is the New Weird? After all, many of the common features of New Weird texts are using motifs from the Lovecraftian Weird fiction of the early-to-mid twentieth century. For example, in the case of Miéville's work, his affection for the tentacular is a direct descendant of Lovecraft's Cthulhu tales. Yes, as previously discussed, the New Weird does approach these motifs differently in terms of genre appreciation, but are New Weird texts strictly limited to the first decade of the twenty-first century?

Writers such as Stephen King, Clive Barker and Neil Gaiman all wrote texts that contained elements of the New Weird canvas, such as internalisation of the supernatural (first displayed by Ramsey Campbell), an exploration of the urban as a locale for the weird and the portrayal of New Weird tentacular and body horror motifs.[33] Most contemporary examples of New Weird fiction are closely connected to this principal thematic characteristic: the representation of body horror. It is its approach to the depiction of grotesque bodies that signals New Weird as being different from its more recognisable ancestor. Whereas Lovecraft's Weird fiction revelled in the monster's indescribable physiology as a means of examining the possibilities of the greater cosmos,

[33] Many of Stephen King's novels embrace elements of New Weird aesthetics but his 1986 novel *It* most effectively demonstrates the traits mentioned here. Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* (1996) and Clive Barker's *Coldheart Canyon* (2001) are also great examples of the New Weird aesthetic and interest in body horror and urban locales. S.T. Joshi stated that 'future generations will regard [Ramsey Campbell] as the leading horror writer of our generation, every bit the equal of Lovecraft or Blackwood' (Joshi, 2006).

New Weird teratology moves beyond the unsettling dread of Cthulhu to focus on the grotesquerie of the monster motif and the social commentary which can be created by it. As VanderMeer points out: ‘in this kind of fiction body transformations and dislocations create a visceral, contemporary take on the kind of visionary horror best exemplified by the work of Lovecraft - while moving past Lovecraft’s coyness in recounting events in which the monster or horror can never fully be revealed or explained’ (VanderMeer and VanderMeer, 2008: x). This recalibration of body becomes the central element of the New Weird aesthetic. In fact, it is this element that separates the New Weird from other forms of progressive fantastical writing such as Slipstream and Interstitial Fiction. The inclusion of a horror influence, with what Jeff VanderMeer refers to as ‘the intense use of grotesquery focused around transformation, decay, or mutilation of the human body’ (VanderMeer and VanderMeer, 2008: xvi), makes New Weird distinct from these other sub-genres that exist around it which could be said to be informed by the New Wave of science fiction. This horror influence is designed to highlight a “threat” which aims to move the reader to a more transgressive social and political commentary.

In conclusion, the New Weird was born out of necessity to categorise those texts that were uncategorisable, texts reflecting the ever-changing cultural landscape of the early twenty-first century. It is an experimental style of writing used by writers to explore sociological ideas. The New Weird utilises the fantastical, the macabre and the Gothic to skew our perspective of the recognisable urban locales of the twenty-first century world, showing us dark corners that we have repressed. The New Weird’s embracing of the monster reflects this. The tentacular elements of Lovecraftian Weird fiction are present but also given more abcanny qualities, emphasising shapelessness, ooziness and rhizomatic features, also symbolising the New Weird’s approach to genre conventions. The New Weird is an aesthetic approach, rather than a specific genre: a tapestry woven with a deep appreciation and understanding of genre categorisations and expectations, yet choosing to incorporate whichever pattern it likes, assimilating motifs for its own purpose.

The power of the New Weird lies in its detail and the immersion that this creates. The secondary worlds of the New Weird are rich, baroque and monstrous landscapes, created through explorations of hybridity: hybridity of spaces; hybridity of society; hybridity of language. It differs from Weird fiction in that its purpose is not to create a new specific genre, but to splice and mix different genres together into a new form, expressed with literary flourishes. The New Weird successfully explores how the atmosphere of dread, which Lovecraft was obsessed with, can be articulated within other genre texts. It is in constant flux, changing with the cultural references which it clings to, resulting in a slippery identity. It is this flux that has made the New Weird such an appealing style to explore for contemporary genre writers.

Yet this power is also its downfall, preventing the New Weird from becoming a fully acknowledged genre category. Instead, the term has drifted into relative obscurity, with little critical academic analysis in the past decade. However, the influence of the New Weird's moment within the cultural spotlight is ongoing: even though the term is no longer widely used, its genre-splicing methodology continues to spread throughout contemporary genre fiction as writers ignore boundaries and choose specific motifs which best articulate the social commentary that they wish to explore: 'It is precisely their decidedly label-resistant work, a conjunction of science fiction and fantasy scenarios populated with creatures that are clearly connected to, yet not derived directly from, Lovecraftian weird tradition, that makes the work of these [New Weird] writers so rich... the New Weird's mixing of genres is, no doubt, one of the reasons for its contemporary popularity' (Aldana Reyes, 2016: 208). For Miéville, the Weird represents most succinctly the elements of genre fictions which do not comfortably fit into categories:

> I don't think you can distinguish science fiction, fantasy and horror with any rigour, as the writers around the magazine *Weird Tales* early in the last century (Lovecraft in particular) illustrated most sharply. So I use the term 'Weird fiction' for all fantastic literature - fantasy, SF, horror and all the stuff that won't fit neatly into slots. (Miéville, 2002b)

Miéville's methodology and his genre-splicing output symbolises the New Weird's rebellious mark upon the landscape of genre fictions, as well as his deep-rooted appreciation and understanding of Lovecraftian Weird fiction and its influence. It is also an aesthetic which mirrors his own revolutionary, political viewpoint. For Miéville, the New Weird is a mass of gloopy tentacles, reaching out into all aspects of contemporary society, grasping socio-political issues and dragging them into view.

Chapter Three:
China Miéville, Psychogeography and Marxist Urban Theory

3.1 Psychogeography and the Importance of Urban Landscapes in *London's Overthrow* and *The City & The City*.

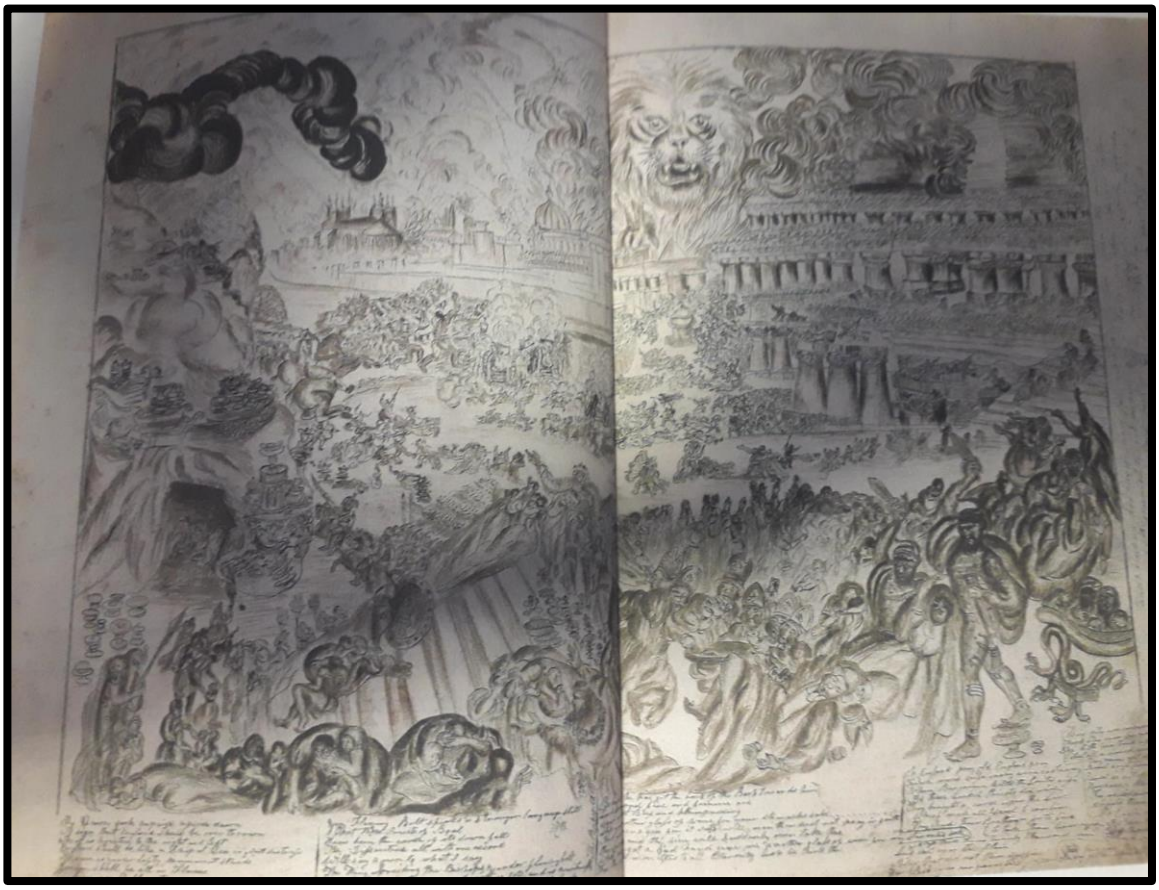
> Deep inside the town there opens up, so to speak, double streets, doppelganger streets, mendacious and delusive streets – Bruno Schulz, *The Cinnamon Shops and Other Stories.*[34]

China Miéville's extended-essay *London's Overthrow* originally appeared in the *New York Times Magazine* and a more complete book-form was published in the UK in 2012. The text is an account of Miéville's nocturnal strolls through London during the final two months of 2011. Armed with a camera to take snapshots of the urban landscape, Miéville's objective was to produce an overview of the psychological condition of London under the Coalition government. Miéville's exercise here could easily be interpreted as an act of psychogeography, what Merlin Coverley defines as 'the point at which psychology and geography collide, a means of exploring the behavioural impact of place' (Coverley, 2010a: 10). Given his tendency to utilise the urban as a setting for his fiction,[35] it becomes interesting to analyse what role psychogeographical techniques play in Miéville's development of urban landscapes.

The title of Miéville's essay is taken from a drawing by Jonathan Martin, produced sometime between 1829 and 1838, whilst Martin was incarcerated in Bethlem Royal Hospital for trying to burn down York Minster. In this version of "London's Overthrow" we

[34] This is the Epigraph to China Miéville's novel *The City & The City.*

[35] Miéville has currently written 11 novels and two volumes of short stories. Three novels (*Kraken, Un Lun Dun* and *King Rat*) and a significant number of his short stories are all set in London. The entire Bas-Lag trilogy has urban settings affecting the action (*Perdido Street Station* and *Iron Council* are set in New Crobuzon and *The Scar* has the floating pirate city of Armada). Three more of his novels are primarily set in fictionalised and extrapolated urban landscapes (*Embassytown, The City & The City* and *The Last Days of New Paris*).



"London's Overthrow" ©Jonathan Martin, image photographed by author, from China Miéville, *London's Overthrow*, 2012c: 12-13.

witness the destruction of the city due to godlessness, the dome of St. Paul's visible in the distance through fire and smoke.

The head of a lion (Britannia perhaps?) looms over the scene. The inhabitants of the city are wandering around as if descending into the depths of hell. Miéville refers to the artwork as 'Another diagnostic snapshot' (Miéville, 2012c: 11), a visual representation of the civil unrest and chaos that existed beneath the surface of nineteenth-century society. In his version of *London's Overthrow,* Miéville provides us with a similar snapshot and it soon becomes apparent that the same unrest still exists nearly 200 years later, albeit for different reasons. Godlessness has been replaced with austerity and governmental failure - a moral and spiritual standpoint replaced with

economics and capitalism. For Miéville the lion looks out from the apocalypse of Martin's imagining into a desperate reality: 'London, buffeted by economic catastrophe, vastly reconfigured by a sporting jamboree of militarised corporate banality, jostling with social unrest, still reeling from riots. Apocalypse is less a cliché than a truism. This place is pre-something' (Miéville, 2012c: 14). Miéville's depiction of a 'pre-something' London suggests a landscape about to irrevocably alter and he uses Martin's prophetic drawing as a constant reference point within the essay. For example, when discussing the Tottenham riots, Miéville reflects that 'Jonathan Martin prophesies: 'London shall be all in flames'. It's scribbled below the lion. Who's mad now?' (Miéville, 2012c: 41) The apocalypse of London – the destruction of the urban landscape – exists in both times, albeit for different reasons. Martin's destructive 'flames' become the consequences of economic catastrophe. More importantly, the apocalypse is communicated in both instances through a deep, psychological connection to the recognisable urban space of London and its famous landmarks.

Another of Miéville's works lends itself well to psychogeographical interpretation. What makes *The City & the City* (2009) so intriguing is the nature of the novel's setting. Inspector Tyador Borlú of the Extreme Crime Squad in the city-state of Beszél is assigned the case of a homicide involving a disfigured girl found on the outskirts of the city. The "police procedural" plot serves as a useful tool to introduce Miéville's political and psychogeographical exploration. Beszél shares the same geographical space with the "twin city" of Ul Qoma but through the volition of their citizens they are perceived as two different cities. From childhood, residents of each city are taught to recognise elements of the other and then immediately "block out" their existence. To not comply is known as *breaching* and is punishable. The result is an indoctrinated method of *unseeing* both architecture and people from the other city which is policed by a secret force known as Breach. As the murder investigation develops, Borlú finds himself on both sides of the border as the clues lead him into the shadowy corners of both cities and force him to evaluate the true motives behind Breach. This imaginative concept allows readers to

explore the themes of psychogeography closely, as we witness the effect that the physical intertwining of these urban environments has on the inhabitants. Unseeing plays a significant role within the narrative, encouraging critical thought regarding our connection to urban landscapes. The concept of policed borders engages the reader with political issues and subtexts due to contemporary and historical conflicts involving land disputes and imperialistic motives.

The use of the prefix un- is interesting here. The suggestion of this prefix inclusion is *not*-seeing and Miéville uses it playfully. This is not a biological or a physical action but a psychological one. As Caroline Edwards and Tony Venezia demonstrate in their "UnIntroduction" to the 2015 volume *China Miéville: Critical Essays*, this prefix creates a paradox: 'in not doing these things, the disavowal required of an antonymic UnIntroduction necessitates an Introduction in the first place' (Edwards and Venezia, 2015b, 1). By suggesting *not* seeing, the act of unseeing which Miéville creates *draws* our attention to that we should not be observing.

The epigraph in *The City & the City* reads: 'Deep inside the town there open up, so to speak, double streets, doppelganger streets, mendacious and delusive streets.' This sentence is from a specific translation of the story "The Cinnamon Shops" (1934) by the Polish writer, Bruno Schulz. This is an interesting quotation for Miéville to use here for several reasons. Firstly, Miéville has chosen a quotation from a *specific* version of Schulz's story as it is translated by John Curran Davis. In other translations of the story this line is slightly different: for example, in Celina Wieniewska's translation there are 'doubles, make-believe streets' (Schulz, 2008, 55). The inclusion of 'mendacious' and 'delusive' in the translation Miéville choses alludes to a deliberate act of misleading and deception as opposed to Wieniewska's choice of innocent 'make believe'. The fact that this line has been interpreted in several ways is symbolic of the "unfixed", a theme which is opposite to *The City & the City's* idea of indoctrinated geographical zones and controlled behaviour. Secondly, it alludes to the uncertain nature of the political systems of cities and their ability to deceive. Finally, considering this being adopted by a political

writer, it is impossible to ignore the allusions to the act of dissembling the streets. The reality of our streets is lost behind a cover of social and political falsehoods. Given that Schulz himself was murdered for appearing in the wrong quarter of Drohobych, the concept of border and zone duality and the brutality of its control is being expressed here through Miéville's choice of epigraph.

In both *London's Overthrow* and *The City & The City* Miéville engages with the urban in order to explore the modern socio-political landscape. This engagement between urbanism and politics is one motif that the cultural theory of psychogeography has always been exploring with varying degrees of success. It therefore seems pertinent to apply psychogeography to Miéville's work to see how he may be trying to incorporate its methodology as a political tool. By examining his work, especially *The City & the City* and *London's Overthrow*, we can explore whether his political viewpoint is effectively portrayed through application of psychogeographical techniques and how Miéville may be attempting to redefine psychogeography for the twenty-first century urban landscape.

Miéville takes the imagery of the city and plays with it. He fuses the imaginative traits of genre fictions with the everyday to produce his own brand of urbanism. The fantastical becomes a lens through which to examine political and social structures and concerns regarding modern cityscapes. This fusing of fantasy tropes and social urban realism – which we could label as *fantastical-urbanism* – grants Miéville creative freedom to explore sociological and political concerns. In *Perdido Street Station* (2000) there are elements of fantastical-urbanism in the streets of Bas-Lag, such as the rubbish tip suddenly springing to life, merging electronic components and machine parts into an intelligent being, symbolising technology's increasing sentience within modern urban culture. In *The Scar* (2002), even the open oceans are urbanised, with the city of Armada created from the physical joining and extending of captured and up-cycled vessels:

> They were built up, topped with structure, styles and materials shoved together from a hundred histories and aesthetics into a compound architecture.

> Centuries-old pagodas tottered on the decks of ancient oarships, and cement monoliths rose like extra smokestacks on paddlers stolen from southern seas. The streets between the buildings were tight. They passed over the converted vessels on bridges, between mazes and plazas, and what might have been mansions. Parklands crawled across clippers, above armories in deeply hidden decks. Decktop houses were cracked and strained from the boats' constant motion. (Miéville, 2002a: 101)

It is as if Miéville shows us how urbanism is encroaching into every area of the contemporary world, how the urban can adapt and evolve into new forms, to intrude upon other environments and combine different architectural aesthetics and social influences. Miéville fundamentally shows us how varied and complex urban environments can be and the role that they play in crafting our psychological and social identity.

Psychogeography is a term that continues to create much debate, with influence from a wide range of sources including politics, cultural studies, architecture and literature. The political radicalism created through examining urban environments – the way in which the art of walking affects our perception of urban space – and the constant reassessment of our personal and social relationship with the cities in which we live corresponds with Coverley's useful definition. At first glance, therefore, it seems productive to associate Miéville's work, so heavily influenced by urban space, with psychogeography.

However, Miéville's relationship with psychogeography is problematic. His work can be examined using the lens of psychogeographical theory, yet he shows a reluctance to engage with the movement fully, suspicious of the recent 'celebritisation' of psychogeography as 'a lazy label for hip decay tourism' (Miéville, 2012c: 58). He is aware of psychogeography's ever-dwindling lifespan too; that it has now developed beyond its roots as a tool for social and political examination and has become something else that needs to be re-evaluated:

> Some really interesting stuff has been done with psychogeography… I mean, re-experiencing lived urban reality in ways other than how one is more conventionally supposed to do so can shine a new light on things—but that's

> an act of political assertion and will. If you like, it's a kind of deliberate—and, in certain contexts, radical—misunderstanding. Great, you know—good on you! You've productively misunderstood the city. But I think that the bombast of these particular—what are we in now? fourth or fifth generation? — psychogeographers is problematic. (Manaugh, 2011)

He is keen to highlight how psychogeography's political message has been misunderstood by the most recent generation of practitioners. Miéville embraces the political contributions that psychogeography has made in its previous incarnations but suggests that it is time to create a new method of political and cultural examination for urban landscapes.

Miéville explores new methods of examining urban landscapes in both his fiction and non-fiction. His socialist affiliations inevitably direct his attentions towards the city, as much of the political power-struggle that interests Miéville focuses on the urban landscapes that are growing, in size and stature, across the modern world. The city has become a useful landscape for exploring contemporary politics. Miéville's writing asks questions about these new unexplored strata of the contemporary urban landscape, seeking to infuse psychogeographical study with new political and social focus.

The chronology of psychogeographical thought can be segmented into distinct periods. Firstly, there are the urban novels of the eighteenth and, more prominently, the nineteenth century through to the Modernist period. Later, in the mid twentieth century, psychogeography was adopted by the Lettrist and Situationist International as a political tool to encourage urban change and revolution but was never fully realised as a theoretical perspective. Most recently, from the 1990s onwards, psychogeography has reflected upon the postmodern landscape of contemporary cities. The common themes of psychogeography stretch across all three of these key time periods and reflect the wide-ranging interpretation of urban landscapes. They include: the act of walking and the figure of the flâneur; the theoretical examination of emotional zones and spaces; the effect of borders; and, finally, the consideration of crowds and individual anonymity. By examining Miéville's work through the lens of these psychogeographical themes, we can

begin to understand how he views the modern urban landscape and how he may be attempting to redefine psychogeography for a new generation.

3.1.1 Walking the Streets: The flâneur

Miéville's psychogeographical work uses the themes of anonymity to instigate social commentary. In *London's Overthrow* he uses the stories of "forgotten" populations as a means of communicating social and political issues. In *The City & the City* anonymity is explored again, through the concept of *unseeing*. We first witness unseeing occurring at the start of the novel between Borlú and an elderly woman:

> Immediately and flustered I looked away, and she did the same with the same speed... When after some seconds I looked back up unnoticing the old woman stepping heavily away, I looked carefully instead of at her in her foreign street at the facades of the nearby and local GunterStrasz, that depressed zone. (Miéville, 2009b: 14)

What we see here from both characters is a psychological detachment from their surroundings that leads to a sense of isolation and anonymity. The final words of this extract reveal how their psychology is intrinsically linked to the physical surroundings; the word 'depressed' being used to express not only the gloomy urban setting but the unstable psychology of the people inhabiting this space. The unseeing that occurs within real-life modern cityscapes (avoiding homeless people for example) is exaggerated by Miéville through the citizens of Besźel and Ul Qoma. This is a direct result of the banalization of urban space by simulacra and commercialism. The detachment of individuals due to the saturation of brand symbols and media imagery translates to psychological detachment from social concerns and geographical surroundings. These effects lead to a banalization of urban landscapes that dramatically alters how we behave within those spaces.

This idea of anonymity and invisibility is seen much earlier in Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Man of the Crowd", first published in 1840. The narrative centres on a nameless narrator who, whilst watching the crowds on a London street, spots a figure who looks suspiciously different from the rest. His interest piqued, the narrator follows the stranger throughout the streets of London, observing intensely. The pursuit continues for almost a day, as the narrator follows the stranger from shop-to-shop, where they show no signs of buying, before entering a gin-house. When he eventually confronts his quarry, who moves past him as if he was not there, Poe's narrator finally relents, admitting that the old man is 'the type and the genius of deep crime. He refuses to be alone. *He is the man of the crowd.* It will be vain to follow; for I shall learn no more of him, nor of his deeds' (Poe, 2009: 212 – 13, original emphasis). The important element of the narrative here is not the *man* of the title but the *crowd*. Poe focuses much of the early part of the story on the sociological construction of the crowd itself, highlighting the vast array of characters present on the modern urban street. At the same time, the size and rapid movement of the crowd dehumanize the individuals that constitute it, they become invisible and mechanical. The stories of these individuals are lost, swallowed by the modern industrial cityscape. Poe is capturing 'nothing less than the beginnings of modernity itself' (Nicol, 2012: 465). The effect is the anonymity of the individual amongst the crowd, the narrator in Poe's story moving unnoticed amongst a populace under the influence of industrial and commercial simulacra. Breach in *The City & the City* possess similar powers of anonymity to Poe's narrator - invisibly observing the citizens of the city and passing judgement on their motives and movements.

Both *The City & the City* and *London's Overthrow* are focused around narrators that use walking as their principal method of traversing the urban landscape. In *London's Overthrow* Miéville himself is the wanderer, capturing the sights of the night and recording them with his photographs and words. Even though *The City & The City* is set in a modern urban landscape, it is surprising how little action takes place within a motor vehicle. Miéville consciously keeps his characters on the streets. This is reminiscent of Michel de

Certeau's reflection of New York as a city of voyeurs and walkers whose opposing perceptions of the city are controlled by the dominant urban feature of the skyscraper. The voyeurs, who look down upon the city from the viewing platforms and hundredth-floor windows, are completely separated from the walkers on the streets: 'The ordinary practitioners of the city live "down below", below the threshold at which visibility begins. They walk - an elementary form of this experience of the city: they are walkers' (de Certeau, 1988: 93). For De Certeau there is a distinction between those people viewing "the map" from above and those individuals finding themselves within "the territory" of the streets below. Their perspectives and realities are vastly different from one another.

In Miéville's urban landscape, Borlú is a walker, experiencing the city in a physical way from the ground up and this is an important distinction as it assimilates him into the urban landscape. Walking becomes a central methodology for uncovering the secrets that lie hidden: for Miéville directly, in *London's Overthrow*, this truth is the real political and social situation in modern London; for Borlú, it is the uncovering of the truth behind the murder. Walking, and the figure of the wanderer, becomes a central factor for deciphering the codification of the urban landscape, due to the wanderer's ability to become more intimate with their surroundings and explore forgotten spaces.

This idea is not new. Although the term itself was not used until the mid-twentieth century, the first depiction of psychogeographical concerns appears in the urban novels that grew in popularity during the nineteenth century. It is impossible to ignore the influence that the growing metropolis and the act of walking the streets had upon the writers of the time. For example, Thomas de Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821) firmly associates London with the drug-induced wanderings of the novel's protagonist, who becomes invisible, able to explore the chaotic landscape of the city. Miéville too, in *London's Overthrow*, seems to slip silently across the urban landscape of London, becoming one with Occupy campaigners and grime-music clubbers before appearing in abandoned housing estates and railway embankments. Miéville's movements in *London's Overthrow* appear random and ghost-like, almost ethereal in

nature, and this allows him to be an observer of all aspects of the urban landscape, just like De Quincey.

In the novel *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) just as Jekyll and Hyde are divided in terms of respectability and monstrousness, so too is the city of London, with the grand Victorian terraces of the West End concealing the poverty and debauchery of the East End. Each of the protagonists becomes intrinsically and psychologically linked with the city. Interestingly, almost 130 years after Stevenson, Miéville highlights this juxtaposition with the new Olympic Park complex. Miéville joins Iain Sinclair on a walk past the twisted tower of the ArcelorMittal Orbit monument. For Sinclair this walk is familiar and Miéville observes him watch 'the city change shape from under an unlikely baseball cap, with polite dislike' (Miéville's, 2012c: 36). Just as Stevenson uses Mr. Hyde as a metaphor for the dark social underbelly of Victorian London, Miéville and Sinclair look past the grandeur of the Olympic Park and examine the social and political significance of this East End development, how 'youth clubs and libraries are expendable fripperies' against the Olympic Park budget (Miéville's, 2012c: 36). To emphasise this social juxtaposition, Miéville comments upon a sump that they encounter just past the Olympic Park, filled with tyres and supermarket trolleys. Quite sardonically, Miéville just simply states: 'Call it apocalypse tourism, but we stare at it a lot longer than we do at the twisted tower' (Miéville, 2012c: 40). For Miéville, the Olympic Park and this sump are just as symbolic as Stevenson's characters Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde at highlighting the vast difference in social standing and situation. It is the act of walking the streets that has revealed this to both writers working over a century apart.

In both novels the city becomes a physical manifestation of their protagonist's psychological states. Reality and hyperreality become blurred amongst the architecture of London's streets. In *The City & The City,* the real architecture revealed by Borlú's physical activity of walking the streets is described in such a way as to bring it to life and make it feel mysterious and fantastical. The scenario – two cities sharing the same space

– allows Miéville to describe the architecture of this unique urban landscape in a surreal way, imbuing Besźel and Ul Qoma with mystery:

> The regions by the river are intricate, many buildings a century or several centuries old. The tram took its tracks through byways where Besźel, at least half of everything we pass, seemed to lean in and loom over us. We wobbled and slowed, behind local cars and those elsewhere, came to a cross-hatching where the Besź buildings were antique shops. (Miéville, 2009b: 16)

The individual cities of Besźel and Ul Qoma are physically similar, but do have slight differences in architectural style, with Besźel representative of neglected Soviet-bloc urban geography and Ul Qoma having a more modern and up-market orientation, although still with areas of older architecture.

The dynamic between Besźel and Ul Qoma is reminiscent of modern Istanbul. Firstly, historically and religiously, Istanbul is a city of cross-hatching.[36] A contested territory, Istanbul (under other names such as Byzantium and Constantinople) has been under the rule of the Roman and Ottoman empires, both leaving their own mark on the city in terms of cultural and architectural influence. The city has been a meeting point of religion, ethnicity, wealth and political power ever since it was established on the Bosphorus, the natural border between empires and continents. In Istanbul, there is a sharp contrast between the glistening skyscrapers of the financial district and the city's historic peninsula. The Istanbul landmark of Hagia Sophia represents this shift and blend of culture in Istanbul, having been during its lifetime a Greek orthodox church, a Roman Catholic cathedral (briefly), a mosque and now a museum. Secondly, Miéville's creation Copula Hall – itself sparking off comparisons with the Hagia Sophia with description of 'it's huge entrance like a made, secular cave… much larger than a cathedral, larger than a Roman circus' (Miéville,2009b: 85) – represents the Bosphorus in Miéville's world building. The Bosporus acts as a border between the European and Asian sections of

[36] See pages 129-130 for a more detailed account of "crosshatching".

Istanbul, very much in the manner that Copula Hall is the border point between Besźel and Ul Qoma. Both are a shared, liminal space. Just like Besźel and Ul Qoma, Istanbul is a city not only straddling political borders but chronological ones too, mixing the old with the modern.

Even though these differences between Besźel and Ul Qoma are slight they are important. Since both cities intertwine Miéville creates a surreal geography of mixed architectural influence. The streets of Besźel and Ul Qoma become mysterious and alluring due to this mix of influences and the quality is revealed to the reader through Borlú's wanderings. The same is seen in Miéville's walks in *London's Overthrow,* with London described as 'Topography patchworks. Seventeenth-century noses up through building-years to horrible modern brick the colour of mustard, 80s, 90s and noughties jostling with the centuries-old stone' (Miéville, 2012c: 53). A cacophony of influences and architectural styles produces a surreal urban landscape that creates different emotional and psychological responses.

What is created is an association between walking the streets and our psychological connection with urban space. The figure of the flâneur – the French word for "stroller" or "saunterer" – emerges with psychogeographical thought, first as a literary figure but then as a social consideration. The flâneur is a figure that uses the act of walking as a means of exploring and, more importantly, experiencing a location casually and with no fixed purpose. Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* is an unfinished collection of writings about nineteenth-century Paris, particularly focusing on the covered pedestrian arcades that were first constructed in the early 1800s. In his magnum opus Benjamin considers the poetic observations of Charles Baudelaire to be the archetypal example of the flâneur figure and the arcades were the flâneur's milieu, a modern stimulus to explore and experience. Indeed, Baudelaire's often quoted definition of the figure expresses its intention: 'He is looking for that quality which you must allow me to call 'modernity'; for I know of no better word to express the idea I have in mind'

(Baudelaire, 1964: 12). Baudelaire's flâneur uses the act of walking to identify with the burgeoning modernity of the nineteenth century city.

The growth of the flâneur corresponds with the rise of commercialism, with the flâneur denoting: 'a certain relationship to an intensifying process of commodification' (Donald, 1999: 14). Indeed, the presence of the flâneur as a figure directly corresponds with the growth of Paris and London's arcades and boulevards as described in Benjamin's *Arcades Project*. The casual strolling through commercial districts becomes a pastime. The growth of the modern world during the interwar years vastly altered the perception of cityscapes for the people who inhabited them, and the flâneur became a figurehead for this change:

> The flâneur, as much as the train passenger, is constituted in terms of a modern sensibility whose morals and social character is endangered by the 'shocks' of modern life, shocks whose other side is evident in a fascination with the sensations offered by new forms of mobility and spatial horizons. (Swanson, 1994: 82)

The flâneur, therefore, becomes associated with the burgeoning world of commercialism and modernity, representative of society's more widespread wealth and the free time granted by the increasing industrialisation of manufacturing.

Virginia Woolf employs the figure of the flâneur in her narrative essay, "Street Haunting: A London Adventure" (1927). In this essay, Woolf depicts the streets of London, on an early-Winter evening, as she walks across to the Strand in order to buy a pencil; the commercial reasoning for this stroll. However, Woolf clearly states that the pencil is irrelevant; that 'as if under the cover of this excuse we could indulge safely in the greatest pleasure of town life in winter - rambling the streets of London' (Woolf, 2005: 1). Woolf describes the myriad of characters that she encounters on her walk: 'Walking home through the desolation one could tell oneself the story of the dwarf, of the blind men, of the party in the Mayfair mansion, of the quarrel in the stationer's shop' (Woolf, 2005: 14). It's these stories that ultimately encourage us to question our own

understanding of our place within the world. By embracing the city and these encounters we are able, as Woolf elaborates: 'to give oneself the illusion that one is not tethered to a single mind, but can put on briefly for a few minutes the bodies and minds of others... [that] to escape is the greatest of pleasures; street haunting in winter the greatest of adventures' (Woolf, 2005: 15). The use of haunting is interesting here; once again the suggestion of invisibility and freedom to explore the city without restriction in a similar fashion to De Quincey's drug-induced wanderings.

Miéville too examines the commercial flâneur in *London's Overthrow*. Miéville's flâneur – using the commercialism of the Christmas period – infuses this economic disparity Woolf explores with political vigour, commenting on how 'the ultrarich might stick to Chelsea and Belgravia, the wealthy stay out of North Woolwich' (Miéville, 2012c: 25). It is the act of walking the streets that allows Miéville to view these disparities. However, there is something more significant for Miéville's flâneur and this is the banal branding of the modern, austerity cityscape: 'A tide of commercial entropy tugs shopping precincts towards indistinguishability, pedestrian brandscapes' (Miéville, 2012c: 27). Christmas decorations highlight this banality and act as 'class markers' (Miéville, 2012c: 31). In poorer regions of the capital – 'where the unrich live' (Miéville, 2012c: 29), Miéville playfully deploys the 'un-' prefix once more – the 'amiable, vivid and tatty' decorations are interspersed with 'pawnbrokers and 'money shops' for short term loans' (Miéville, 2012c: 28-29). Miéville witnesses the commercial aspect of Christmas as a distinct social and political marker: 'white lights and silver ornaments are seasonal peacock tails, with bleached feathers' (Miéville, 2012c: 31). The commercialism of the city is a lens with which to view the social and political gulfs that exist between the economic classes. Whereas Woolf's flâneur witnesses a wide variety of classes and characters on her consumerist walk, Miéville witnesses distinct *regions* of social class and wealth which portray a much more Marxist interpretation of social division.

With *London's Overthrow*, Miéville seeks to decode the modernity of the contemporary "global city" affected by capitalism and austerity. Miéville's repeated

reference to the Olympic Park (which moves beyond this concept of modernity witnessed by Baudelaire's flâneur into the realm of simulacra) uses the methodology of walking to explore a *new* modernity of the urban landscape created by economic and political uncertainty rather than the burgeoning wealth and power of Baudelaire's city. Miéville has produced an *anti-Baudelairian* version of the flâneur figure.

Miéville uses the figure of the flâneur in a specific way here. Whereas Woolf and Baudelaire's interpretations experience the city as a sociological experiment and record, Miéville's reinterpretation of the flâneur as a political tool is used to show the failures of modern society and government. This lack of political engagement is the ultimate problematic element of the traditional flâneur figure. The flâneur becomes a device that never quite delivers on what it promises. As Rebecca Solnit declares: 'The only problem with the *flâneur* is that he did not exist, except as a type, an ideal, and a character in literature... no one quite fulfilled the idea of the *flâneur*, but everyone engaged in *flâneury'* (Solnit, 2001: 200). The flâneur becomes associated primarily with a specific historical time period, part of the social change in nineteenth century London and Paris. Certainly, by the time Iain Sinclair examines the art of walking in *Lights Out for the Territory* (2003), the flâneur is a distant memory:

> The concept of 'strolling', aimless urban wandering, the *flâneur*, had been superseded. We had moved into the age of the stalker; journeys made with intent - sharp-eyed and unsponsored. The stalker was our role-model: purposed hiking, not dawdling, nor browsing. No time for the savouring of reflections in shop windows, admiration for the Art Nouveau ironwork, attractive matchboxes rescued from the gutter. This was walking with a thesis. With a prey... The stalker is a stroller who sweats, a stroller who knows where he is going, but not why or how. (Sinclair, 2003: 75)

Sinclair replaces the flâneur with another walker which he labels 'the stalker': a walker that has purpose for its activity. The aimless meanderings of the nineteenth century commercially-minded flâneur are usurped by a more radical figure.

In *London's Overthrow,* Miéville's wanderings at first appear to be random, with no pre-determined purpose, just like those of the flâneur. However, thanks to Miéville's engaging style of writing, we are soon shown a distinct purpose for this walk and this is delivered with focus and determination right from the start of Miéville's essay:

> Shove your hands in your pockets and set out. In London in winter it's nearly pitch at half-past-four... There's been a revolution in remembrance. Digital photography's democratised the night-shoot. One touch at the end of a sleepy phone call on your way home, you can freeze the halo from streetlamps, the occluded moon, night buses, cocoons shaking through brick cuts, past all-night shops. Right there in your pocket, a lit-up memory of now. (Miéville, 2012c: 7-9)

The start of *London's Overthrow* poetically encapsulates the passion of psychogeography and its practitioners. The opening sentence 'Shove your hands in your pockets and set out' becomes the calling-card for any incarnation of the psychogeographical wanderer. Miéville introduces the modern Smartphone and shows how this technological development is fundamentally changing our understanding of psychogeographical thought. The development of photographic technology now means that everything can be recorded, resulting in a simulated banalization of the urban landscape. By taking photographic records of everything around us, these sights lose their importance and significance, becoming examples of simulacra. Miéville is acutely aware of this condition, ironically referencing the recording of mundane sights in the opening to his essay. However, this is then followed by Miéville's new historicist approach to his wanderings: to record a 'lit-up memory of now'. The images that he produces to include in *London's Overthrow* are consciously chosen. They metamorphose from examples of urban simulacra to a form of photo-elicitation designed to create a social and political response from the reader.

Miéville's wanderer in *London's Overthrow* (himself) has a specific objective and because of this it shares more in common with the *dériveur* figure conceived by the Lettrist and Situationist movements of the 1950s. By the late 1920s the literary

approach to psychogeographical concerns had mostly faded away. In the social upheaval of 1950s Paris, psychogeography was adopted as a political tool. By the end of the Second World War the Surrealist movement was in decline and the promises of social reform replaced with tension between aesthetic and political impulses. Out of this rose the Lettrist International, and then later the Situationist International, a small collective of political thinkers[37] proclaiming the need for a new society free from 'a mental disease [which] has swept the planet: banalization' (Chtcheglov, 2006: 4). Psychogeography became central within this movement as a tool for creating manifestos for a change in urban planning.

What is clear here though is the reintroduction of walking as a central idea to the psychological and political interpretation of urban space, reflected in Debord's examination of the *dérive* and its practitioner, the *dériveur.* The *dérive* is different from the strolls of the flâneur as it has a distinct, in-built awareness of psychological concerns, a fixed purpose or intense interest in a locale, quite often one which is illicit, inappropriate or revolutionary:

> The lessons drawn from dérives enable us to draft the first surveys of the psychogeographical articulations of a modern city. Beyond the discovery of unities of ambience, of their main components and their spatial localization, one comes to perceive their principal axes of passage, their exits and their defences. One arrives at the central hypothesis of the existence of psychogeographical pivotal points... The only difference is that it is no longer a matter of precisely delineating stable continents, but of changing architecture and urbanism. (Debord, 2006b: 66)

There may be no destination in mind, but the process involved is deeply considered and the dériveur is conducting valuable research regarding the changes in mood and ambience that they experience, as well as barriers to this ambience shift. This reflects

[37] Including, amongst others, the French Marxist theorist Guy Debord, Danish artist Asger Jorn and the Belgian writer Raoul Vaneigem. Ivan Chtcheglov's 1953 work *Formulaire pour un urbanisme nouveau* ("Formulary for a New Urbanism") was an influential text for both the Lettrist and Situationist International groups.

Miéville's project in *London's Overthrow*. Unlike Woolf, who sets off to the Strand with the direct purpose of obtaining a pencil, Miéville sets off on his nightly wanderings with no direct location in mind, but he does have a specific *cognitive* objective - to explore the unknown communities and gauge the social, economic and political temperature of this urban landscape. He is a dériveur due to the specific political nature of his journey and desire to highlight regional shifts in psychological condition between districts of London.

Borlú, in *The City & the City* cannot be labelled entirely as a dériveur. The reader themselves become the dériveur through observing Borlú's investigation. Since Borlú has been indoctrinated to unsee the city of Ul Qoma, he does not actually fully experience the unexpected shifts in ambience that the reader does when the opposing city is mentioned. As a novel, *The City & The City* examines the concept of the dérive intensely, exploring how a city, when traversed on foot, can encourage the walker to map out different zones of ambience. However, due to the creative world-building Miéville employs, this sense of psychological evaluation is played out by the reader and not the novel's characters - an interesting and effective shift of perspective. Miéville's examples of the walker figure show a desire to explore the political and social condition of the city they inhabit. We can read his work as trying to fuse together the directness of Iain Sinclair's "stalker" with the political intention of the Situationist International's dériveur to create a walker which best represents the need for reconsideration of urban landscapes in the twenty-first century. In many respects the dériveur is a *detective* figure, walking the streets in order to solve the mystery of the city: 'the flâneur investigator is thus an elaboration on the concept of the man who enjoys the spectacle of the streets because he will make aesthetic and intellectual sense of this spectacle' (Buse et al, 2005: 5). Borlú is an extreme representation of this, literally "walking the beat", an actual investigator through which the reader of *The City & The City* can both decode the murder and the twin cities themselves. We view the urban landscape through Borlú's movements and thoughts; his investigation allows us to interrogate it. Crime fiction and urban landscapes share many similarities regarding shifts in perspectives:

> Unlike their rural counterparts, cities are in a constant state of flux through decay and regeneration and many crime writers find themselves acting as literary cartographers of an authentic but rapidly changing urban space. (Andrew and Phelps, 2013: 1)

In other words, both urban crime fiction and psychogeography examine the multifaceted and ever-changing nature of the city and how the urban landscape affects the psychology of those people that inhabit these spaces. In urban crime fiction – represented by Raymond Chandler's Los Angeles in the Philip Marlowe novels, or the Edinburgh of Ian Rankin's Rebus books, to the setting of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders of the Rue Morgue" – the mystery is solved in the claustrophobic confines of apartment buildings or by walking the streets looking for the clues. Psychogeographers apply similar techniques to their own examination of the urban. The only difference is that the mystery they aim to solve is not a crime, but the socio-political meaning of the visual signifiers that are present in the urban landscape.

3.1.2 Emotional Zones and Interstitial Spaces.

The figure of the dériveur leads us to consider the next psychogeographical theme that Miéville explores within his work - the concept of emotional zones and the spaces in between them. Miéville shows a keen interest in this concept, exploring how specific locations, or zones, affect our personal emotional perception:

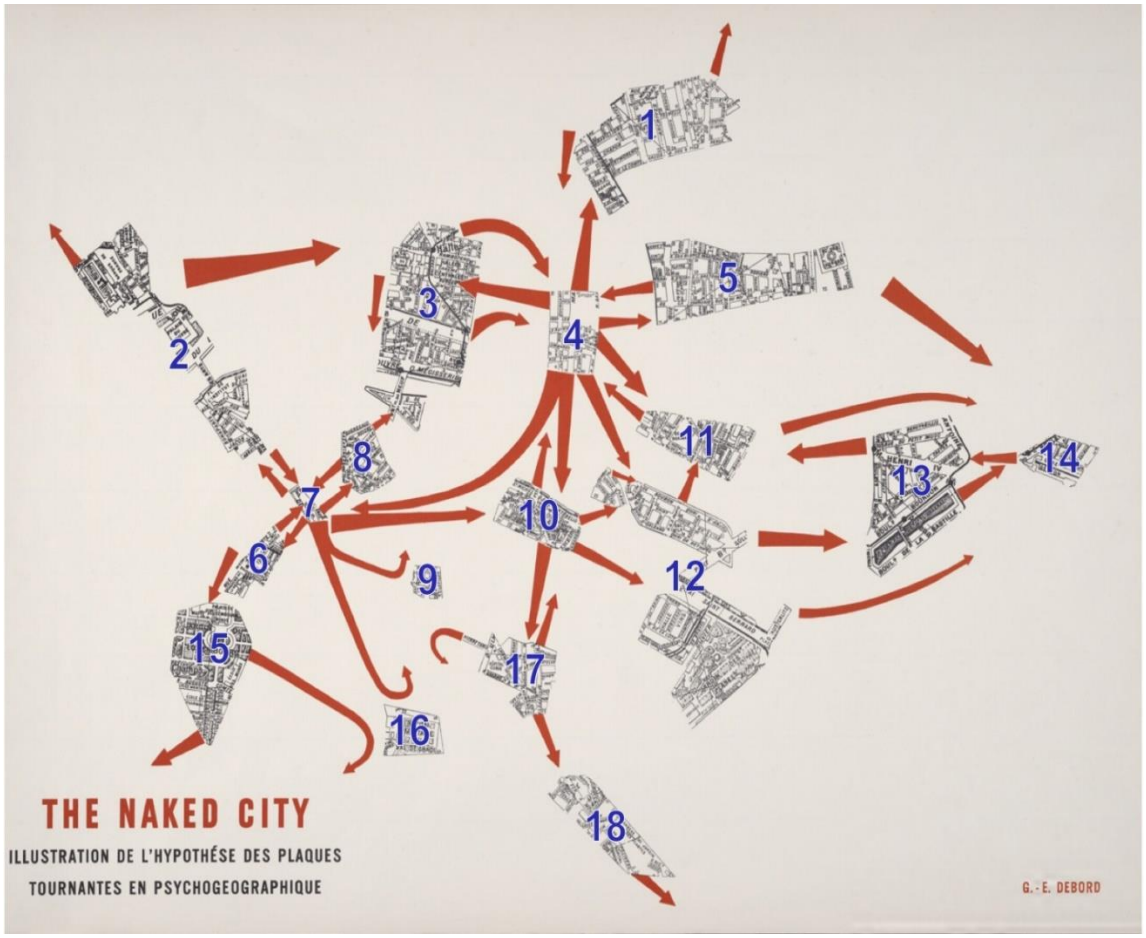
> These interstitial zones, opening at random, shifting and disappearing from the purview of organized space, recur across Miéville's work... The interpenetration of zones becomes the motor of the plot in *The City & the City,* featuring apparently separate cities that occupy the same space and are cross-hatched over each other in complex ways... Miéville's zones are 'impossible' non-Euclidean spaces in which, as Laura Salisbury argues, 'generic transgression is figured in terms of topological complexity'. (Luckhurst, 2011: 29-30)

Miéville's work can cross genre boundaries and expectations through its direct examination of complex zones and topological concerns. In terms of psychogeography, this is demonstrated in Miéville's interpretation of contrasting urban zones and the emotional effect that these zones have on their inhabitants. The interpretation of physical areas and the spaces between them becomes central to Miéville's work. His ideas regarding the blurring of genres are mirrored through psychogeographical exploration of physical space and the way in which topological boundaries can become blurred.

This concept of emotional zones was examined by the Lettrist and then the Situationist International movements as a possible future method of town planning and construction. An early example is Ivan Chtcheglov's "Formulary for a New Urbanism" (1958) which calls for a new type of architecture that reflects an emotional engagement with its inhabitants - to reconstruct cities into specific psychological zones. This idea was later explored by Guy Debord, the figurehead of the Situationist International, with an interpretation of the city as a collection of zones, each with a specific emotional response:

> The sudden change of ambience in a street within the space of a few meters; the evident division of a city into zones of distinct psychic atmospheres; the path of least resistance that is automatically followed in aimless strolls... the appealing or repelling character of certain places - these phenomena all seem to be neglected... In fact, the variety of possible combinations of ambiences, analogous to the blending of pure chemicals in an infinite number of mixtures, gives rise to feelings as differentiated and complex as any other form of spectacle can evoke. (Debord, 2006a: 10)

Debord likens psychogeography to the pure sciences, highlighting the skill at distilling the various emotional ambiances present within any given urban environment. In fact, Debord takes this a stage further, producing a map of Paris centred on this idea. "The Naked City" presents the capital as a collective of nineteen sections seemingly dispersed at random. The arrows on Debord's map suggest possible routes for the users to follow according to the emotional context they experience within a certain zone. As critics of the Situationist International have noted, there can never be a "correct" interpretation of such a map.



© Guy Debord, *The Naked City*, found at: https://isinenglish.com/2016/01/09/debords-the-naked-city-mapped-onto-google-maps/

Despite this rejection, if we view this map in the context of Miéville's *The City & the City* we could imagine this to be a cartographic representation of either Besźel or Ul Qoma with the other twin city removed. By creating this unique urban landscape, Miéville experiments in a similar manner to Debord's "The Naked City". He is examining how particular zones of emotional ambience and social influence can interact together and be aesthetically represented.

In *London's Overthrow*, Miéville moves between different districts of London in order to explore the disparity of economic wealth and socio-political power. Each of these "zones" is unique in the way that Miéville expresses his personal emotional response to his surroundings. Interestingly, this uniqueness is not directed by architectural response – Miéville tends to use this as a means of engaging his political considerations regarding

the failures of the Coalition government – but by the stories of the individuals that either inhabit these zones or accompany him through them on his wanderings. In fact, his descriptions of architecture are quite limited. For example: 'Miles south. New Cross. Past a zone of cheap shops and blistered signs, railways and alleyways, a boarded-up backstreet terrace house' (Miéville, 2012c: 73). Although descriptive, this does not give us any indication to Miéville's emotional connection to this environment. Another example is Miéville's reaction to the abandoned Heygate housing estate, which he visits with the artist, writer and urban examiner Laura Oldfield Ford. Once again, Miéville's description of the estate as 'slabs of buildingness' (Miéville, 2012c: 58) denotes a certain socio-political viewpoint of this urban landscape but does not express much emotional connection to place. However, when he describes the practitioners of *parkour* that appear in the estate, his connection with the location takes on emotional weight:

> Psychogeography of the limbs, filtered through Kung-Fu movies. No number of ads, music videos, station idents featuring roof-bounding like this can make it boring, can alter the fact that watching the *parkouristes* lurch in ways architects never intended along the buildings' innards is quite beautiful. There's salvage. A tough ruin ballet. (Miéville, 2012c: 60)

For Miéville, these *parkouristes* represent the true interaction between individual and geography: an honest and exciting connection with the contemporary urban landscape. Their interaction with this ruined environment is what creates Miéville's positive emotional reaction to it. Emotional zones are created through interaction with architecture, not the architecture alone.

Laura Oldfield Ford shares the views that Miéville portrays in *London's Overthrow*. Like Miéville, her urban analysis is politically tinged and does not relate to the celebrity psychogeographers that Miéville disavows. She too is concerned with the interaction between geography and the individual and the emotions this interaction creates: 'I examine ruined and abandoned spaces from the perspective of the inhabitant or occupier thinking about how spaces can be transformed and reconfigured in that

moment of occupation… a temporary kind of occupation, the fleeting, intense kind' (Lyons, 2014). Oldfield Ford's psychogeographical thoughts form the basis of her illustrated fanzine *Savage Messiah,*[38] an angry, polemical exploration of the marginalisation of the working class. Miéville's essay is tinged with Oldfield Ford's intense examination of occupation of urban space. The majestic St Paul's cathedral is given political significance through Miéville's description of the Occupy campaigners as they: 'set up outside, by a convenient next-door cathedral. St Paul's, Christopher Wren's post-Great Fire masterpiece. A grassroots response to one cataclysm in the splendid shadow of another to another' (Miéville, 2012c: 18). Miéville relishes the Occupy campaigners' invasion of this geographical space, admiring the animalistic masks and placards shouting out their political message. This occupation of the City of London dramatically changes Miéville's personal response to the urban environment.

This concept of emotional interaction between people and geographical space is most clearly expressed by Miéville through his depiction of "zonal attitudes" within *The City & the City.* The inhabitants of these twinned cities are indoctrinated to 'unsee' architecture and people from the opposing city. The resulting etymology expresses this detachment, as zones of each city are described in one of three ways: 'alter', 'total' and 'cross-hatched'. Inhabitants of Besźel and Ul Qoma develop a deep-rooted psychological understanding of the different zones within the shared city, able to identify which type of zone a street exists in with a quick glance: 'There were places of crosshatch in the larger streets and a few elsewhere, but that far out the bulk of the area was total' (Miéville, 2009b: 20). The result is an intrinsic awareness of place and surroundings. 'Total' zones exist entirely within the inhabitant's city and share no physical space with the other. Within these zones the population can act and move freely without worry of retribution. 'Alter' zones exist entirely within the other city and, therefore, are off limits and must be completely avoided and ignored. Zones of 'crosshatch' are the most interesting to

[38] Part graphic novel, part artwork, *Savage Messiah* was collected into one volume by Verso (see Oldfield, 2019).

consider. These are streets or public areas that exist within both cities and therefore denizens from both walk side-by-side. It is in these zones where the rule of unseeing is hardest to maintain as inhabitants must always be aware of their distinguishing cues:

> Most of those around us were in Besźel so we saw them. Poverty deshaped the already staid, drab cuts and colours that enduringly characterise Besź clothes - what has been called the city's fashionless fashion. Of the exceptions, some we realised when we glanced were elsewhere, so unsaw, but the younger Besź were also more colourful, their clothes more pictured, than their parents. (Miéville, 2009b: 21)

Borlú's narration in this extract shows his deep-rooted, instinctive confirmation of the Besź features present in this cross-hatched zone, his fellow inhabitants recognised by their dress alone. Momentary glances at Ul Qomans are instantly 'unseen' and forgotten. These zones are completely a psychological manifestation, with inhabitants making a deliberate, albeit enforced, decision to disengage with the other city.

Miéville's social commentary with unseeing is multi-layered. In general terms it denotes a sense of oppressive regimes and the conformist populations that inhabit these places. One cannot help but conjure up images of imperialistic attitudes and indigenous populations forced to interact in a specific manner. Even though the inhabitants of both Besźel and Ul Qoma appear to be free citizens, the opposite is true. They are psychologically controlled by the invisible enforcers known as Breach. Unseeing reflects a prominent condition present in our own contemporary urban landscapes: the conscious and unconscious detachment from our surroundings. Unseeing is something that we do every day: the avoidance of the homeless on the street; our disengagement from acts of racism or violence which we witness; our unwillingness to explore the spaces in between our familiar spaces of existence. As inhabitants of urban landscapes, we stick to a relatively small area of physical space, using specific routes of navigation between our homes and places of work or leisure. There is an array of zones and spaces within our cities that lie unexplored, a myriad of varying emotional responses to the surrounding

urban landscape from which we distance ourselves. Miéville's use of unseeing in *The City & the City* becomes a polemical examination of contemporary attitudes towards urban society. Unseeing is an act of defamiliarisation, similar to Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject and the literary theory of the Russian Formalists.[39] Viktor Shklovsky, in his 1916 essay "Art as Technique", posits that as the habitualization of perception occurs then the meaning of objects (and therefore words) becomes devoured - 'If the whole complex lives of many people go on unconsciously, then such lives are as if they had never been' (Shklovsky, 2004: 16). This is Miéville's concept of unseeing explained. Defamiliarisation is key for making people consider extreme political structures. It removes you from reality and allows you to view situations from different perspectives. This is an important methodology for the construction of Miéville's aesthetic. By following Borlú's investigation, and witnessing the defamiliarisation of what he unsees, the novel forces us to ask the very personal question "what things do I unsee?" This question is most blatantly highlighted when we witness Borlú legitimately walking through the nocturnal Ul Qoman streets:

> It was a busier city than Besźel at night: now I could look at the figures at business in the dark that had been unseeable shades until now. I could see the homeless dossing down in side streets, the Ul Qoman rough sleepers that we in Besźel had had to become used to as protubs to pick our unseeing ways over and around. (Miéville, 2009b: 171)

This is a significant passage for exploring Miéville's use of psychogeographical motifs as social commentary. As part of the investigation Borlú is granted a pass in order to enter Ul Qoman zones in order to follow up on leads. For a while, Borlú is forced to unsee his home of Besźel, to leave behind the familiarity of his home city and become a

[39]Shklovsky argues that the technique of art 'is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. *Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object: the object is not important...* Art removes objects from the automatism of perception in several ways' (Shklovsky, 2004: 16, original emphasis).

temporary citizen of the other city. Borlú is forced to observe everything which previously he had unseen; a direct psychological shift from normality. The suggested social commentary here is an invitation for the reader to do the same, to observe and recognise the elements of society that unconsciously we would normally ignore; to realise that discourse and perception is controlled by power structures.

The application of various emotional zones is an important consideration of psychogeographical theory as this is the central process in establishing how psychology and geography collide, as defined by Merlin Coverley. This "collision" is instigated by our emotional response to the environment we are in and architectural changes within urban zones can dramatically affect this. This exploration of zones automatically creates gaps in between that become matters of theoretical interest. These interstitial spaces are a significant factor of Miéville's psychogeographical examination. In *London's Overthrow* these spaces are occupied by the cast of "invisible" everyday figures that provide him with insight into the realities of austerity London: grime-music clubbers, squatters, sex workers who are 'just like everyone else... trying to keep ourselves and our families together' (Miéville, 2012c: 34). For Miéville, these characters are the lifeblood of the city and they exist in the unnoticed corners, unseen. His project is to highlight their stories, to make them visible, break down borders between different zones of the urban landscape.

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Map of Baarle-Nassau-Hertog's political zones, reminiscent of Debord's *The Naked City*.

http://www.futilitycloset.com/2011/05/15/an-inland-archipelago/

Belgian/Dutch border markings in Baarle-Nassau-Hertog.

http://photos.tarunchandel.com/2011/01/baarle-nassau-hertog-international.html

3.1.3 *The Brutality of Borders in* The City & the City

Borders are a manifestation of political and geographical considerations. They determine topographical space, affect political stability of regions throughout the world and are a highly politicised symbol of power and control. Miéville, as a political thinker, is unsurprisingly interested in the concept of borders and explores this extensively within his work. The imaginative concept of place that appears in *The City & The City*, although

fresh and compelling, is by no means an original one in socio-historical terms. Miéville visualises an extreme example of political borders that already exist in such cities as Jerusalem, the West Bank, Belfast or Cold-War era Berlin. For example, the town of Baarle-Nassau-Hertog on the Dutch-Belgian border contains distinct pockets of Dutch and Belgian control within its official boundaries. Effectively it is an amalgamation of two separate towns, the Belgian Baarle Nassau and the Dutch Baarle Hertog. Maps of the town's division are reminiscent of Debord's *The Naked City* from the context of psychogeography. This dual municipality may seem a nightmarish scenario, but citizens of Baarle-Nassau-Hertog, although defined by nationality and municipal control depending on the zone in which they live, are free to move between zones without any hindrance. Although the border between the two countries is prominently visible on the streets, it is there purely for municipal reasons and is not actively policed:

> Many homes are cut in half by the border, so as a matter of convention each household's nationality is determined by the location of its front door. If the border runs through the street door, the two parts then belong in different states, and this is indicated by two street numbers on the building... There was a time when according to Dutch laws restaurants had to close earlier. For some restaurants on the border it meant that the clients simply had to change their tables to the Belgian side. (Amusing Planet, 2012)

Despite this lack of militarised control, residents of this town still have a unique relationship with their neighbours, who, despite only being metres apart from each other, have entirely separate and different social structures to consider. Politics and space become intrinsically linked and inseparable. Miéville's portrayal of Besźel and Ul Qoma is an exaggerated depiction of this situation.

Borders, thus, take on psychogeographical properties. The people inhabiting border spaces can become highly politicised. The geography they inhabit, and the brutal control of its borders, directly affects their psychological condition. Unseeing is Miéville's embodiment of this idea. The act to consciously unsee the opposing city is a choice made because of the threat of retribution by Breach. The physical geography of these

two cities requires a dominating force that *enforces* psychological compliance from the general populace. Both populations are stripped of all sensory interaction: it is not just unseeing that is enforced. It stretches to unsmelling and unhearing as well. Breach, originally deployed as a policing force for the borders of these zones, have become a dominant imperialist force that explicitly controls the perception of both populations. Their control of the borders has resulted in the perception of Breach becoming fractured itself; their original role of zonal monitors has become lost and replaced with imperialistic connotations.

In 2013 Miéville visited the West Bank. His essay, “Exit Strategy”, published in the journal *Guernica*, describes his trip through the border point between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Although written after *The City & the City,* this essay has many connections with the political commentary of the novel. Miéville starts “Exit Strategy” with a reference to the Mohammed Al-Durra incident in 2000, when a 12-year old boy was caught in the crossfire between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian security forces. Caught on camera, the boy was killed as he and his father cowered behind a metal barrel. After a public funeral in which the boy became a martyr, conspiracy theories were suggested about the boy’s death being faked as a means of condemning Israeli forces. Suggestions that the boy died at the hands of friendly fire were put forward in opposition. What Miéville highlights with this initial reference is the real brutality of border control and the methods used to ensure that it remains “unseen”. Jamal Al-Durra, the boy’s father, is forced to open his son’s grave in order ‘to prove that this thing we saw happen happened, that the boy we saw die died’ (Miéville, 2013b) and counteract the claims of Israeli and Palestinian forces.[40] The father’s actions here are a crucial counterpoint to enforced unseeing: the suggestion of the boy’s faked death by Israeli forces a means of declaring to the

[40] An official report on the incident was published by the Israeli government in 2013, claiming that there was ‘no evidence that the child was injured or killed by Israeli fire’. This report was immediately disputed by Jamal al-Dura and the original French 2 television reporter Charles Enderlin. Jamal al-Dura further added in response that ‘he was willing for his son’s body to be exhumed to prove the circumstances of his death’ (Sherwood, 2013). Miéville’s picks up on this quote in the sentence from “Exit Strategy” referenced here.

controlled population that ‘what you saw is not real’. This is what is happening with unseeing between the populations of Besźel and Ul Qoma in *The City & the City*.

The most dominating presence in “Exit Strategy” is Miéville’s description of the border checkpoint as a ‘rising, concrete animal’ (Miéville, 2013b). Not only are borders a political idea, they can be a physical manifestation, literally preventing the populace from moving between geographical spaces. His own photographs of the border checkpoint do depict a vast barrier of grey, crowned with twisted barbed wire and full of cages and walls. They are physically intimidating and a highly militarised space, devoid of human emotion. Miéville keenly highlights the irony of Israel tourism posters in a location where personal perception of time and space are shifted: ‘that these are exactly the posters a Palestinian is supposed to see at this point, that this is information she needs, now move on, keep going on this time out of time, time off, this vacation you have been given on the sand. You are beached. Get out’ (Miéville, 2013b). Miéville’s astute observational style is ideal for examining the interstitial spaces of border controls. He encapsulates the sense of forced displacement that occurs in such spaces, the way in which a person is physically in a geographical space but politically is not. This absurdity is further highlighted in Miéville’s key observation within the essay. On both sides of the border is the same sign, declaring “entrance”. Miéville describes the border checkpoint as ‘a non-place. No exit is marked. The arrows both point in’. The checkpoint becomes a space of trapped people, ‘two near-unending lines of broken living and the authorized dead, ordered forward and pushing and pushed and becoming nothing. What is lawfully inscribed here is not “No Exit”: it is “Entrance—Entrance”’ (Miéville, 2013b). This image from the Jerusalem/Bethlehem checkpoint is reminiscent of Breach’s actions upon the unfortunate perpetrators of unlicensed border crossing in *The City & the City*, those individuals vanishing mysteriously into the space in between being and not being, registered and unregistered, alive and dead. Breachers become lost, just as those people who temporarily cease to exist in between political borders.

The harsh physicality of the Jerusalem/Bethlehem border is also reflected through Copula Hall in *The City & the City.* Copula Hall is the official border checkpoint for passage between Besźel and Ul Qoma. The description of its size and its Gothic architecture magnify the building into a monstrous entity. A thoroughfare for traffic and pedestrians between the two cities, Copula Hall is a militarised checkpoint such as those seen in destabilised nations around the world, 'the waist of an hourglass, the point of ingress and egress, the navel between the cities. The whole edifice a funnel, letting visitors from one city into the other, and the other into the one' (Miéville, 2009b: 85). The people within its thoroughfare are in a state of limbo, awaiting clearance and 'stamped permissions-to-cross' in order to exist again as tourists and visitors to the other city. In this initial description of Copula Hall Miéville reveals the inherent problems when indoctrinated unseeing is combined with strict border control:

> If someone needed to go to a house physically next door to their own but in the neighbouring city, it was in a different road in an unfriendly power... But pass through Copula Hall and she or he might leave Besźel and at the end of the hall come back to exactly (corporeally) where they had just been... a street they had never visited before, to the architecture they had always unseen, to the Ul Qoman house sitting next to and a whole city away from their own building, unvisible there now they had come through, all the way across Breach, back home. (Miéville, 2009b: 85-86)

Miéville refers to this movement as 'grosstopical'. To visit an Ul Qoman neighbour, a Besź citizen would have to pass through Copula Hall and then return to the exact same spot as a tourist, unseeing their own city and their own home in order to avoid the wrath of Breach. As previously highlighted, this municipal separation of neighbouring homes which Miéville depicts is a real-life scenario within the official town limits of Baarle-Nassau-Hertog; the only difference is the militant enforcement of the border we witness in *The City & the City*. To not pass through Copula Hall, to not obtain the correct stamps and authorisation, is a punishable crime. Although an extreme exaggeration, Miéville cleverly highlights the absurdity that such militarised border control inevitably creates.

The brutality of borders is further emphasised in *The City & the City* by the circumstances of the three principal acts of violence within the novel. Mahalia Geary's body is discovered in the Beszź suburb of Lestov, far out from the crosshatched areas of the inner city. It soon becomes clear in the investigation that Mahalia was killed across the border in Ul Qoma and then transported with ease – thanks to the correct political papers – through Copula Hall to Besźel. The assistance of Breach cannot be invoked because no breach has officially occurred. Effectively, the body has been *legally* smuggled across. The killer can use the regulations of the border control to try to conceal the brutal crime of Mahalia's murder. The second act of violence is the shooting of Yolanda. This takes place in Copula Hall itself, just as Borlú, Dhatt and Yolanda are walking across No-Man's Land. At that moment in time, the victim is neither in Besźel or Ul Qoma and the killer realises this potential to avoid the wrath of Breach. This is a murder committed with 'a *surplus* of care for the cities' boundaries, the membrane between Ul Qoma and Besźel. There was no breach' (Miéville, 2009b: 282). In this example the violence that occurs is literally associated with the border between the two cities; if we interpret borders as a space where individuals shift between existence and nonexistence then this killing represents the slaying of a person who is already *metaphorically dead*. The precise location of the shooting means that the brutal act is, on a philosophical level, unseen. Under this interpretation, it could be argued that the event does not take place; hence the reluctance of Breach to intervene. This event leads onto the final act of violence to consider here. Borlú chases Yolanda's killer through the streets of Ul Qoma, observing him through crosshatched areas as he chases him down. Eventually though the killer heads towards a 'total' area in Besźel, taking one last look at Borlú as they both realise that the pursuit cannot continue. At that moment Borlú considers his options, raises his gun, and shoots at the killer across the border, invoking the wrath of Breach. Once again, violence is associated with the concept of borders.

Borders are an important aspect of psychogeographical thought. They create geographical space and zones, encouraging an emotional connection and response

from the people who inhabit them. They are contested areas of geographical space desired by political and imperialistic powers, fundamentally changing the psychological behaviour of the citizens who exist within those spaces. Populations become controlled by the policing of borders, not only in their physical movements around those spaces but through indoctrinated behaviour enforced through the use or threat of brutality. Miéville encapsulates this in *The City & the City*, using the concepts of unseeing, breaching and Breach to comment on the political control of borders that we witness across the contemporary world. However, he is keen to highlight that analogies can be dangerous, that *The City & the City* does not represent an analogy of contemporary political border control but is rather an extreme fictionalised account of it. Miéville cleverly highlighting the absurdity that such militarised border control can create, using the concepts of unseeing, breaching and Breach to comment upon the political control of borders that we witness across the contemporary world:

> It is based on the absurd idea of Borders - that infinitely thin line that can kill you. On one side of it, your actions are punishable by law, while a few centimetres over you are fine. It is wholly absurd... The novel is an uncanny exaggeration of real-life politics; it is intended as an uncanny extrapolation of the political logic of borders. (Schmeink, 2013)

He is keen to highlight that *The City & The City* does not represent an analogy of contemporary political border control but is rather an extreme fictionalised account of it. However, Miéville does highlight that in a real-world context a “Two States in One Space” idea is ‘completely demented’: ‘I don’t think that it would work at all, and I don’t think Israel has the slightest intention of trying it… analogies occur but sometimes they will obscure as much as they illuminate’ (Manaugh, 2011). After all, Ul Qoma and Besźel are fictional cities, and to apply their municipal structure in real life *is* absurd. Borlú summarises this viewpoint in the novel, when Corwu asks him about his time in Berlin:

> ‘I was young. It was a conference. ‘Policing Split Cities.’ They had sessions on Budapest and Jerusalem and Berlin, and Besźel and Ul Qoma.’
> ‘Fuck!’
> ‘I know, I know. That’s what we said at the time. Totally missing the point.’
> (Miéville, 2009b: 90)

Miéville’s novel is extreme political commentary designed to highlight the absurdity and brutality of borders. In terms of psychogeography, this is an important distinction; Miéville’s exploration of borders is more focused on the psychological effect they have on the populace. The political allusions are present, but his reason for examining borders is primarily rooted in psychogeographical thought.

3.1.4 Miéville’s use of Psychogeography

Miéville does adopt psychogeographical motifs within his work. His objective is two-fold. Firstly, he reveals a personal interest in examining how we live within modern urban landscapes and how this affects our behaviour and psychology. He is interested in the hybridity of urban landscapes - how they can shift in monstrous ways, how one physical space can become invaded by others. Secondly, he is interested in how psychogeography can be used as a modern-day political tool in a similar way to the work of the Lettrist and Situationist International movements in the 1950s and 60s. However, his use of psychogeographical techniques is vastly different to previous incarnations of the movement. For Miéville, psychogeography is fundamentally a mixture of deep-rooted political examination of urban spaces and the psychology of individuals affected by these political factors. His examination of psychogeography in *The City & the City* and *London’s Overthrow* is engaged with the politics of our time. Miéville embraces the analysis of urban extremes and attempts to reveal the stories of the cityscape.

Miéville’s success in *London’s Overthrow* is that he avoids this essay becoming simply manifesto of his own political views. Instead he uses the stories of individuals and their connection to the urban environment, as well as his own musings on London’s

architecture, to simply *show* us the political condition of Coalition London. Examining Miéville's work as a "product of its time" highlights the deep significance that austerity politics of the contemporary moment has as a context for his work. His original objective – to provide a 'diagnostic snapshot' – is successful as the essay captures the *essence* of London at a particular social, economic and political turning point.

The psychogeographical approach in *The City & the City* is much more interesting to consider. This is a highly-politicised novel that uses an exaggerated examination of political space, invisible zones and border control as a way of assessing the psychology of individuals that inhabit contested or militarised urban environments. However, the imaginative concept of unseeing is essentially an anti-psychogeographical idea. The indoctrination of the twin populations in the novel produces a psychological conditioning for individuals to ignore architecture and inhabitants from the opposing city. At its roots, this is an enforced, but conscious, decision to disengage with the surrounding environment - the complete opposite message of urban engagement present in previous incarnations of psychogeography. *The City & the City* is a psychogeographical novel which utilises the recognised tools previously discussed – the act of walking, the theoretical investigation of emotional zones, the examination of borders and the critique of crowds and anonymity – in order to comment on the banality and disconnection present in modern urban landscapes. Miéville creates a new form of psychogeographical thought in *The City & the City* which focuses on examining the interaction of inhabitants and the political condition of twenty-first century cities. Whereas historically, psychogeography has developed into various strands over time, Miéville attempts to redefine psychogeography for contemporary society by combining the important elements of previous incarnations. This "neo-psychogeography" that Miéville explores is a new hybrid formation of this familiar theoretical perspective. This new form centres on a political examination of contemporary urban culture and is one which uses representation of the walker and the interest in the recapture of stories and urban myth as tools to approach this political examination. By assessing the modern city and its

inhabitants using psychogeographical techniques, Miéville can show us the political uncertainties and troubles that exist in contemporary society, brought on by failed economic systems and governmental power structures.

3.2 A *Marxist Exploration of Urban Space: China Miéville, New Crobuzon and the Contemporary London Gothic*

> The *places* of social space are very different from those of natural space in that they are not simply juxtaposed: they may be intercalated, combined, superimposed - they may even sometimes collide. (Lefebvre, 1991: 88, original emphasis)

The work of Miéville is anchored by political commentary, with his depiction of the urban being an important method of critically scrutinising contemporary political policies and viewpoints. By layering fantastical elements upon real urban environments, Miéville can extrapolate and comment on modern political and social structures. His novel *The City & The City* (2009) and his essay *London's Overthrow* (2012) approached this methodology in a particular manner, using a more realist political and psychogeographical examination in order to *produce* the fantastical elements present in these texts. For this reason, these two texts stand apart from the majority of Miéville's other fiction, which use fantastical motifs as a method of producing a sense of perceived detachment from realism. After looking at *The City & the City* and *London's Overthrow* and their use of psychogeographical motifs it is now important to examine how Miéville uses elements of fantastika in his construction of urban landscapes and how this produces political commentary.

The definition of fantastika given by John Clute[41] is important in terms of Miéville's work and his interpretation of the city. What Clute highlights through his definition is the

[41] See Chapter 1.4 for more information on Clute's definition of Fantastika.

ability of the fantastic to respond to the ever-changing world in which it exists. Clute declares that fantastika 'responds instantly to the vertigo of this new knowledge', that it 'vibrates to the planet'. This undoubtedly appeals to Miéville's political viewpoint as a Marxist and a socialist. Fantastika allows Miéville to explore the 'vibration' of the contemporary city as a social construct, elements of fantastika allowing him to metaphorically unpick urban landscapes and scrutinise modern-day political and social structures.

There are two urban landscapes which Miéville revisits within his work: the real but fantasy-tinged London and his own steampunk creation New Crobuzon, the antagonistic metropolis which dominates the Bas-Lag trilogy. Both are sprawling cityscapes with a diverse variety of denizens, societies and districts, politically-charged cauldrons of social disorder and hybridity. They are *monstrous* creations, hybridised spaces: Miéville's London – even though it is observed through a lens of Gothic-fantasy – is recognisable as our own, whereas New Crobuzon, built around the bone remains of some ancient, gargantuan creature, is rooted in traditional fantasy world-building methodology, complete with strange races inhabiting the streets. However, New Crobuzon's steampunk technology and Gothic-inspired architecture does conjure up connections with Victorian-London, as depicted in the novels of the nineteenth century. Both urban creations use fantastika as a methodology for scrutinising urban landscapes and examining Marxist and socialist theories of urbanism.

3.2.1 Welcome to New Crobuzon: Marxist Urban Theory and Social Spaces

Let us consider these words from the urban sociologist Robert Park:

> [The city is] man's most consistent and on the whole, his most successful attempt to remake the world he lives in more after his heart's desire. But, if the city is the world which man created, it is the world in which he is henceforth condemned to live. Thus, indirectly, and without any clear sense of the nature of his task, in making the city man has remade himself. (Harvey, 2012: 3-4)

Park's suggestion here is that the most effective landscape for reflecting contemporary society is the urban, which grows and shapes itself to reflect current social attitudes and stimuli. Miéville's fiction fits Park's hypothesis too, as he shows how the city and the human interact with each other in all manner of hybrid, social and political contexts.

Marxist theory continues to explore the urban landscape through the lens of social reformation. In *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845), Frederick Engels reflects on his experience of several of North England's industrial cities, specifically the cotton-industry metropolis of Manchester. Engels' condemnation of what he labels the *'industrial epoch'* highlights the pressure that the population migration had on the burgeoning urban landscape of the mid-nineteenth century. As industry took root in the cities of England, vast numbers relocated from the rural to the urban landscape under the promise of work and a better life. The Industrial Revolution coincided with a dramatic growth in the size of cities. Engels' study closely examined this, taking us through a detailed psychogeographical dérive of the various regions of Manchester, such as this description of the Old Town:

> True, this is the *Old* Town, and the people of Manchester emphasise the fact whenever any one mentions to them the frightful condition of this Hell upon Earth; but what does that prove? Everything which here arouses horror and indignation is of recent origin, belongs to the *industrial epoch*. The couple of hundred houses, which belong to old Manchester, have been long since abandoned by their original inhabitants; the industrial epoch alone has crammed into them the swarms of workers whom they now shelter... the industrial epoch alone enables the owners of these cattlesheds to rent them for high prices to human beings, to plunder the poverty of the workers, to undermine the health of thousands, in order that they *alone*, the owners, may grow rich. In the industrial epoch alone has it become possible that the worker scarcely freed from feudal servitude could be used as mere material, a mere chattel; that he must let himself be crowded into a dwelling too bad for every other, which he for his hard-earned wages buys the right to let go utterly to ruin. This manufacture has achieved, which, without these workers, this poverty, this slavery could not have lived. (Engels, 1998)

In this description Engels shows us an example that supports the burgeoning Marxist viewpoint of the disparity in the wealth of urban populations - his 'Hell upon Earth' is a recent development. Notable is his description of the claustrophobic conditions of lower-class urban spaces and the sense of confinement that these classes felt - economically, socially and physically. The cramped living conditions of the working class resulted in sharply contrasting socio-economic spaces within the urban landscape of the Industrial Revolution. Engels' description represents the burgeoning political voice of the proletariat. As Ira Katznelson highlights, Engels 'treated city space and social relations as the key mediators between the explosive growth of capitalist production and the coming to consciousness and the political possibility of the working class" (Katznelson, 1992: 144-45). Forced to live in such conditions, the workforce starts to become restless and politically activated, vocalising the desire for fair work and living conditions. As Engels demonstrates with his meticulous walks as a flâneur through Manchester, poverty and wealth become unevenly distributed, with the bourgeoisie and the proletariat living in distinct spaces within the urban landscape, albeit sometimes within proximity to one another. Capitalism (and its uneven distribution of profit) not only creates and defines different social classes but has left its mark upon the urban landscape itself, creating distinct ontological and topographical spaces. This contrasting urban landscape, in turn, encourages a psychogeographical examination as inhabitants of these contrasting zones experience vastly different ways of interpreting the landscape.

The names of New Crobuzon's districts in Miéville's Bas-Lag books hint at the socio-political power struggle that is taking place, not only in Miéville's imaginative urban landscape, but in our own contemporary cities too. The sense of dilapidation and industrialisation in the names of New Crobuzon's districts, for example 'Smog Bend' and 'Tar Wedge', acknowledge the tendency for fantasy novels to portray the city as an invasive pollution upon the secondary world. Miéville's creation, although hinting at an ancient past, is very much an industrial city, dominated by steam power and the burgeoning influence of science and technology. This steampunk creation has just as

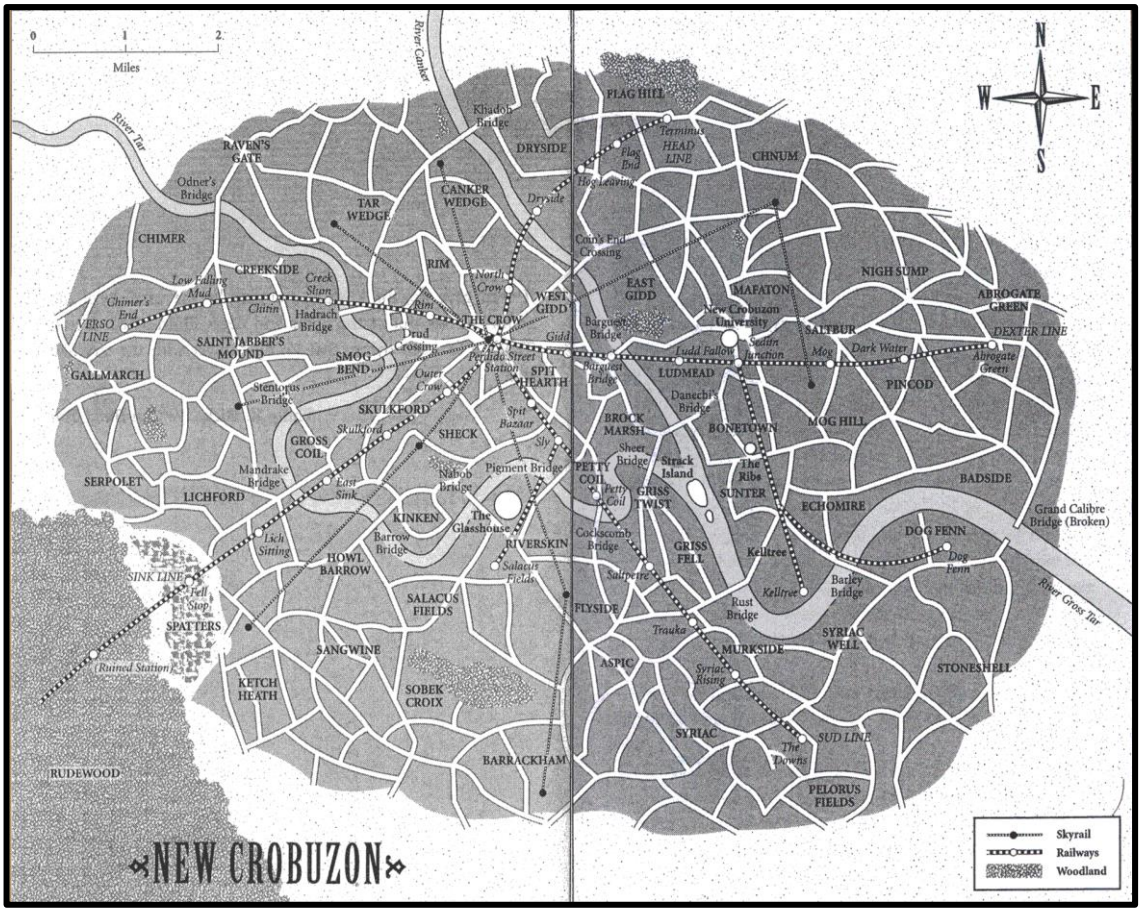
much connection to the industrial cities of the Victorian period as it does to other famous urban landscapes in the fantasy genre canon. Miéville's cartography of New Crobuzon not only visualises the cartographic representations of London closely, but also demonstrates the disparity of economic and political power present within New Crobuzon, just as Engels was doing with his description of Manchester. We can see this disparity illustrated in Lin's perception of Bonetown:

> The cross-bred architecture of this outlandish quarter confused her: a syncresis of industrialism and the gaudy domestic ostentation of the slightly rich, the peeling concrete of forgotten docklands and the stretched skins of shantytown tents. The different forms segued into each other seemingly at random in this low, flat zone, full of urban scrubland and wasteground where wild flowers and thick-stemmed plants pushed through plains of concrete and tar. (Miéville, 2000: 39)

Bonetown is a district that contains mass industry, affluence and poverty within the same geographical area, reminiscent of the capital-driven urban spaces that developed during the Industrial Revolution. Here Miéville clearly uses the fantastical city as a means of exploring socialist views regarding the uneven distribution of capital.

The beginning of *Perdido Street Station* sees Yagharek arriving into New Crobuzon on a boat, itself an alien concept for the now-wingless Garuda. He describes the rising factories and buildings – a capitalist landscape of industrial architecture – as he progresses deeper into the city from the suburb of Raven's Gate. He summarises his thoughts regarding the surrounding urban sprawl:

> *How could we not see this approaching? What trick of topography is this, that lets the sprawling monster hide behind corners to leap out at the traveller? It is too late to flee.* (Miéville, 2000: 2, original emphasis)



Map of New Crobuzon, © China Miéville, taken from China Miéville's *Perdido Street Station,* 2000.

Yagharek's description of New Crobuzon highlights his lack of familiarity with this urban space. To him it is alien and "other" and his only method of describing the surrounding space is as a dangerous monster. The fact that this symbolism is connected to a capitalist, industrial landscape is not accidental. It suggests recognition of New Crobuzon, therefore London, therefore the urban generally, as being a *sprawling monster* constructed from capitalist ideology.

In this context New Crobuzon becomes a Gothic metaphor for London itself, an alter-, or abstract-, version of the city. There are recognisable characteristics of Victorian London in Miéville's creation, and a distinct mirroring of urban conditions from this historical period, such as the strong influence of steam technology. Miéville uses New Crobuzon as a template for exploring socialist ideas of capitalist growth and power structures, as well as the potential revolutionary changes that these conditions

encourage, all through the lens of fantastical extrapolation. This allows Miéville to present a multi-faceted cityscape to the reader, exploring all aspects of social space which exist within this landscape. In other words: 'the familiar metropolis undergoes potent transformations, as Miéville focuses his attention on the interstitial places and moments that characterise the abutment of one view of the capital with another' (Williams, 2016: 178). Through the imagined city of New Crobuzon we can see multiple interpretations of modern-day London as a social space.

Although Marx did examine elements of geography, his focus was more on the action of time and history on the working classes, rather than a deliberate consideration of physical spatiality. Engels aside, this methodology was adopted by Marx's contemporaries too, the resulting socio-economic analysis being useful and revolutionary but not a coherent treatise upon the sociology of urban spaces. As David Harvey reflects: 'Marx, Marshall, Weber and Durkheim all have this in common: they prioritize time and history over space and geography and, where they treat of the latter at all, tend to view them unproblematically as the stable context or site for historical action' (Harvey, 1985: 141-3). In fact, there was relatively little change in Marxism's evaluation of space from its formative period right up until the 1970s when a re-introduction of Western Marxist thought regarding modern and, more importantly, urban geography started to appear. Theorists such as Michel Foucault and Henri Lefebvre sought to re-evaluate urban spaces within the context of Marxist theory, focusing attention away from the constraints of time and history to the physical properties, various forms and production of space.

Foucault's work on heterotopias becomes interesting here. Primarily collected in his essay *Des espaces autres* (Of Other Spaces), his theory describes physical spaces that are layered with multiple meanings outside of our initial evaluation:

> There are, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places - places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society - which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are

> outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. (Foucault, 1984: 46-49)

Foucault's conclusions regarding spaces existing outside the restraints of normal sociological systems shifts the perspective away from Marxist evaluations of capitalist commodity-production and towards the socio-political significance of physical space itself. Foucault advocates the presence of heterotopic spaces within the modern city as a methodology for affirming differences and encouraging escape from the repression of authoritarian social structures. Foucault's theory concerning heterotopic spaces moves away from considering the Marxist production of commodities within a physical space, to consider the production of the *social* space.

Miéville's urban creations are examples of heterotopic spaces. They contain liminal zones that act as pockets of revolutionary escape from suppressing, capitalist governments. They are vastly different from our own recognisable urban spaces, and these differences are celebrated as being powerful and affirming. New Crobuzon is a city inhabited by a variety of different races, social classes and power structures, existing together within a steampunk-tinged heterotopia space. The utopian ideal of racial and social harmony and stability is juxtaposed by description of physical geography and architecture as something which is not stable but shifting and morphing according to our experience of it. The physical building of Perdido Street Station is Miéville's most focused examination of heterotopic space. Foucault revisits the term heterotopia as a liminal concept, as something 'disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this *and* that' (Foucault, 1970: 379). In terms of the physical geography of New Crobuzon, Perdido Street Station is a real presence, a Foucaultian "this" firmly rooted within the topography of the city. Yet it is described in unreal terms, as a "that", with a sense of what Joan Gordon perceives as 'permeable, oozy liminality' (Gordon, 2003: 467). Perdido Street Station, as a physical structure, is a

dominant feature of the landscape, yet Miéville describes it with a sense of organic fluidity: 'The architecture oozed out of its bounds' (Miéville, 2000: 751). This duality of being simultaneously "this" and "that" firmly aligns Perdido Street Station with Foucault's idea of heterotopic spaces and allows Miéville to add commentary regarding more recognisable power structures into his portrayal of liminal spaces. After all, connected to Perdido Street Station is the Spike, the home of the capitalist government of New Crobuzon. Perdido Street Station has a significant duality as a symbol of the city and its hybridity, whilst simultaneously a symbol of capitalist control over this fantastical urban space.

Henri Lefebvre explores this shift in Marxist perception of space further in his seminal work *The Production of Space* (1974). Lefebvre carefully defines the concept of the city, summarising it as 'a space which is fashioned, shaped and invested by social activities during a finite historical period' (Lefebvre, 1991: 73). This focus on space as a defining characteristic of urban landscapes created a new alignment for Marxist urban theories which previously had focused upon the commodity-driven aspects of the urban class system. For Lefebvre, and his Marxist contemporaries, spaces – and their interaction with one another – become the central consideration of urban studies, or that, as Edward W. Soja states: 'social struggle in the contemporary world, be it urban or otherwise, was inherently a struggle over the social production of space, a potentially revolutionary response to the instrumentality and uneven development of the specific geography of capitalism' (Soja, 1999: 70). The development of capitalism in the intervening century between Marx and Lefebvre forces theorists to redefine the social structures present within urban landscapes moving forward into the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

What Lefebvre suggests – which is significant when considering Miéville's work – is that "social spaces" are not secondary to social structures but are intrinsically linked with them. Urban spaces are the arena in which class conflicts and structures exist, but they are more than just a conduit for this expression. They actively *create* it. In modern

cities, the production, management and occupation of space are a vitally important social issue that actively creates divisions in terms of social, economic and political classifications: 'spatial structures cannot be *theorized* without social structures, *and vice versa*, and... social structures, cannot be *practised* without spatial structures, *and vice versa*' (Gregory, 1978: 120-1, original emphasis). Furthermore, these social spaces are not distinct from each other but are able to – quoting Joan Gordon once again – 'ooze' into one another:

> *Social spaces interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another*. They are not *things*, which have mutually limiting boundaries and which collide because of their contours or as a result of inertia... Visible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures in general, give rise for their part to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is ambiguous continuity. (Lefebvre, 1991: 86-87, original emphasis)

A contemporary Marxist analysis of space, therefore, becomes central to decoding urban landscapes and the interaction between different social spaces. Not only are spaces important for defining the physical topography of contemporary cities, but also the social structures of the populations which live within such landscapes.

Whereas the Marxist concept of the urban during the Industrial Revolution focused on the treatment of workers within the capitalist system, the modern shift in Marxist Urban thought has been towards an examination of conflict and injustice amongst urban populations and the distribution, or use, of physical space. As David Harvey suggests:

> The right to the city is, therefore, far more than a right of individual or group access to the resources that the city embodies: it is a right to change and reinvent the city more after our heart's desire. It is, moreover, a collective rather than an individual right, since reinventing the city inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power over the process of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake ourselves and our cities is, I would argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights. (Harvey, 2012: 4)

This change in the theoretical examination of the city represents a shift from quasi-biological metaphors and mathematical models of urban process to analysis of the political and economic underpinnings of the urban system. This argument still holds weight, as contemporary society and the modern city still contain zones of disparity and are now psychologically and geographically defined by the postmodern capitalist ideals of multinational corporations. Therefore, it makes sense for Miéville to examine Marxist concerns through his construction of fictionalised urban landscapes. Historically, the urban has been the location of growing capital and governmental power and this interrelated duality has had a clear effect upon the spatial distributions within the city. This may have changed from period-to-period but the growing influence of capital and political power upon theories of urban spaces cannot be ignored. Marxism's ability, therefore, to focus on how economic and political power is established and maintained makes it the ideal theoretical conduit through which to examine the urban and the production of space.

By joining Miéville's characters as they traverse the streets of New Crobuzon, we are, in a virtual capacity, re-claiming the streets of the city from the false, mass-produced cartographic representation of the capitalist urban model. We become a *fantastical flâneur*, Miéville's immersive fantasy construction acting as a metaphor for socialist action regarding our own contemporary urban spaces. It is what is *missing* from Miéville's map of New Crobuzon that encourages the reader of *Perdido Street Station* to interact with the fantastical cityscape that he has created. The unnamed, blanked out areas of the map take on significance. We become intrigued by the mysterious topography that is being described to us. Instead of being a mark on Miéville's map, these streets take root in our imagination and come alive through our own creativity, inviting us to view our own urban spaces in a similar fashion. Jerry Brotton remarks that 'Maps always make choices about what they include and what they omit... the possibility of creating a different world - or even new worlds beyond our knowledge (which is one reason that science fiction writers have been drawn irresistibly to maps)' (Brotton, 2012: 15). All maps, real or maps

of secondary worlds, can only represent their world in one way, usually determined by governmental, capitalist, power structures. The result is conceptual gaps that the audience must interpret. Miéville takes advantage of this with his map of New Crobuzon allowing the reader to interact with the urban landscape on an imaginative level. The map acts as a starting point on which the reader can add social, political and economic detail that is not shown to create a more realistic *virtual* version of the city.

This is not something that Miéville does alone. All fantasy maps present the landscape as simulacra, allowing us to immerse ourselves in a virtual flâneurie which enables us to apply our own experiences to the secondary world construct. This virtual flâneurie itself becomes an important socialist action: it is a revolutionary appropriation of space and the movement across perceived boundaries becomes an act of radicalism. The process of creatively exploring the spaces that we virtually inhabit through the immersion of fantasy invites us to transfer this process to our own urban social spaces, identifying the economic and political disparities that exist within our own urban landscapes. What Miéville does, through his creation of New Crobuzon, is to use fantasy as a means of exploring real-life socialist ideology. Through adopting a psychogeographical approach to his use of fantasy – describing the city's streets from the point of view of a 'virtual flâneur' – he is using his world-building process as a methodology for inviting the reader to examine the social structures within their own urban spaces.

3.2.2 Miéville and Contemporary London Gothic.

Miéville's urban societies engage with this political examination of the Marxist urban question from various sides of the fantastika spectrum. Miéville's London is deep-rooted in a tradition of nineteenth century London urban literature and combines contemporary elements with reinterpretations of classic Gothic motifs from that era. Therefore, focus will now shift to a close analysis of Miéville's "London novels" and their use of Gothic

motifs to evaluate and scrutinise twenty-first century attitudes to London and other urban landscapes. The interplay between a Gothic aesthetic and Marxist urban theory will be explored, highlighting why Gothic fiction is an ideal form for evaluating contemporary urban socio-political landscapes.

Miéville's London novels consist of four specific texts. *King Rat* (1998) was Miéville's first full-length novel. *Looking for Jake and Other Stories* (2005) is a London-centric collection of short stories that portrays fantastical and alternative versions of the capital throughout. *Un Lun Dun* (2008) – one of Miéville's two excursions into Young Adult fiction – presents a mirrored version of London that threatens to leak into our own reality. Finally, *Kraken* (2010) depicts a London that is occupied by squid-worshipping cults and fantastical creatures living in the hidden spaces of the city. Although all these novels are set in a fantastical version of real-life London, their approach and commentary are very different. However, one common feature is the use of motifs from Gothic fiction in their depiction of the urban landscape of London. Therefore, Miéville's London novels not only link into a literary heritage but are significant contributors to a new wave of London urban-Gothic texts, which use elements of the uncanny and the supernatural as a means of exploring the social dynamics of the modern city.

Gothic fiction blossomed in the 1760s, with the writer Horace Walpole first using the term as a subtitle to his 1764 novel *The Castle of Otranto.* Representing a shift from the ideals of Romanticism, Gothic fiction began to explore the boundaries between terror and horror, the psychological and the physical, the beautiful and the sublime. Although locations such as castles, abbeys and mansions had been used by writers from previous periods, Gothic writers began to explore these locations in terms of the sublime, with references to the harmonious and beautiful being replaced with an examination of awe and the terrifying: 'Gothic fiction was everything that offended neoclassical taste. The Gothic was disordered, dark, and labyrinthine. The proportionate taste of the beautiful was wrenched out of shape by the excesses of the sublime' (Luckhurst, 2005: x-xi). Locations are transformed into grand panoramas of psychological and supernatural

consideration, challenging the reader's perception of the nature of beauty, terror and divinity. By examining locations in this manner, writers of Gothic fiction can associate place with the psychology of their characters, transfer their examination of the sublime onto the individual, critically explore the darkest desires and fears of the human condition. Gothic fiction intrinsically links landscape and psychoanalysis through use of the sublime and the supernatural.

There are other ways in which the Gothic aesthetic is used within depictions of the urban landscape. Topography is a factor that Gothic fiction has always used to its advantage and London became a prominent topographical feature in the Victorian period. Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821) places its narrator at the heart of Victorian London's depraved slums. Charles Dickens' London novels provide lavish and dark descriptions of the London streets, especially *Oliver Twist* (1837-39), *Bleak House* (1852-53) and *Great Expectations* (1860-61). These novels represent the importance of psychogeography in the urban Gothic. The city is described through the eyes of a flâneur traversing the unknown corners of the city. At the height of the second wave of Gothic revival – the late Victorian period – two specific novels focus their plots on the Gothic topography of urban London. Robert Louis Stevenson's novel *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) places the motif of the doppelganger in the dark, moody streets of London. The topography of Victorian London – a city of rich and poor districts and architecture – is transposed directly onto Jekyll and Hyde, each character representing one side of the divide. Stevenson creates a dreamscape for London that has been repeated many times since - the foggy, lamp-lit urban landscape:

> This dismal quarter of Soho seen under these changing glimpses, with its muddy ways, and slatternly passengers, and its lamps, which had never been extinguished or had been kindled afresh to combat this mournful reinvasion of darkness, seemed, in the lawyer's eyes, like a district of some city in a nightmare. (Stevenson, 2006: 22)

Stevenson evokes a nightmarish, Gothic, vision of London here which future novelists and filmmakers would emulate. Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) explores the central themes of the "double" with the seemingly immortal Dorian and his portrait, which ages instead of him. The debauchery and sensuality that Dorian explores – at the expense of the painting – takes place amongst the opium dens of Victorian London. Dorian's dual life of respectability and debauchery are represented in the novel by the juxtaposition of high-class and slum society. Alex Murray comments that 'there is a temptation to see in London Gothic the idea of an inherent alterity, an ontology of difference, a politics of dispersed and deferred identity that destabilizes the idea of the city itself' and his observation is indeed productive (Murray, 2012: 65). London Gothic texts are examining the destabilised fictional topography of the city as a means of commenting upon destabilised politics.

Miéville's London novels all examine the hybrid topography of the capital. Our own recognisable plane becomes mirrored or substituted with an alternative "other" version of the city, either through the violent re-establishment of place due to apocalyptic factors or the discovery of secret planes or alternative versions of the urban landscape. Miéville plays with the familiarity of London's streets, revealing the weird nature of the city, how it shifts between realism and the fantastic. London itself is a Gothic doppelganger; both Dr Jekyll *and* Mr. Hyde, simultaneously a beacon of modernity and a landscape of dark, hidden horrors, juxtaposition and magical properties. London's topography is unstable and multiple perspectives blur into one another.

Miéville uses the Gothic sublime as a way of crafting an alternative urban space in his London novels, one which can comment on contemporary social and political concerns from a Marxist perspective. In "Looking for Jake," the eponymous story from his first collection, the narrator is wandering the streets of an alternative London, looking for a missing friend. The narrator lives in a flat in the borough of Kilburn; a name which Miéville fills with ominous subtext: 'We shouldn't stay here. We have, after all, been warned. Kill. Burn' (Miéville, 2005a: 6-7). The streets of London are constantly referred

to as ‘dangerous’; a repetition which creates a sense of terror in the reader as more clues are slowly revealed as to what has happened. This is the familiar landscape of London that has been forever altered by an apocalyptic invasion from forces unknown which has seen most of the urban population mysteriously disappear and be replaced with supernatural and fantastical occurrences: ‘a very inexact apocalypse... the change in the order of things’ (Miéville, 2005a, 9, 16). However, the narrator, who can be interpreted as being a fictionalised version of Miéville himself (due to the collection’s epigraph ‘For Jake’), describes the urban landscape in a sublime manner. This highlights the juxtaposition between the longed-for familiarity of the London-left-behind and the corrupted, yet still beautiful, new landscape:

> So I learnt to see the view from my roof in the garish glow of fireworks, to hold it in the awe it deserved. That view is gone now. It’s changed. It has the same topography, it’s point for point the same as it ever was, but it’s been hollowed out and filled with something new. Those dark thoroughfares are no less beautiful, but everything has changed. (Miéville, 2005a: 5)

There is an acknowledgement here that this new landscape is still awe-inspiring, despite the changes that it has undergone. This ‘hollowing out’ – the loss of the city’s population – is the significant psychological shift, yet the urban landscape itself remains dramatic. The result is a Gothic obscurity: a landscape that is difficult to comprehend but still has the capacity to mesmerise and captivate, to enable an individual to experience sublimity. This obscurity is further emphasised by the narrator’s description of the Gaumont State building, which constantly shifts between happy childhood memories of the building as an opulent and dignified cinema and its present reality as a garish, banal and terrifying neon-lit bingo hall; ‘the generator of the dirty entropy that has taken London’ (Miéville, 2005a, 18). By the end though, the halls of the Gaumont State building have become a beautiful, almost spiritual, place as the narrator concludes: “I’ll cross the grand corridors, wind through tunnels into the great vast hall that I believe will be glowing very bright. If I get that far’ (Miéville, 2005a: 19). As the narrator heads into the building, into the heart

of the invisible enemy, this Gothic building has metamorphosed into a gateway to the spiritual. In “Looking for Jake”, London is a landscape of contrasting perspectives, the beautiful and the terrifying existing simultaneously, forcing the narrator to enter a state of Gothic sublimity, to view the landscape in a new and unexpected manner.

A sublime London landscape is also seen in “The Tain”. This is significant, as this version of London is like that seen in “Looking for Jake”; this similarity creates fitting bookends to the overall collection. In fact, the similarity with “Looking for Jake” leaves open the suggestion that these two stories could be taking place within the same dystopian version of London, although it must be said that there is no narrative connection between the two stories. “The Tain” opens with an innocent and peaceful image of the protagonist, Sholl, lying on a wall on the banks of the River Thames, as if he is nothing more than a casual Londoner enjoying a moment of solitude. Miéville is skilful with the opening of this story, orientating his reader to a recognisable urban world before introducing a few glimpses of the uncanny. This is done through the casual references to water and reflection:

> Over time he turned his head, still shielding his eyes, until he was looking down at the walkway to his right, at the puddles. He watched them carefully, a little warily, as if they were animals... The man stood and walked away. Behind him sunlight hit the Thames. It did not scatter: it did not refract on the moving river into little stabs of light. It did other things. (Miéville, 2005a: 227-28)

The sunlight is not reflected in the normal manner; the central conduit of the Thames is given a supernatural quality and another moment of Gothic obscurity is created by bending the recognisable topography of London’s urban landscape. Indeed, Sholl’s journey in search of the Imago’s leader, the Fish of the Mirror, leads him across a recognisable London, taking in the South Bank, Kensington Gardens, Hampstead Heath and Battersea Power Station. This is undeniably a London that is familiar. This recognisable urban landscape may be destroyed and ruined, but it still holds the power

to make us remember. The urban landscape itself is haunting Sholl, making him recall the city before it fell:

> To his south was the rubble that had been Battersea Power Station. Without it, the skyline was remarkable: a perpetual surprise. Sholl could see over the industrial park behind it - the buildings there much less damaged - to a tract of housing that looked almost as if it had before the war. (Miéville, 2005a: 229)

Once again, Miéville highlights the sublime of the urban landscape, the beauty (or 'perpetual surprise') that can inhabit even the most ruinous of urban spaces. The juxtaposition between ruined and intact areas within "Looking for Jake" and "The Tain" metaphorically reflects Marxist urban theory, posited by Engels, regarding the distribution of urban spaces and the disparity of wealth within our contemporary cities. In fact, the use of Battersea Power Station – itself a symbol of revived Victorian capitalist industry once again ruined in Miéville's story – as a tool to represent this hauntological disparity is a successful one. The destruction of a recognisable monument is a popular science fiction motif - consider the portrayals of such iconic buildings as the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building or the White House being demolished by alien or monstrous invaders.

In fact, this monstrous invasion dramatically alters the urban landscape and Sholl is the solitary observer of this. Studiously he keeps an A-Z map of London and changes this cartographic representation as needed, as he 'learnt about the city's changing shape' (Miéville, 2005a: 234). This Gothic incursion has altered the urban landscape forever, represented by Sholl's map and the new legend he has inscribed upon its pages every time he comes across a new landmark: '*#7... Jebb Ave. filled with something like cuckoo-spit. Funnel-tower still rising - threads snagging chimneys. Something inside moving'* (Miéville, 2005a: 235, original emphasis). This sinister description of a domestic structure highlights the shift in the urban landscape caused by this Gothic invasion.

The London depicted in *Kraken* is more recognisable than the apocalyptic landscapes in “Looking for Jake” and “The Tain” but is still heavily influenced by the Gothic aesthetic of the sublime. The opening imagery depicts an ‘everyday doomsayer’ walking away from his pitch outside of the Natural History Museum: ‘The sign on his front was on old school prophecy of the end: the one bobbing on his back read FORGET IT’ (Miéville, 2010a: 3). This is a London that is pre-apocalypse: a London existing before that seen in “Looking for Jake” and “The Tain”. However, there is still a feeling of impending doom. The doomsayer has given up trying to warn us: we have become blind to the impending disaster. Miéville, by starting the novel in the Natural History Museum, immediately establishes a sublime, and Gothic, foundation in the narrative. The museum is depicted as a Gothic mansion to science, complete with formalin-preserved specimens in steel and glass coffins. Description of the actual architecture of the museum is limited: instead Miéville focuses upon the macabre specimens preserved in the Darwin Centre as a means of establishing the novel’s mood early on:

> The specimens mindlessly concentrated, some posing with their own colourless guts. Flatfish in browning tanks. Jars of huddled mice gone sepia, grotesque mouthfuls like pickled onions. There were sports with excess limbs, foetuses in arcane shapes. They were as carefully shelved as books. (Miéville, 2010a: 7)

This description is one of Miéville’s most uncanny and sublime. We are simultaneously repelled and intrigued by this description of the specimen room, our perception of the beautiful and the terrifying, the living and the dead, seriously challenged. Billy, the novel’s protagonist, is conducting a tour of the specimen room and we, as readers, become one of his awe-inspired participants. This description conjures up images of Gothic familiarity such as Frankenstein’s laboratory, Dr Jekyll’s workshop or the circus freak show. What is interesting in *Kraken* is how the Gothic aesthetic transfers onto the recognisable streets of contemporary London through obscure descriptions of statue-jumping deities (Wati) and underground libraries filled with volumes of squid-worshipping cult mythology. The

search for the missing squid takes Billy and Dane into the Gothic underbelly of London. Once again, Miéville is not concerned with describing the physicality of London here; his objective is more to do with the mood of the uncanny, the obscure and the sublime. This is Miéville exploring the Gothic-Weird.

It was not until the second Gothic revival of the Victorian period that a switch to urban landscapes became a prominent feature. In fact, Roger Luckhurst cites Arthur Machen's story *The Great God Pan* (1894) as a significant marker for the developing trend of urban-Gothic, claiming that it demonstrates 'the geographical drift of the Gothic from its first inception' - that of the rural mansion and castle (Luckhurst, 2005: xxix). This change reflected the migration of the work force to the urban centres of England. The psychological condition of the impoverished Victorian workforce, and the squalid conditions in which they lived, are ripe for Gothic interpretation. The dark, shadowy, moody settings of ruined castles, impenetrable forests and haunted country mansions are replaced by the depiction of foggy streets, rundown urban slums and (still haunted) townhouses of wealthy businessmen. The increasing enclosure of urban space carries a strong link to the portrayal of psychosis.

In Miéville's short story "The Go-Between",[42] Morley's mundane life is interrupted by the appearance of small and intriguing packages in unusual places: inside loaves of bread; chocolate bars; CDs; milk; vegetables; cut-out compartments inside of purchased books. Each "insert" contains instructions for delivery and the ongoing presence of these leads to Morley's paranoia that he is involved in a series of important, secret missions. Morley does not know the source of these covert deliveries and starts watching the news and media, associating global atrocities with the secret work that he has been undertaking. When he decides to not deliver a package that is marked as being his last delivery, Morley's paranoia begins to dramatically increase until he is left considering the

[42] Miéville's protagonist shares similarities with Leo, the protagonist from L.P. Hartley's novel of the same name. Leo acts as an intermediary postman between the lovers Marian and Ted and soon becomes manipulated by them. As in Miéville's story, when deciding to stop as a go-between, Leo too faces psychological pressures, albeit of a different nature to those faced by Morley.

‘war that he had started or contained or had no effect on at all’ (Miéville, 2005a: 141). The antagonist in Miéville’s narrative is the creation of paranoia brought on by the Gothic effect of the enclosure of the city. Morley is a captive within his own confined architectural prison, with Miéville restricting his character to a small, enclosed, urban space.

As Morley’s paranoia increases the world of his flat seems to metaphorically shrink. His focus shifts to the media stories on his television screen. There is no external landscape at all, only the “horrors-of-his-doing” that Morley perceives within the news reports (Miéville, 2005a: 140). This paranoia comes through in Miéville’s writing as Morley ponders the outcome of his decision not to send the final parcel, agonizing over whether there is still time to act. Although this story does not contain the direct Gothic aesthetic that we witness in other Miéville stories, the domestic urban location is being used as a method of psychoanalysing Morley in a manner like that seen in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892). In Gilman’s story visions are seen by the protagonist within the patterns in the wallpaper, whereas Morley perceives his visions through media news stories. In other words, capitalist media – an output of the modern urban landscape – is responsible for creating madness and paranoia. In terms of the Gothic, twenty-four-hour news broadcasts have become the primary method of instigating individual paranoia and madness. Indeed, the technological overload of information seen in the contemporary world becomes metaphorically represented by “wallpaper” of our own design and construction upon the screens of our computers and smartphones.

Another fantastical topography, when considered from a Marxist perspective, is seen in Miéville’s novel *Un Lun Dun.* UnLondon is referred to as the “under-city” to Deeba and Zanna’s more recognisable, real-life contemporary London. Access to UnLondon is limited to specific portals, suggesting that it is a secondary world. However, it soon becomes apparent that the two versions of London are topographically linked. The architecture of the under-city is constructed from the detritus of London itself, the rubbish forgotten by the residents of the city but not deleted, instead falling through the cracks to

the alternative plane of UnLondon. The strange and bizarre architecture of UnLondon reflects this duality, especially the moil houses:

> The streets were mostly red brick like London terraces, but considerably more ramshackle, spindly and convoluted... Obaday took them past a house-sized fist, carved out of stone, with windows in its knuckles, and then the shell of a huge turtle... The entire three-floor building was mortared-together rubbish. There were fridges, a dishwasher or two, and hundreds of record players, old-fashioned cameras, telephones and typewriters, with thick cement between them. (Miéville, 2008a: 54-55)

The dwellings of the UnLondoners are fashioned from the discarded consumer goods of London-above: our London. Deeba's faithful pet in UnLondon is Curdle, an anthropomorphic empty milk carton that on first meeting she mistakes for rubbish. UnLondon is a topographical metaphor for capitalist London, an embodiment of the forgotten and misplaced possessions of our own consumer society. Everything that is used by the UnLondoners to build their moil houses is now defunct in the "real" world, passed over by new and improved versions. UnLondon is a city of recycling and upcycling, of resourcefulness and positive aptitude. In his description of UnLondon's physical geography, Miéville uses fantastika as a means of constructing multi-levelled socio-political commentary. With his Young Adult audience in mind, Miéville encourages the consideration of recycling and the salvaging of consumer goods as a positive action to take. After all, the first creature that they encounter in the alternative London is the malicious sentient rubbish pile which 'came with motions as careful and catlike as its odd shapes would allow... Ragged black plastic reached out with its rip arms, trailing rubbish juice like a slug's slime' (Miéville, 2008a: 35). The warning about our own waste and the effect it may have upon our landscape is clear to see right from the start. The depiction of the moil houses and the society of UnLondon in general contain a polemic: these buildings and the inhabitants of UnLondon survive by salvaging and reusing which, in light of current concerns such as use of plastics and disposable electronics, is a powerful message to present to the reader for consideration. Salvage as a central world building

concept is also repeated in *Railsea* (2013) and reflects effectively Miéville's approach to genre fiction too, where he can be seen to be using salvaged motifs from a variety of different genres to create something new. This positive connotation of salvage becomes a good metaphor for Miéville's approach as a genre writer.

The presentation of these dual topographies in *Un Lun Dun* also raises questions over our own contemporary power and class structures. Using the prefix 'Un-', Miéville invites an interpretation of these two alternative Londons as representing a clearly defined hierarchical social structure, with UnLondon being "NotLondon" - literally *under* the more recognisable political structure of contemporary, capitalist London. The relationship between the two opposing governmental agencies is constantly frayed, with the lower (under) classes of UnLondon living off the scraps and discarded possessions of our London. It is therefore significant that the very existence of our London is saved by the denizens of UnLondon: the metaphorical working classes ensuring the survival of the capitalist city. The social cohesion of the UnLondoners, under the direction and leadership of Deeba (representing the new generation) is what saves the day: a deep-rooted socialist message reflecting the revolutionary actions of the proletariat and the strike actions of younger generations witnessed in response to the lack of governmental urgency in the face of environmental catastrophe.

Gothic fiction is interested in the juxtaposition between reflections upon modernity and the derailing – sometimes violent – intrusion of a mythical or supernatural past. London, more than any other city, has a strong association with both elements; a city that is simultaneously embracing contemporary concepts of modernity and being haunted by its own mythology. London's modernity is broken down by 'the ancient commands and ancestral inheritances that live on amidst the mirrored glass and cantilevered concrete' (Luckhurst, 2002: 531). The past is everywhere in London: history, mythology and folklore form its backbone and exist in every brick of every building. This accounts for why London has continued to be a source of inspiration for Gothic writers for almost two centuries. For example, the recent excavation of the Bedlam graveyard in London, unearthed

thanks to exploration undertaken for the new Crossrail transport network, represents London's inability to escape its own history.[43] This is a real-life Gothic invasion upon capitalist modernity. This Gothic infatuation with history links to Derrida's theory of hauntology in *Spectres of Marx.* Miéville's depictions of London, thanks to their use of fantastika, feel "out of joint" with time as suggested by Derrida. Miéville's London novels depict a city haunted by the past, the present, and, in the case of "Looking for Jake" and "The Tain", the possible near-future too. History is bleeding into the present, imbuing the city with a spectral quality. Time is *disarticulated*. In Marxist terms, elements of fantastika are *haunting* the capitalist landscape of the contemporary city. As Italo Calvino writes:

> I could tell you how many steps make up the streets rising like stairways, and the degree of the arcade's curves... but I already know this would be the same as telling you nothing. The city does not consist of this, but of relationships between the measurements of its space and the events of its past... As this wave from memories flows in, the city soaks it up like a sponge and expands... The city, however, does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the street, the ratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls. (Calvino, 1997: 10-11)

Miéville's London novels replicate Calvino's commentary here. His work fuses our contemporary interpretations of urban spaces with the history and mythology of London's past, with the intention of reclaiming lost stories or histories and gaining greater understanding of the urban landscapes in which we live. Gothic motifs communicate these hauntological connections most effectively.

In "The Ball Room", Miéville's use of fantastika brings this hauntological perspective of London to the foreground. The story moves the Gothic haunted house narrative into the capitalist setting of the out-of-town, IKEA-style, warehouse retail unit. The narrator is a security guard in one such retailer, who describes the sequence of spooky events that

[43] See the Crossrail archaeological website for more information on the discovery and analysis of the Bedlam skeletons: https://archaeology.crossrail.co.uk/exhibits/

take place in the ball room belonging to the store's crèche. A presence and mood set in amongst the children and staff occupying the ball room, maliciously spreading further. The security guard witnesses a ghostly presence one night, a young girl who looks 'washed out, grubby and bleached of colour, and cold, as if I saw her through water' (Miéville, 2005a: 44). The source of the ghost is never revealed but it becomes more violent, attacking a child and her mother, resulting in the closure of the popular attraction. This is when Miéville's Marxist exploration takes over, as the company does not act as expected. Instead of exorcising the spirit, they strike a mutually beneficial deal with it. By the end of the story the ball room has taken on alluring qualities, become in the eyes of the children 'the best place in the world', intentionally brainwashing them to want to return in order that their reluctant parents are forced to spend, ensuring revenue remains high. There is a suggestion that the ghostly presence remains as Miéville skilfully describes the children's desire 'to play in the ball room forever, like in a fairy tale, alone, or with a friend' (Miéville, 2005a: 50). This depiction of history violently infiltrating the present not only takes place in the icon of capitalist urbanism – the retail unit – but seeks to express how 'the understanding reached between powers secular and supernatural conceals the monstrous calculation behind business-as-usual' (Bould, 2009: 312). The lengths that consumer society goes to in search of capital are granted not only a hauntological face within this story but an urban locale too.

Other examples of history and modernity clashing in a hauntological context exist within Miéville's depictions of London. In "Different Skies" we have a *found narrative* - a diary from a seventy-one-year-old man who describes the alternative London mirrored through the colourful window he has purchased and installed: 'a rude piece' with 'something in it I can't ignore...my new – old – window' (Miéville, 2005a, 146). This premonition comes true as it unfolds that the window is a portal to a historical version of London, replicating the new and old juxtaposition. The hauntological nature of the window produces a sense of the Gothic within the narrative, represented by the protagonist's diary entries becoming more frenetic as fear takes hold: 'There is something beyond the

window. I am afraid. I am no longer bemused or concerned or intrigued but truly afraid. I must write this quickly' (Miéville, 2005a: 151). The haunting of the present urban landscape by the past is expertly realised as views of the urban sprawl of contemporary London and the darkened alleyways of Victorian London are revealed simultaneously through the differing panels of the window. The two historical topographical planes exist side-by-side. This haunting is further emphasised by the presence of ghost-like ruffians, Victorian children, that torment our narrator from the other-London. Although not ghosts in their own time, their displacement by the window that 'remembers what it used to see' (Miéville, 2005a: 157) turns these children into spectral figures. The effect on the urban landscape is the same, with the window revealing the city that is lost and gone but has left its everlasting echo on London's geography. The window is a portal into the history of the urban landscape, and the ghost-children represent that history's determination to violently break through into the present.

Miéville uses fantastika to reveal London's historical backbone and mythology as a political counterpoint to the city's contemporary urban landscape. His project is to show the streets of the capital, uncover its lost stories and present them as a means of assessing our association with urban spaces, to reinstate the personal story into the crevices and cracks of the city. Miéville, by using the fantastical motif of the haunted topographical space, allows the mythological past to infiltrate the physicality of the city's architecture, further shaping our own perception of the city.

Therefore, London Gothic prevails into the twenty-first century and contemporary authors such as Neil Gaiman, Will Self and Maggie Gee[44] continue to view the city as a Gothic landscape. Miéville is one such author who chooses to embrace the Gothic aesthetic of London for a specific purpose. His methodology is to use Gothic fiction as a means of scrutinising contemporary attitudes regarding politics and urban spaces. For

[44] Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* (1996), Will Self's *How the Dead Live* (2000) and *The Book of Dave* (2006) and Maggie Gee's *The Flood* (2004) are all strong examples of this wave of London Gothic in the early twenty-first century.

Miéville, Gothic fiction is an opportunity to present social realism through the lens of the fantastic. Miéville views the urban as a landscape primed for political revolution and change, and Gothic Fiction's position as a mode of fragmentation suits this objective. Julian Wolfreys famously declared that 'writers in the nineteenth century understood the event in London, and responded in their own writing of the capital by writing of the city's very unpredictability' (Wolfreys, 1998: 17). Miéville's London novels, and his "alter-London" New Crobuzon, set out with the same objective: to show the unpredictable nature of the city at the turn of the millennium and to extrapolate and comment on the crises that exist within modern urban landscapes. Given his political affiliation, Marxist urban theory – seen through the lens of Gothic and fantastika – is the model that Miéville chooses to frame this debate. He infuses his cities with elements of class power structures, economic disparities, political controls and cultural, institutional and discursive spaces which are somehow "other" and heterotopic. He presents worlds within worlds, mirroring what is outside and upsetting our perceived expectations of spaces.

However, his method of delivery is psychogeographical – the *dériveur* – and this constitutes a revolutionary shift. We experience both Miéville's London and New Crobuzon through the eyes of his characters as they traverse the urban landscape, walking the streets and describing the effects of industrial and capitalist power structures upon their surroundings. These fictional characters and their interaction with urban landscapes act as metaphor for real-life political evaluations of urbanism. This approach reflects that of the Situationist International in 1950s Paris who, inspired by the revolutionary actions of the Communards of the 1870s, 'sought to expose the radical intention of urban space' (Hubbard, 2006: 108). Through the actions of the *dérive* psychogeographers aim to reclaim the streets from the grips of capitalist banality, to reintroduce a sense of understanding and belonging to their existence within the urban landscape. They seek to equalise the power between classes not only in an economic sense, but a geographical one too. The *dérive* allows its participant to traverse the streets, observing the inequalities that capitalism and governmental power have inflicted on the urban landscape. The *dériveur*

can move across the perceived (capitalist) borders between different social spaces within the city, therefore destroying those symbolic zones. For Miéville's, the act of walking is a resistant strategy: people of all socio-economic backgrounds can traverse the urban landscape at will regardless of wealth, social position or political standing. By walking we can truly appreciate the urban landscape as one ripe for revolutionary action. Boundaries and borders become meaningless and redundant. As a result, economic, governmental and political control is challenged and suspended.

Chapter Four:

'The Perpetual Train': Socialism, Revolution, Law and Justice in the work of China Miéville

> *Iron Council* forces us to confront the *unruly*, unpredictable stuff of history, the moments when revolutionary success or failure rely on choice, conscious action, and timing. Revolution is the product of conscious human activity and organization, and Utopia does not arrive according to some pre-ordained timetable. (McNeil, 99-100)

In August 2013 an open letter was sent to *The Guardian* newspaper from the founding members of the Left Unity party, declaring them a viable opposition to a Labour Party which (according to Left Unity) was, at that time, in agreement with Conservative austerity measures. Claiming that Labour were betraying 'the working-class people it was founded to represent', Left Unity positioned themselves as a political party 'that is socialist, environmentalist, feminist and opposed to all forms of discrimination' (Left Unity, 2013). Nine people put their name to this open letter, including the filmmaker Ken Loach, author Michael Rosen, and the General Secretary for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Kate Hudson. China Miéville was another of these names.

As well as being a writer of genre fiction, Miéville is a social and political commentator, consistently writing articles and features for a wide variety of publications such as *The New York Times, The Guardian, Granta* and *Conjunctions*, on a wide variety of social and political issues. Until March 2013 Miéville was a member of the UK Socialist Workers Party (SWP)[45] and in 2001 he stood (unsuccessfully) as a candidate for the

[45] His resignation from the party was due to the SWP leadership's management of rape allegations concerning one of the party's members. Miéville, once again, put his name to an open letter, showing his moral and ethical commitment to equality.

Socialist Alliance in the General Election, gaining over 400 votes in the Regent's Park and Kensington North constituency, at that time a Labour seat.

These socialist affiliations are clearly expressed through Miéville's work with (and in) academic journals. In 2015 a new quarterly journal *Salvage* was introduced, with the mission statement of being 'edited and written by and for the desolated Left, by and for those committed to radical change, sick of capitalism and its sadisms, and sick too of the Left's bad faith and bullshit' (Salvage, 2015). Miéville was one of the founding editors and continues to write editorial, articles and creative pieces for each issue. Other work, such as his editorial of the journal *Historical Materialism* in 2002 (a special issue on Marxism and Fantasy, in which Miéville addresses the question of why Marxists should be interested in the fantastic at all) demonstrates Miéville's commitment to politics of the Left and Marxist thought. His association with *Historical Materialism* highlights Miéville's interest in the study of social development as the materialist conception of history. In simpler terms, historical materialism suggests that social progress has always been driven by production, with elements of class struggle and revolution spurred on and created *by* this material production. Considering Miéville's affiliation with this movement, it would be productive to examine if, and how, elements of historical materialism manifest as philosophical thought experiments in his fictional work, alongside much clearer socialist and/or Marxist theoretical perspectives. Although it is inevitable that the work of Marx and Engels must be considered to contextualise any examination of Miéville's philosophical positioning, the focus here will remain firmly on his work and how these elements of Left, socialist politics are embedded within the structure of his novels.

Miéville's PhD thesis, examining Marxist law within the context of International Relations, was published in 2005 as *Beyond Equal Rights: A Marxist Theory of International Law.*[46] While he was writing his thesis in the late 90s, Miéville also wrote fiction - Miéville graduated from London School of Economics in 2001 and his second

[46] By the book publishing strand of *Historical Materialism* journal.

novel *Perdido Street Station* was published in 2000. His PhD thesis and the novel *Perdido Street Station* were, therefore, contemporaneous and both explore themes of law and justice through different methodologies. Here, these two texts will be contrasted to demonstrate the value of viewing Miéville's fiction and non-fiction side-by-side.

The depiction of utopia (itself a slippery and difficult concept to define) and ultimately its unattainability, is a recurring motif in Miéville's novels, once again through the lens of political commentary. Considerations of utopia in Miéville's novels can be contrasted with his non-fiction work on the subject, such as his introduction to the 2017 edition of Thomas More's *Utopia.* Here Miéville views utopia as a failed dream, or (as defined by Thomas More's original etymology) "a non-place"; a socio-political falsehood consistently out of reach. Despite this "failure" of utopia, Miéville's work in this area does, nevertheless, show why utopian ideals are still necessary to instigate *real* political change.

Margaret Atwood defines "utopia" as the 'designing of societies; good societies for the Utopias, bad ones for the Dystopias… in a Utopia you get to plan everything – the cities, the legal system, the customs, even facets of language. The Dystopian bad design is the Utopian good design in reverse – that is, we the readers are supposed to deduce what a good society is by seeing, in detail, what it isn't' (Atwood, 2006: 86). The suggestion here, from the viewpoint of the writer, is that utopia is a consideration imbedded deeply in the world building process. Yet, also, there is a socio-political examination imbedded in depictions of utopia too, often in the guise of satirical observation. As Atwood concludes: 'the satire being directed at whatever society the writer is currently living in: that is, the superior arrangements of the Utopians reflect badly on *us*' (Atwood, 2006: 87, original emphasis). Utopia is a useful framework for asking questions about our own world and the societies in which we live. Miéville's shares this concept but his definitions of Utopia are more complex than these simple binary definitions of either "good place" or "non-place".

The final method with which Miéville explores social issues is the depiction of revolutionary action. Miéville's 2017 work *October: The Story of the Russian Revolution* is a historical account of one of the most significant socialist uprising in history. Coming almost twenty years into his career, *October* feels like a significant marker in Miéville's oeuvre, an accumulation of all the political thoughts and commentary which he has been constructing in his work up to this point. *October* is Miéville providing real-life, historical context to the social and political landscapes he has created in his novels. Socialism, and the revolution so associated with the strangulation of production and the proletariat, is an important element of Miéville's political consciousness and occurs repeatedly as a thematic strand within his fiction as well as his non-fiction writing. Therefore, the story of revolution depicted in *October* can be contrasted with moments and motifs of revolution which occur in his novels, significantly a triptych focused around revolution: The Bas-Lag trilogy (especially *Iron Council* (2004)), *King Rat* (1998) and *Kraken* (2010).

By carefully considering these three elements of political thought (socialism and revolution, law/justice, utopia) within Miéville's work we can identify a landscape that not only solidifies his significance as a politicised writer, but as an important contemporary commentator too. This landscape of socio-political thought is the most significant aspect of Miéville's world-building methodology and the most common motif and thematic thread which permeates all his work. In fact, his novels can be defined as "fictional manifestos" - demonstrating how the aesthetics of fiction can be used to extrapolate on the political views, intentions and motives of a group or an individual. The advantageous result of a "fictional manifesto" is that a readership that may not engage with political writing will become exposed to these views and motives through fictional extrapolations and begin to consider them in the context of their own lives. Political discourse takes on various forms, the most obvious being that of the traditional manifesto document. However, comparing Miéville's novels alongside his own political writing (and those of others) demonstrates that fantastical fiction is a useful form for political discourse.

4.1 On-board the Perpetual Train: Socialism and Revolution in the work of China Miéville.

In their 1848 political pamphlet *The Communist Manifesto*, German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels expressed the collective thoughts, motives and views of the burgeoning socialist movement growing in popularity across Europe. Marx and Engels were focused on the disparity present in the distribution of wealth, the ownership of production and the resulting establishment of a new form of class system. Indeed, Marx and Engels' opening statement in *The Communist Manifesto* reflects on the historical significance of this form of social structure:

> The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles... Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat. (Marx and Engels, 1990: 12)

The defining moments throughout history have involved class struggle and revolutionary reaction to these class struggles with the objective of establishing new social conditions. Marx and Engels established the presence of two specific social strata: the bourgeoisie, represented by the rich factory owners in charge of the production and distribution of goods; and the proletariat, the working class, existing on the basic minimum wage. Marx and Engels reflect on the historical development of the bourgeoisie as being intrinsically connected to the development of modes of production and exchange. As they highlight: 'The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society' (Marx and Engels, 1990: 17). Production, consumerism and wealth become the new driving forces of society; the rise of the recognisable capitalist system which now dominates our contemporary global world. For Marx and Engels only one possible outcome of this social structure exists: revolution. Indeed, in their manifesto Marx and Engels clearly state that the bourgeoisie not only creates the proletariat, 'it creates a

revolutionary proletariat' (Marx and Engels, 1990: 57, original emphasis). Marxist materialist interpretation of history suggests that when a mode of production is no longer capable of supporting productive forces, either progress halts or "revolution" of some sort (technological or social) must occur to move production relations to a new level of operation. The disparity of wealth between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, as well as the control that the bourgeoisie have over the distribution of wealth and production, becomes a battleground:

> The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. *Working men of all countries, unite!* (Marx and Engels, 1990: 78-79, original emphasis)

These final words of *The Communist Manifesto* are, undoubtedly, revolutionary in tone, encouraging the proletariat to shake off the shackles of repression and unite against their oppressors. This is not an attack on the concept of production, which Marx and Engels concede 'is made for the maintenance and reproduction of human life'. Instead it is an attack on the *process* of production, or 'the miserable character of this appropriation, under which the labourer lives merely to increase capital, and is allowed to live only in so far as the interest of the ruling class requires it' (Marx and Engels, 1990: 41).

The open letter sent from the founding members of Left Unity (Miéville included) is not the powerful call-to-arms of *The Communist Manifesto.* However, they share a common ground in opposing capitalist ideals and the discrimination that results from the vast disparity of wealth - seen in contemporary political landscapes through austerity measures. Although the terms *bourgeoisie* and *proletariat* are not as commonly used now as when they were appropriated by Marx and Engels, Miéville and the other members of Left Unity acknowledge that class struggles are still a prominent issue within contemporary society: Miéville's thoughts regarding capitalism and class are deeply-

rooted in Marxism. His political, non-fiction writing is focused on the ideologies of the Left, most strikingly seen in the pages of *Salvage*[47] and these political leanings transfer into his critical work on genre fictions and teratology. Not only does his editorial introduction for *Historical Materialism* focus on the role of Marxism in fantasy fiction, but his 2009 critical collection *Red Planets: Marxism and Science Fiction* (with Mark Bould) examines the application of Marxist theories as a means of exploring the extrapolative and speculative narratives of science fiction. Miéville himself contributes an epilogue examining the role of Marxist forms of cognition as a defining ideology in the genre. In addition, Miéville's fascination with fantastical monsters invites a critical-Marxist interpretation of the body and the worker as witnessed in Franco Moretti's interpretation of the monster found in his seminal essay "The Dialectic of Fear" (1982).

Here, Moretti reflects on how the oppositions seen in the construction of monstrous bodies 'exist in function of one another, reinforce one another' (Moretti, 1982: 85). This is a similar relationship, as Moretti acknowledges, between the roles of capital and wage labour – the proletariat worker – in a Marxist system. In relation to Miéville, Mark Bould highlights: 'As a Marxist, Miéville conceives of the world as a place riven by contradiction, the driving force of dialectical processes which produce change and, in its strict non-teleological sense, evolution, both social and biological' (Bould, 2009: 310). The 'dialectical processes' which Bould refers to here are discussions regarding current social and critical perceptions and how the capacity for these to be changed somehow can be introduced. Miéville uses the political context of Marxism and socialist ideas as a framework in which to place these discussions. By utilising genre fiction, Miéville can create a "Trojan Horse" effect in which serious socio-political issues can be explored with relative freedom within the structure of a fantastical world or scenario. Marx and Engels' viewed the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as the driving force

[47] His articles "On Social Sadism" (17th Dec 2015) and "From Choice to Polarity: Politics of, and, and in Art" (20th June 2016) both contain strong socialist and Marxist references. An updated Introduction to *London's Overthrow* (2012c) has also appeared in *Salvage.*

of revolutionary change. Miéville views similar socialist ideals as a means of evaluating and commenting on contemporary social issues, as well as the theoretical landscape of genre fictions. Perceptions of the body – through the examination of monsters – and the representation of history are important Marxist dialectical considerations in Miéville's work.

Both Marx and Engels died before their prediction of socialist revolution was fully realised. It was not until the Russian Revolution of 1917 that Marxist theories regarding the control of production and the distribution of wealth resulted in radical social upheaval, with many of Marx and Engel's philosophies being adopted by the followers of Lenin. China Miéville's *October: The Story of the Russian Revolution* (2017) is an account of the nine months between February and October which marked the uprising of the working classes in Russia. *October* is full of interesting nuggets of personal stories (extrapolated from historical accounts or documentation) and it is these moments that bring the narrative of the Russian Revolution into focus. This shows an understanding on Miéville's part that revolutions are about *people* and that this is where the real potential for social change exists. As McNeil declares in the epigraph to this chapter, utopia, history and revolution are determined by the choices of people made in specific moments.

It also shows an understanding of history as a form of writing, as Miéville brings his aesthetic skills as a fiction author to an examination of historical events. This highlights Miéville's interest in genre boundaries. With *October*, he is exploring the boundaries of creative non-fiction, testing the extent to which fiction and non-fiction can interweave and combine. Miéville aestheticises non-fiction. At times *October* reads with the creative turn-of-phrase of a novel, presenting the history of the revolution through a more accessible style of language than seen in other historical accounts of the period.

This technique brings into focus the narratology of history itself, an "accepted" account which is constructed from conjecture - conjecture of the author's opinions and informed viewpoint, as well as conjecture of the material found in historical sources.

History itself becomes a narrative form and writers of creative non-fiction can use unexpected literary devices, styles and embellishments to make the historical *fact* more accessible to a general readership. In this sense, writing history has much in common with memoir writing. Both are accounts of events that happened, memoir being a personal account whilst history has the freedom to alternate from the personal to the grander scale of social account. History and memoir both share a responsibility to reveal the "truth" of what happened. Even "accepted" history is not necessarily what really occurred but just common conjecture. There will always be a version of historical "truth" offered from a specific perspective. Yet, as Rodge Glass counters, 'this sense of responsibility has little to do with the word "truth" and that is nothing to feel uncomfortable about' (Glass, 2015: 56). This is the landscape in which writers of creative non-fiction operate, utilising creative elements to not only fill in gaps of knowledge but to aid the accessibility of the material in question as well. For non-fiction to be effective as a form of writing, fact and fiction *must* co-exist. In promotional interviews for *October*, Miéville has commented on the fact that the text is not a piece of "historical writing" but more of an "accessible" narrative of the events of the revolution.[48] Miéville's objective is to present the important social issues of the revolution in a more creative fashion to entice a modern audience into considering their own political viewpoint. This position which Miéville adopts invites us to compare his depiction of revolution in *October* alongside the depiction of revolution in his novels.

The type of social revolution which Miéville meticulously describes in *October* has been present in his fiction ever since his 1998 debut novel *King Rat.* In fact, *King Rat*, *Kraken*, and his Bas-Lag trilogy (most notably *Iron Council*) form a triptych of texts which contain a depiction of social revolution as a central theme. *Iron Council* contains details regarding the role of capitalism and modes of production, as well as workers' strikes. The middle section of the novel is dominated by the recollection of 'The Perpetual Train' and

[48] China Miéville delivered a talk at Tate Modern, London, on Friday 12th May 2017 promoting *October*. During this talk he mentioned this interpretation of the text.

how the revolutionary Iron Council came to be. The Iron Council itself is contained within the perfect motif of revolutionary change - the train. From a historical materialist perspective, the railroad is the archetypal manifestation of how capitalist production has influenced history. The construction of a railroad, itself an act of commercial development and production, changes the social landscape of a nation and its population, allowing for the spread of capitalist ideals through distribution of further products - interconnectivity is the framework for capital growth.

However, it takes a significant moment to solidify the Iron Council's revolutionary identity as a proletarian collective. Just as it seems that the totalitarian actions of the Transcontinental Railroad Trust (TRT) are quashing the striking workers and their uprising, violence breaks out and a Remade worker is beaten and killed. The Remade rise to protect the strike action, but the TRT militia reacts with force. Just as it seems the revolution may be quashed, Ann-Hari steps forward and makes an impassioned speech:

> -You curse the Remade, as if it makes you better. Why we here? You fought. You - she gestures at the tunnellers - you struck. Against *us.* Her lieutenant prostitutes nod. -But why did you fight the gendarmes? Because *they*, they Remade, wouldn't scab. They *wouldn't.* They took beating for you. To not break *your* strike. And they did it for *us.* For *me.*
> Ann-Hari reaches out and grips Uzman and pulls him to her, he acquiescing with surprise. She kisses him on his mouth. He is Remade: it is a vivid transgression. There are shocks and exhalations, but Ann-Hari roars. (Miéville, 2004, 267: original emphasis)

It is a defining moment, a call for equality and unity. By kissing Uzman, Ann-Hari is breaking social conventions and expectations, bringing together the three different proletarian groups (the prostitutes, the workers and the Remade). The free, originally-paid, workers are the last to join the insurrection, only after the frustration from the removal of the sex-trade and much persuasion from the figureheads Ann-Hari, Uzman and Thick Shanks. As Carl Freedman suggests: 'the one [group] that corresponds to the most traditional popular image of the proletariat – formally free male workers – is in fact

the most initially *conservative*' (Freedman, 2006: 38, original emphasis). It takes Ann-Hari's unifying act of emotion to activate a full-scale revolution. Ann-Hari becomes the Iron Council's Lenin-figure, a spearhead for revolution.

It is at this moment that the Iron Council develops from being a simple worker's strike to a *social* revolution. Indeed, the action which leads to the uprising of the Iron Council is like the conditions that created the Russian Revolution as Miéville describes in *October.* Miéville quotes the words of Eduard Dune, a teenager from Moscow in 1917, who was 'just engaging with radical politics': 'To call it mass hypnosis is not quite right... but the mood of the crowd was transmitted from one to another like conduction, like a spontaneous burst of laughter, joy, or anger' (Miéville, 2017c: 61). The uprising of the Iron Council reflects this description: the words of the Weaver[49] act as this "not-quite-hypnosis" which quickly spreads throughout the different aspects of the proletarian collective. 'Conduction' is an apt term, describing the passing of an electric revolutionary spark.

With the TRT militia defeated, the Remade slaves are freed by the Iron Council. They adopt the name "fReemade", celebrating the legend of the revolutionary Jack-Half-a-Prayer, and choose to remain by the side of their abolitionists. Once again, this is a playful use of words, Miéville suggesting that true freedom is something which is "made" rather than earned or given. In other words, freedom is something which must be constructed from other parts, it involves process. There is a certain irony to this. The freedom of the fReemade is a "method of production" just as much as the oppressive, capitalist, construction of the railroad - a more positive method of production, yes, but one nevertheless. It is achieved through action.

Simultaneously to the actions of the Iron Council, a similar revolution is brewing on the streets of New Crobuzon. Ori is persuaded by the mad, homeless Spiral Jacobs to join the revolutionary militia group run by Toro, someone obsessed with trying to

[49] See the entry on the Weaver in Chapter Five.

assassinate the mayor, Eliza Stem-Fulcher. A socialist union of gangs calling themselves The Collective revolt against the New Crobuzon militia and, momentarily, seem to wrench the city from the grasp of governmental control. Toro, accompanied by Ori, finds Mayor Stem-Fulcher and succeeds in assassinating her. This is social revolution through militarised action, like the real-life accounts of violence in Petrograd in February 1917, with major governmental figures being removed by force, or even assassinated, by the rising proletarian collective. In *October*, Miéville describes the uprising at Petrograd's naval base, Kronstadt, on 28th February 1917. Governor-General Viren (who just a few months earlier had warned that 'one tremor from Petrograd would be enough... The fortress is a powder magazine in which a wick is burning down') became the focus of the revolutionaries' retribution:

> They marched him to Anchor Square, shivering in his underclothes in the sea winds. They told him to face the great monument to Admiral Makarov, engraved with his motto: 'Remember War.' Viren refused. When the Kronstadt soldiers bayonetted him he made them meet his eyes. (Miéville, 2017c: 64)

Viren was just one of several governmental officials killed during the initial stages of the Russian Revolution. When considering Miéville's own interpretation of events in socialist revolutionary history, this moment, as depicted in *October*, becomes reminiscent of Stem-Fulcher's assassination in *Iron Council*, written over a decade before. Here Stem-Fulcher shows the same stoic defiance as Viren:

> "What do you think you'll do" she said. Indulgent as a kindly schoolma'am. "What do you think you're doing?"
> She turned square to Toro and gave another smile, drew again from the pipe, held her smoky breath, and she cocked her face quizzically and raised an eyebrow - *Well?* - and Toro shot her dead'. (Miéville, 2004: 426)

Arguably, Miéville recalls this passage from *Iron Council* when embellishing the historical detail of Viren's assassination in 1917. Both passages display the violence associated with social revolution, demonstrating that a certain degree of dramatic upheaval is often linked with true revolutionary change. Power structures need to be destabilised so that they can be re-calibrated under a socialist democracy.

Once again, this links back to the violent activity of the Iron Council, who revolt against their oppressors and steal the train – so long a symbol of enslavement – and turn it into a socialist sanctuary, a symbol of freedom. They use the "capitalist materials" of the railroad to further their cause, removing track already laid and re-placing it at the front of the train so that it can inch forward across the barren landscape. By doing this, the Iron Council can avoid capture by the New Crobuzon militia, literally using the materials from the previously uneven capitalist production to avoid persecution. The train becomes the means of transportation for the proletarian collective.

So, what is it about the train that makes it the ideal embodiment of socialist revolution? Firstly, the fact that the train is a method of capitalist dispersal of production, indeed a historical-materialist machine, is significant: its appropriation for socialist means becomes extremely relevant when considering the train's previous use. Historically, the invention and development of trains and the railroad system have been important moments of history which irrevocably altered the social landscape. Secondly, the train is a significant motif in the *actual* history of revolution. Throughout *October*, Miéville comments on important moments during the Russian Revolution being marked by the travel of people on trains. Tsar Nicholas II escapes the revolution in February 1917 by rail, meandering 'in luxury, his train a wheeled palace' (Miéville, 2017c: 64). Scared that revolutionaries could turn his train back towards Petrograd – 'The iron road could turn him' – the royal party changed their plans at the final moment, escaping into the frozen north of Russia. As Miéville concludes: 'The man dethroned in all but final formality rattled too late into the dark' (Miéville, 2017c: 65). The departure of the monarch is then

juxtaposed with the return of the socialist "prodigal" Lenin. His journey back to Russia was on a train too, on which Lenin 'secluded [himself] in his cabin, fortified by refreshments from the unlikely restaurant car, he scribbled on as trees and towns rushed by' (Miéville, 2017c: 106). Lenin wrote his own socialist manifesto – "The April Thesis" – on this famous train journey back to Russia. Lenin's arrival into Petrograd was at the Finland Station on April 3rd, 1917. As Miéville extrapolates, it was at this moment that 'Lenin at last began to grasp his own standing in the revolutionary capital... The station was festooned with vivid red banners. As he stepped, dazed, onto the platform, someone handed Lenin an incongruous banner. Thousands had come to salute him: worker, soldiers, Kronstadt sailors' (Miéville, 2017c: 108). Later, a disguised Lenin uses the trains to escape capture and, in turn, return to Petrograd in the guise of a train stoker (Miéville, 2017c: 202-203). For Miéville, there is no other symbol more fitting to represent the stories of revolution:

> The revolution of 1917 is a revolution of trains... Looming trains, trains hurtling through trees, out of the dark… Revolutions, Marx said, are the locomotives of history. 'Put the locomotive into top gear', Lenin exhorted himself in a private note, scant weeks after October, 'and keep it on the rails'. (Miéville, 2017c: 319)

'Revolutions are the locomotives of history'. Miéville's reference to Marx here[50] is a central message in his depiction of revolution in *October* and *Iron Council.* The train and the railway track are the ideal metaphor for the "perpetual motion" of a burgeoning revolution, directly referencing Miéville's description of the Iron Council as the 'perpetual train'. The relentless motion of a train on the track, the rhythm of movement and inevitability conjure ideas of revolution - the track itself, splitting off into several sidings and opportunities, new directions of travel and potentiality. Although, as Lenin suggests, the challenge is to 'keep it on the rails'; maintain control of the speeding machine and

[50] Chapter 3 of Karl Marx's *Class Struggles in France* (Marx,1850)

ensure it remains constant and true. One false move and the revolution is easily de-railed and destroyed. Miéville has alluded to such comparisons himself[51] and his concluding words in *October* confirm the usefulness and the fragility of this metaphor:

> Onto such tracks the revolutionaries divert their train, with its contraband cargo, unregisterable, supernumerary, powering for a horizon, an edge as far away as ever and yet careering closer.
> Or so it looks from the liberated train, in liberty's dim light. (Miéville, 2017c: 230)

Revolutions speed like trains towards their destination of true social change but, as Miéville alludes, the view from the carriage can be deceptive, as the horizon is never actually reached but continues to move further afield as the train approaches.

Another novel which utilises the motif of the train and the railway as a symbol of revolution is Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* (2016). Whitehead explores the history of the real-life Underground Railroad – the network of secret routes and safe houses which abolitionists used to help African-American slaves escape to freedom during the early to mid-nineteenth century – by granting it the physical form of a steam locomotive, transporting slaves to the Free States through a network of underground tunnels. At first glance Whitehead seems to be applying realist fiction to this depiction of slavery. The novel is set in the accurate period and full of strong detail. It is only when we consider the plausibility of Whitehead's railroad that the fantastical framework of the novel comes alive. In historical terms the technology to produce such a vast network of tunnels big enough for the huge size of the steam locomotives described in all their 'hulking strangeness' is impossible (Whitehead, 2016, 83). What Whitehead is doing is using the motif of the train and the complex railway network as a device to show the huge extent of slavery that took place in American history. Cora is the protagonist of the novel and an escaped slave. As she travels from state-to-state along the Underground Railroad

[51] At the talk at Tate Modern, London, on Friday 12th May 2017, in response to an audience question Miéville talked about trains as revolutionary symbolism (the author attended this talk).

history becomes compressed. What Whitehead presents is a series of landscapes which are still in Cora's present but contain elements not chronologically accurate. The objective is to reveal different aspects of the slave experience across the centuries. For instance, as Cora arrives in South Carolina she sees a skyscraper – not possible for the time period depicted – and wonders 'how far she had traveled' (Whitehead, 2016, 84). Whitehead is subtly playing with chronology, presenting the Underground Railroad as a time-shifting machine which enables him the freedom to explore US history. As the engineer of the steam locomotive suggests: 'If you want to see what this nation is all about, I always say, you have to ride the rails. Look outside as you speed through, and you'll find the true face of America' (Whitehead, 2016, 83). What is interesting is that when Cora does look out of the window of the train all she sees is blackness. The train – one of the most significant symbols of the union of the American continent – is granted revolutionary symbolism in the skilled hands of Whitehead's writing. Both Whitehead's Underground Railroad and Miéville's railroad in *Iron Council* have been built by slaves, yet ultimately free them in an act of revolution. As Whitehead's station manager Lumbly says when Cora asks who built the Underground Railroad: '"Who builds anything in this country?"' (Whitehead, 2016, 81).

True social change is a destination which is impossible to arrive at. Revolutions are, therefore, truly the 'locomotives of history' which Marx suggests. Revolutions transport their proletarian passengers towards a desired socialist society with the power and ferocity of a charging locomotive, creating important moments of shift within history itself. Miéville uses the train as a metaphor for social revolution but the ambiguous conclusion to *October* makes us question whether the Iron Council is a successful revolution at all.

An examination of social revolution and Marxist thoughts concerning the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are important to Miéville's fictional landscapes. The examples discussed here demonstrate a keen understanding

of the different types of revolutionary potential: bourgeois power struggles, workers' strikes and fully-blown social revolution. *October* serves as a text which brings together all Miéville's previous philosophical thought experiments regarding socialism, placing them into a real-life, historical context. However, for Miéville, it is still the personal stories of revolution that interest him, rather than the larger, national-or-global scale of historical events.

Miéville uses the metaphor of the train effectively in both *Iron Council* and *October* to demonstrate the perpetual, unstoppable motion of revolutionary action and the desire to reach a socialist-horizon which is forever out of reach. Yet the ultimate memorialisation of the Iron Council and its place within the minds of New Crobuzoners, suggests that the journey is still a rewarding and essential one to make:

> Revolutionary change seemed, at the hinge between the centuries, once again, a realistic and essential desire and strategy, raising the question: which ideas remained productive within inherited political traditions and which have become obsolete? How can revolution as a goal be revived after the defeats and set-backs of the twentieth century?... For all that the anti-capitalist movement is itself now in the past and recent history, its actors and theorists - Miéville not least among them - continue to ask its questions in different venues and as part of different projects. (McNeil, 2015: 99)

Miéville continues to explore revolutionary potential as it exists within contemporary political and social landscapes. He does this through different methodologies and projects. For Miéville, genre fiction is one such project. Within the framework of the fantasy world of Bas-Lag, Miéville can contextualise and present a more well-rounded interpretation of revolution, not confined through using London as a narrative landscape which we witness in *King Rat* and *Kraken.* As Carl Freedman argues:

> As we survey the Bas-Lag trilogy as a whole, it is evident that the creation of this alternative world serves the ultimate purpose of providing a locus where ideas of socialist revolution can be experimentally concretized. For *King Rat* is finally limited, politically, by its London setting. (Freedman, 2015: 69)

Freedman's analysis is poignant. Fantasy provides Miéville with the freedom to imagine what a social revolution could really look like away from the constraints of real-world social landscapes. When read together, *Iron Council* and *October* invite us to remember historical moments of revolution and the potentiality to instigate social change in the future.

4.2 The Broken Dream? Socialist-Utopian Ideals in Miéville's work.

The illusion of the revolutionary train speeding ahead towards the horizon of social change highlights another important element of the socio-political landscape which Miéville explores in his work: the presentation and interpretation of utopia.

"Utopia" is a term which has been misinterpreted since its original application by Thomas More in 1516. His work *Utopia* was the first text to use the word, with More creating it from Greek origins:

> In order to create his neologism, More resorted to two Greek words – *ouk* (that means not and was reduced to *u*) and *topos* (place), to which he added the suffix *ia*, indicating a place. Etymologically, utopia is thus a place which is a non-place, simultaneously constituted by a movement of affirmation and denial. (Vieira, 2010: 4, original emphasis)

Whereas "utopia" is commonly used to represent a "good" or "ideal place" in terms of social structure, More's original etymological construction of the word referred to a "non-place", an example that simultaneously exists and does not exist; a country that is desirable yet ultimately impossible. There is no reality in which utopia can exist. As Krishan Kumar notes: 'To live in a world that cannot be, but one fervently wishes to be: that is the literal essence of utopia. To this extent utopia does share the quality of a dream. To deny that would be to miss one of the most powerful sources of its appeal'

(Kumar, 1991: 1). A utopian society is an attractive proposition but is nothing but a falsehood; it may reflect contemporary society's ills and amplify its successes but is unattainable.

It soon becomes clear that More's Utopia is a more egalitarian society, with citizens split into towns, districts and households all governed by a democratically selected system of representatives. Surplus production is distributed as required so that everyone has enough. There is no private property and households are open to all. Utopians are trained in warfare but only as a means of protection against the outside world. There is no imperialist intention amongst the population. Money is unimportant, only stockpiled for the hire of mercenary forces to protect the island. There are a variety of religions, all of which are accepted and worship a collective supreme being. Atheism is criticised as it is considered that a lack of belief in an afterlife results in a lethargic attitude. The inhabitants exist within a socialist structure with everyone working towards the benefit of the population. Every Utopian knows what is expected of them and the rewards of social unity.

The presence of slavery in Utopia could be problematic. More was writing the text in a historical period in which slavery would have existed so even though this concept seems strange to a modern readership it is not out of context in terms of More's contemporary time. However, the interaction between slaves and wealth in More's text does contain a strong Marxist message. In Utopia, gold and silver holds no monetary value. The Utopians use it only to purchase mercenaries and as decoration to adorn their slaves:

> Of the same metals they likewise make chains and fetters for their slaves, to some of which, as a badge of infamy, they hang an earring of gold, and make others wear a chain or a coronet of the same metal; and thus they take care by all possible means to render gold and silver of no esteem. (More, 2017: 96)

This adornment leads to philosophical self-examination from foreign ambassadors who,

dressed in fine silks and jewellery, the Utopians consider with the same indifference as a slave. The ambassadors denounce their wealth in shame as a result. In real terms, the ruling classes represented by the foreign ambassadors (in Marxist terminology, the *bourgeoisie*) are "enslaved by wealth", weighed down by monetary concerns. They are only freed when they denounce their wealth. This is further heightened through the imagery of the slave as a colonised body as well as a "mode of production" for the ruling classes.

Miéville acknowledges More's significance[52] in the establishment of utopian thought – 'Was More's utopia blueprint, or satire, or something else?... We are all and have always been Thomas More's children' (Miéville, 2017b: 5-6) – but underlines the overlooked, forgotten elements of history that quite often stain our perception of utopian societies, as well as More's original indication that utopia was a "non-place". Miéville uses the mythology of the island's formation to emphasise his historical materialist reading. The first ruler, Utopus, after conquering the land, forces his slaves, soldiers and his subjects to dig a deep channel into the earth, separating the island from the mainland. This is a Marxist action - workers used for the benefit of the ruling classes and their final objectives. Miéville emphasises this interpretation of Utopia, revealing that 'The splendid – utopian – isolation is part of the violent imperial spoils'. He goes on to link this imperialist connotation with More's own depiction of utopia as a "non-place":

> The classic reactionary attack on the utopian impulse is that it is, precisely, no place, impossibly distant. But, disavowed and right there, in More's foundation myth of the dream polity is a very different unease: that, wrought by brutality, coerced from above, it is all too close. (Miéville, 2017b: 4-5)

What Miéville alludes to here is that "utopia" can be interpreted in several ways including, depending on your perspective, totalitarian regimes achieved through brutality and

[52] Given More's examination of an egalitarian society in *Utopia* and Miéville's strong leanings towards the portrayal of proletarian collectives, it is no surprise that when Verso Books published a new edition of More's text in 2017 they commissioned Miéville to write the introduction.

military action. Miéville asks us to consider what is not revealed in the perception of utopian societies: *how* was this all achieved? More's utopian vision, and other utopian literature such as the Victorian equivalents *Looking Backwards* (1888) and *News from Nowhere* (1892), all depict a "good place" in terms of equality, governance and social structure but reveal little about the development of the social system in question, once again adding to the notion of More's definition of utopia as a "non-place". What is troubling is that what little detail is given by More regarding Utopia's past is tinged with imperialist undertones.

What Miéville suggests is that the etymological interpretation of utopia as either a "good place" or a "non-place" is not helpful. Neither definition is ultimately satisfying. Miéville's reference to utopia being 'all too close' is a similar view of utopia suggested by Ernst Bloch in his work *The Principal of Hope* (1954-1959), a text in which he sets out his understanding of utopianism and utopian impulse in art, literature and cultural expression. For Bloch, utopianism was not something confined to historical consideration or future extrapolation but was fundamentally present in the here and now. Utopia is not condemned to be resigned to its fate as a "non-place", yet neither is it a fully conceptualised "good place". Instead, utopia is a dream, a spark of hope half-glimpsed out of the corner of our eye. To consider utopia in the manner of Bloch is to understand where the true power of utopia lies: in its spectrality and transition from lucidity to consciousness:

> After all, the forward glance becomes all the stronger, the more lucidly it makes itself conscious. The dream in this glance seeks to be absolutely clear, and the premonition, the correct one, seeks to be quite plain. Only when reason starts to speak, does hope, in which there is no guile, begin to blossom again. The Not-Yet-Conscious itself must become *conscious* in its act, *known* in its content, as the process of dawning on the one hand, as what is dawning on the other. And so the point is reached where hope itself, this authentic expectant emotion in the forward dream, no longer just appears as a merely self-based mental feeling… but in a *conscious-known* way as *utopian function*. (Bloch, 1995: 144, original emphasis)

Blochian utopianism does not exist within the structures of a perfect society but within the *concept* of perfectionism, something which he suggests always exists. In effect, utopian elements remain subterranean and it is our task to dig them up and actualize them, to make them conscious and to provide them with their true function. As Sherryl Vint suggests, 'The process of the construction of utopia is one of disagreement and struggle… Here Bloch proves useful, reminding us to recognize that the success of fascism in the 1930s could in large part be explained by its appeal to the irrational in human behavior, its emotional ability to appear to respond to a genuine longing for a less alienating world' (Vint, 2009: 277). For Bloch, utopianism is formed from thought process, from a desire to construct a better world, rather than the unrealistic representations of utopian societies in action.

Miéville embraces this definition of utopia in his work, constantly searching for glimpses of utopian impulse and presenting them to his reader. For example, at first *London's Overthrow* appears to be saturated with negative imagery of capitalist, austerity London, but there are utopian glimpses of communities existing within this dystopian framework, showing solidarity and hope when faced with such huge socio-economic challenges. In *Iron Council*, the utopian glimpse of a better community is turned from dream to reality by revolutionary action against capitalist oppressors and imperial dominance. In many respects, the final memorial of the Iron Council is not the true utopian message of the novel, but the transition from lucid dream to reality, from imprisonment to freedom. The outcome is not the "good place" that we commonly perceive utopia to be, but the utopian elements of the novel are powerfully evoked through the uprising of the railroad workers.

Miéville is much more embracing of alternative versions of utopia, such as that presented by Bloch. He also refers to the work of Ursula K Le Guin as a consideration, referring to her as the 'great dissident utopian and dissident utopian thinker' (Miéville,

2017b: 5).[53] In her seminal essay “Utopiyin, Utopiyang”, Le Guin proposes a more flexible definition of the term:

> Every utopia since *Utopia* has also been, clearly or obscurely, actually or possibly, in the author’s or in the reader’s judgement, both a good place and a bad one. Every eutopia contains a dystopia, every dystopia contains a eutopia. (Le Guin, 2017: 195)

It is important that Le Guin is using the specific terminology *eu*topia as the use of the *eu*-prefix, in Greek, denotes this term as *definitively* meaning “a good place”. Le Guin is recognising the misinterpretation of More’s term and providing us with a clearer neologism to use. As the title of her essay suggests, she is also demonstrating how utopias contain elements of dystopian ideology, and vice versa. For Le Guin, the concept of utopia is best defined by the Chinese Yin-Yang symbol which simultaneously represents interconnectivity as well as interdependency and change. As Le Guin suggests ‘The figure is static, but each half contains the seed of transformation. The symbol represents not a stasis but a process’ (Miéville, 2017b: 195-196). As suggested earlier with Miéville’s interpretations of revolution, utopia – in Le Guinian terms – is a “mode of production”; something which is created through change. It is the presence of this change which inevitably leads to dystopian elements, such as capitalism, imperialism or revolution, having a major role (albeit, most often hidden) in utopian development. In this model, utopia is a *possible result* of dystopian, even apocalyptic, change. However, what is important is that change *does* have to happen. Miéville agrees with this, claiming: ‘Apocalypse and utopia: the end of everything, and the horizon of hope… the imagined relationship is chronological, even of cause and effect. The one, the apocalypse, the end-times rending of the veil, paves the way for the other, the time beyond, the new beginning’ (Miéville, 2017b: 20). For Le Guin and Miéville utopia cannot be theorised without

[53] Le Guin’s writing on the theory of utopia is included in the recent Verso Books edition of More’s text, alongside Miéville’s contributions.

considering dystopia too, and vice versa. A secondary consideration is that, in terms of fiction writing, entirely utopian or entirely dystopian societies are uninteresting and dull in terms of narrative structure - a “perfect” world without conflict lacks intrigue and an entirely dystopian world is too much for the reader to bear. Some element of hope is essential to the narrative.

When considering representations of utopia in Miéville’s work, Le Guin’s yin and yang interpretation is much more useful than More’s original definition. The Iron Council has been discussed at length, but this is a good example of Miéville exploring the concept of a *utopian*, as well as proletarian, collective. Once the Iron Council has been formed it exists as a utopian society: self-regulating, self-producing, egalitarian, with the greater good of all outweighing the needs of the few. However, as highlighted, it is born out of dystopian conditions, the result of a violent uprising against capitalist oppression. Judah’s memorialisation of the Iron Council at the end of the novel does succeed in turning the proletarian collective into a utopian monument, marking the end of a transitional movement from dystopia to *eu*topia. The final status of the Iron Council cannot be removed by capitalism and acts as a reminder to the residents of New Crobuzon of a more desirable social system. Yet, as will be discussed, this comes with a price - the abrupt ending of a social revolution that may just have worked.

Miéville’s most interesting depiction of a utopian collective is the floating pirate-city of Armada in *The Scar* (2002). The proper noun – “Armada” – immediately provides historical context for the reader, conjuring up images of the invading Spanish fleet from the Elizabethan period, a vast flotilla of military ships. This historical connotation of the word “Armada” contradicts the peaceful utopian space which Miéville initially describes. Thus, the name of the city immediately makes the reader question the utopian credentials of this society.

Armada is constructed from hundreds of vessels which have been captured and connected as a home for the escaped criminals and Remade of New Crobuzon’s imperialistic expanse. This has now grown to huge proportions. The hotchpotch of

mismatched ships and ‘countless naval architectures’ (Miéville, 2002a, 101) mirrors the multicultural society of Armada’s inhabitants: just as several different types and sizes of vessels have come together to form the architecture of Armada, so too do many different races live together, interacting with one another in an egalitarian manner to ensure their survival. New Crobuzon has been seeking to find and destroy Armada for decades but have always failed thanks to the shared actions of the city’s inhabitants. Armada seems to be an example of utopia in action: the inhabitants live free from governmental rule and come together under a common purpose. The central vessels of Armada’s construction are the stolen ship *The Grand Easterly* and the rig *Sorghum*, both of which represent the resistance of Armada against the capitalist grip of New Crobuzon. *The Grand Easterly* is a vessel of impractical size, a sign of New Crobuzon’s immense power. Now it is the central navigational point of Armada from which all geographical directions are given, appropriated by the residents as their flagship. The *Sorghum* is also a key symbol of New Crobuzon’s capitalist power, a huge rig which has been captured and is now used for the benefit of Armada, drilling materials for them to use or trade. These two vessels represent the utopian ideal of reclaiming power from capitalist systems.

Armada’s economic structure and its “modes of production” differ from those in a capitalist model by focusing on the choice of the workers, with inhabitants encouraged to embrace the required tasks and vocations which best suit their interests, skills and physiology. Tanner Sack’s social position as a Remade outcast in New Crobuzon is reversed when his new, tentacled body becomes useful in his role as an underwater operative for Armada. In fact, he willingly undergoes another Remade procedure to acquire gills and other features to further his efficiency in this new-found role. After four days of remaking procedures he awakes, the chirurgeon pronouncing: ‘“The procedures were successful. You are now amphibian”’ (Miéville’s, 2002a: 215). It is the inhabitants who embrace this economic structure that succeed most within the social landscape of Armada. This aligns with Fátima Vieira’s analysis of a ‘socialist-communist utopia’ which considers the ‘alteration of economic relations’ resulting in a society ‘capable of

harmoniously interacting with others: once the system of labour... is extinguished... this transformation of the way man faces work would be reflected in a myriad of harmonious relationships with other men and women and with nature itself' (Vieira, 2010: 13). It is by witnessing Tanner Sack's transformation and reaction to Armada's social system that we are led to consider this pirate city state as a utopian landscape; the freedom of the working class suggests Armada as a "socialist-utopia".

The physical materiality of The Lovers (the rulers of Garwater, the most powerful riding and the one dominated by the *Grand Easterly*) is also a powerful metaphor for revolutionary action and utopian impulse. As an act of devotion, The Lovers scar each other's faces by cutting intricate patterns into their skin with a knife. As Bellis writes in her letter:

> The Lover's scarred face revolts me somewhat. I've known – I have been with – those who found release in pain, who made it part of sex, and though I find the predilection slightly absurd, it does not trouble or disturb me at all. That is not what I find wrong with the Lovers. I have a sense that their cutting is somewhat almost contingent. What makes me queasy is something deeper that inheres between them. (Miéville, 2002a: 349)

Although this is an extreme act it is a significantly symbolic one, representing a need to wound and scar perceived realities and re-calibrate into a new, more desirable form. As Sherryl Vint suggests, this mirrors the utopian impulse of Brecht: 'Wounding is a rupture of the skin, and scarring is the process by which this rupture heals in a new configuration. This language of rupture and reconfiguration points to the close connection between the imagery of scarring in the novel and the idea of utopia as a radical break with the world as given' (Vint, 2009: 279). Utopian impulse in *The Scar* becomes embedded in this extreme action of The Lovers.

However, by the end of *The Scar* the utopia of Armada has disintegrated into civil war. So, what goes wrong and what is Miéville saying about utopian ideals? Firstly, the utopian ideals which Miéville initially presents to us are not the entire picture. The city of

Armada, although not governed by ruling elite, is divided into different neighbourhoods each run by a representative. The so-called Ridings do exist harmoniously with each other, with decisions affecting the entire city democratically discussed, yet the individual ridings do fall into a more hierarchal system. This is further emphasised when considering Armada's racial configuration. Although all races mix and interact in their everyday lives, there is still segregation, with specific races living in specific ridings: the Khepri focus around Booktown; the Cactacae reside in Jhour; and the Scabmettlers can be found in Shabbler. This is not true integration in a utopian sense and racial separation is still apparent.

Secondly, the actions of The Lovers reveal a sinister manipulation of the Armada working class akin to those of the bourgeoisie factory workers in Marx's social model. Their desire to capture the avanc has been presented as beneficial to the entire population of Armada, a 'triumph of science' resulting in 'more motive power for the city' (Miéville, 2002: 307) However, there are still suspicions regarding The Lovers' motives. These are well founded as it soon becomes clear that The Lovers wish to use the avanc to speed up the discovery of the Scar, the fabled crack in the fabric of the world where all possibilities exist. They view the avanc as a means of obtaining more power. It is this capitalist poisoning of the utopian model which ultimately leads to revolution in Armada, with the Riding of Dry Fall and other individuals revolting against The Lovers and their intentions.

As the Brucolac and Uther Doul fight each other during the resulting uprising, the Brucolac highlights Armada's failings at the capitalist hands of The Lovers:

> 'The city's the one thing you won't betray. And you know that *they* will destroy it... This is a city, Uther. We live, we buy, we sell, we steal, we trade. We are a *port.* This is *not* about *adventures*... And if we survive this lunacy, as long as we're tethered to the bastard avanc, these two will take us on another fucking voyage, and another, until we all die.
> 'That's not our logic, Doul, that's not how Armada works. That's not why we came here. I will not let them end this'. (Miéville, 2002a, 707-708: original emphasis)

The Brucolac understands the utopian ideals upon which Armada is built: freedom, unity, egalitarianism. He is willing to spark a revolution to overthrow any threat to this model. The Brucolac is the chief of Dry Fall. Not only, therefore, is this another example of a bourgeois revolution for power (despite the Brucolac's utopian speech here) but it is undertaken by a governor who demands a so-called "gore-tax" from the inhabitants of the Riding. The Brucolac is a vampire and he and his entourage are sustained on this taxed blood in exchange for extensive social freedoms and protection. Given this, the Brucolac's utopian words become tainted and obsolete. The uprising from Dry Fall is quickly quashed.

Once again, it takes the actions of the proletariat to instigate the revolutionary change which Armada needs to shift back towards utopia. When Tanner Sack discovers the truth from the returning castaway Hedrigall (the Cactacae claiming he has been adrift for two days since Armada fell into the Scar) he quickly pulls together the population of Armada in unison against The Lovers' continued obsession with finding this incredible source of power. As the masses invade the decks of the *Grand Easterly*, Tanner Sack declares to The Lovers that '"This ends here. *We* say what happens now. We're taking control. We're turning around, we're heading home"' (Miéville, 2002, 767-768: original emphasis). Order is achieved: the female Lover banishes herself from Armada and heads towards the Scar on her own. Armada is slowly turned around:

> Tanner's revolutionary moment thus does not mark the end of the novel or the process of social struggle but instead leaves the horizon open to new possibilities, preserving the framework of utopia in which people continue to struggle, collectively and individually, to realise their own vision of the good life. (Vint, 2009: 284)

In the coda of *The Scar* both Tanner Sack and Bellis refer to Armada as returning to its original state: *'We're going back to how things were*', 'Armada will be as it was' (Miéville, 2002a, 781 and 784 respectively). Utopian egalitarianism is restored, and Armada returns to more familiar waters, both geographically and socially. However, it is not the same city

as it was at the start of *The Scar.* The male Lover rules over the city, but in a vague and lost fashion now that his companion has deserted him. Uther Doul still protects his ward and the Brucolac reclaims control of Dry Fall. Yet, despite this re-configuration of utopian ideals now that the pursuit of the Scar has ceased, both Tanner Sack and Bellis feel as if they no longer belong in Armada. *The Scar*, therefore, is also a novel which explores the utopian idea of belonging. Vint explores this central theme, suggesting that the idea of utopia in the novel 'requires us to imagine the break via characters invested in the old social order, who struggle over what heimat/home should mean' (Vint, 2009: 281). Tanner Sack and Bellis most effectively demonstrate this struggle, both having contrasting responses to their experience of Armada. For Tanner Sack, Armada is much more of a home and a utopia worth fighting for. However, by the end of the novel, even this utopian impulse has run its course and Tanner Sack feels the urge to move on. The fire of revolution has instigated change within the social structure of the city, forming a new utopia, yes, but one just as scarred as the faces of The Lovers.

Armada is an example of Le Guin's yin-yang definition of utopia and the end of the novel expresses Miéville's view that utopia can be born from apocalyptic circumstances. It is also an example of Bloch's assessment of utopia as being a dream glanced rather than a tangible system. Miéville's Armada and More's Utopia are similar social constructs in that they are both examples of perceived, socialist ideals (in terms of working for the common good, no private property and being free from governmental control) yet they contain dystopian social qualities such as power struggles and impeding capitalist factors.

Margaret Atwood solidifies Le Guin's Yin-Yang interpretation of utopia even further. Not only is Atwood a writer who explores utopias and dystopias in her speculative world-building, she has also written critically on the subject. In line, partly, with Le Guin's view, Atwood proposes the use of the term *ustopia* as a means of characterising the sliding scale between *eu*topia (as in "good place") and its opposite dystopia: '*Ustopia* is a word I made up by combining utopia and dystopia – the imagined perfect society and

its opposite – because, in my view, each contains a latent version of the other" (Atwood, 2011: 66). Once again, Atwood alludes to the *imagined* context of utopia: this is an ideal which does not exist. The prefix *Us*- which Atwood uses takes on further meaning within this context. By combining the two extremes of the utopia scale, Atwood suggests that the result becomes a more balanced – and therefore believable and acceptable – construct. The *Us*- prefix therefore becomes relevant as actually reflecting "us" in the contemporary here-and-now. Miéville successfully creates *us*topian societies which, at first glance, appear completely fantastical constructs, but *insist* on showing the reader the social structures which surround them. For Miéville utopia is a constantly shifting scale, a society which strives for socialist attitudes but does not quite reach its goal.

An example of *us*topia from Miéville's work is the society depicted in *Embassytown* (2012). The outpost of Embassytown (on the planet of Arieka) seems, at first, to be a utopian space. A human colony has been built as a trading outpost and the population has become established amongst the aboriginal alien species known as the Hosts. Even though the relationship between the two races is based around commercial circumstances (the Hosts are able to create a form of bio-technology which is of value to the human settlers) this is a symbiotic dynamic, the humans even going to extreme lengths to biologically engineer sets of psychically-linked identical twins to act as Ambassadors to the Hosts, their dual identity enabling them to understand the Host's unique language. This is a society which displays a level of understanding and respect, the two factions existing side-by-side for decades in tranquillity. For all purposes this is a utopian community; devoid of social-hierarchy (except for the necessary Ambassadors and their Staff), economic disparity and violence. Indeed, when Ra is murdered Avice comments that 'We weren't very used to murder' (Miéville's, 2012a: 232). The residents of Embassytown, unaware of the drastic hold EzRa's speech holds on the Hosts, are described as wandering 'through streets in a kind of utopian uncertainty, knowing that everything was different but unsure in what sort of place they lived now' (Miéville's, 2012a: 191). Even though the social structure of Embassytown appears to be peacefully

utopian, these are merely glances at utopian ideas, fragile 'Not-Yet-Conscious' Blochian-utopian functions that the residents of Embassytown never manage to implement into certainty.

It is the intervention of the capitalist intergalactic conglomerate known as the Bremen, who wish to wrestle control of Arieka's resources away from the Hosts, which shifts this potential utopian society towards a dystopian state. Afraid of the colonists' monopolisation of communication with the Hosts, the Bremen send their own Ambassador named EzRa to Embassytown. EzRa is not a set of identical twins like the other Ambassadors but still can speak the Host language. At first EzRa's abilities are revelatory and suggest that communication with the Hosts could become commonplace. However, it is soon discovered that EzRa's speech is addictive to the Hosts instigating a swift decline into civil unrest on the streets of Embassytown - '"Language like this, right there but *so* impossible, so doping, that EzRa are infecting *every, single, Host.* All of which are spreading the word. All hooked on the new Ambassador"' (Miéville, 2012a: 198, original emphasis). At its core, this dystopian shift is created through the unnecessary introduction of capitalist systems within a successfully harmonious society, a Marxist indictment of capitalist intentions. The Hosts – now established within a capitalist model as the proletarian workers – revolt against their human oppressors. It takes the intervention of Avice to stop the Host's revolution from turning into a fully-blown war. Just like Armada in *The Scar,* a new balance is restored in Embassytown, the outpost once again striving towards harmonious, socialist utopian existence but scarred by the experience it has just endured. It is irretrievably altered: 'Welcome to Embassytown, the frontier… I know the likelihood that Embassytown will become slum: but we'll moulder and die or be eradicated by Bremen shivabomb if we have no use… So we're to be ravaged by speculation and thrill seekers. We'll be the wilds' (Miéville, 2012a: 404). Therefore, Embassytown is an example of *us*topia, displaying how utopian ideals shift to become dystopian. When social structures are returned to normality after this interruption of dystopian elements a new status-quo has been established, vastly

different from the initial starting point.

One final example of utopian ideology is the world-building seen in Miéville's young adult novel, *Railsea* (2013). The sunburnt desert world depicted in *Railsea* could be anywhere: our own near-future world after ecological apocalypse; a completely secondary fantastical world; or, perhaps most interestingly, it could even be part of Miéville's ultimate fantastical creation Bas-Lag, at a moment in that world's history (such names as Manihiki City and Scabbling Street Market inviting comparisons to Perdido Street Station). Whatever the origin of this world, Railsea is a dystopian space, a desert crisscrossed by an intense network of interweaving rail tracks. The remnants of past civilisations lie scattered amongst the dunes, salvage which the inhabitants of Railsea use to survive. The desert sands are populated by huge monstrous beasts, most noticeably the giant moles known as Moldywarpes. However, as suggested by Miéville, Le Guin and Atwood, this world is not entirely filled with dystopian imagery. There are rumours and myths of what exists beyond the Railsea, a mythological "Heaven" where only one, single track runs off into the distance. The quest for the utopian ideal forms the central plot of the novel and the principal goal of the orphaned teenage protagonists Caldera and Dero Shroake, who believe that their missing parents found this fabled place. At the end of the novel, after defeating the Moldywarpe called Mocker-Jack, the moletrain *Medes*, with Sham (another teenage protagonist) and the Shroakes aboard, find the single track and discover it blocked by a desolate "Angel" train. Passing on foot they cross a bridge and enter the world beyond the Railsea. Miéville's "Heaven" in *Railsea* is an *u*stopian mixture of positive philosophical ideals and the dystopian influence of capitalism.

What the party discovers is an abandoned city at the rail's end, resting on the coast of an ever-expanding ocean: 'Heaven, the world beyond Railsea, was empty, & very long dead. & he, though utterly awed, was not surprised' (Miéville, 2013a: 354). What appears to be the end of the rail line is soon revealed to be the start of it, as the inhabitants of the dead city appear, demanding payment and presenting a bill to the bemused party. It is

revealed that the entire Railsea is a corporate entity, built ‘Years, Centuries. Epochs’ before (Miéville, 2013a: 362). The desert world used to be submerged and was drained in order to construct the vast network of rails. The inhabitants of Heaven are the descendants of the original controllers, now elevated to god-like status by the myths and legends of the inhabitants of Railsea. The utopian ideal of “heaven” is corrupted by capitalist ideology as the Shroakes and Sham learn about the true nature of their world. Their belief system is crushed under the revelation of the true nature of the railway tracks.

The revelation that the Railsea is a “mode of production” is a startling Marxist comparison. The absurdity of the controller’s “bill” which is presented to the *Medes* party – summarised exquisitely by Caldera: ‘“This is... more money than there’s ever been in history... It’s gibberish”’ (Miéville, 2013a: 362) – is a commentary on the general absurdity of capitalist systems. Sham muses on his hatred for the controllers who present themselves as expecting of payment: ‘endlessly extending terms to a humanity unaware they were in debt’ (Miéville, 2013a: 363). Miéville uses this fantastical, young adult, narrative to explore the actions of financial institutions and the ethical and moral factors surrounding debt. Sham’s final words to the controllers are a powerful manifesto: ‘“We,” he said, “owe you nothing”’ (Miéville, 2013a: 363).

However, the end of the novel is not entirely a dystopian revelation. In face of the truth the party set off across the water in a vessel constructed from salvaged material from the Railsea. In the final moments, we witness Sham and his companions sailing off towards the horizon and a new world, leaving the Railsea far behind them: ‘No clatternames, no switches, no thud of wheels on rail. No rails or wheels to thud them. Sham shouts in a new motion’ (Miéville, 2013a: 375). This final image is a positive one: yes, they are sailing into the unknown, but they are escaping from the capitalist constraints of Railsea, a landscape created through spectacular ecological control for the sole purpose of capitalist gain for the privileged few. This is a utopian glimpse in the sense of Bloch, a snatched dream of a better place which is made conscious and implemented as the children set off in pursuit of this ideal.

Railsea is another strong example of Miéville's use of the train and the railway as a motif for socialist issues and ideals. The final, single rail line which the *Medes* discovers is a one-way track to a utopian horizon which, once again, Miéville suggests is *just out-of-reach*. This reminds us of the earlier examination of the revolutionary railway motif in *October* and the idea of a train speeding along the track towards a future of social change. The train never quite reaches its destination, perpetually in motion. However, yet again, Miéville suggests that the journey towards utopia is not wasted and is essential to achieve *actual* change and revolutionary action. As Krishan Kumar suggests:

> [Utopia] always goes beyond the immediately practicable, and it may go so far beyond as to be in most realistic senses wholly impracticable. But it is never simply dreaming. It always has one foot in reality... Utopia's value lies not in its relation to present practice but in its relation to a possible future. (Kumar, 1991: 2-3)

Ultimately, the railway track leads somewhere, and that destination is an important one. In *Railsea*, utopia does not exist at the end of the line, as the protagonists believe, but across the vastness of the ocean. This suggestion of utopia being a distant land beyond the Railsea is reminiscent of More's original *Utopia*, the island nation lying just out of sight beyond the horizon. The railway track was an important step towards reaching this destination, this 'possible future'.

For Miéville, utopia is a complex but interesting concept: it is unattainable and, when defined as a "good place", completely unhelpful in real-life social structures. Instead, utopia acts as a conduit, a fabled interpretation of what is possible which can spark *real* social change. It is the act of consciously acknowledging the ideal dream and acting upon it that is the true power of utopia. Fátima Vieira acknowledges this too, exploring utopia's principal objective to establish 'horizons of expectation (with the inevitable awareness that they will never be reached)':

> By this process, utopia also performs an expressive catalytic function... By incorporating into its logic the dynamic of dreams and using creativity as its very driving force, utopia reveals itself as the (only possible?) sustainable scheme for overcoming the contemporary crisis. (Vieira, 2010: 23)

Utopia is an important methodology for social change as it is a creative extrapolation of political possibilities. Yet it is still a creative process, an imagined falsehood, and it becomes important to recognise the difference between the generic form of utopia and its political application and potency. Frederic Jameson talks eloquently about utopia in his text *Archaeologies of the Future* (2007):

> It has often been observed that we need to distinguish between the Utopian form and the Utopia wish: between the written text or genre and something like a Utopian impulse detectable in daily life and its practices by a specialized hermeneutic or interpretive method. (Jameson, 2007: 1)

Miéville utilises a Blochian and Jamesonian definition of utopia. His literary knowledge allows him to embrace the creativity of the 'Utopian form' and its heritage, yet it is the 'Utopian wish' – the important messages, lessons and practices that can be gleaned from utopian fiction, referred to by Bloch as the utopian impulse – that Miéville considers to be the more important element. He is acutely aware of the unrealistic portrayal of traditional utopias and embraces a more equally structured portrayal of (socialist) *eu*topian and dystopian elements within his world-building. The traditional model of utopia is not enough. It is only through a more balanced appreciation of the utopian scale that Miéville can use the form as a means of interpreting the contemporary social landscape and the changes that are consciously needed to move society towards a more ideal function. Miéville also understands that fiction can act as an enclave in which utopian impulse can exist, yet a more solid path to the material world of practice is required to achieve utopian action which constitutes a change in global capitalism. However, the role of fiction to keep alive utopian impulse is important. As Sherryl Vint concludes:

> To some, it has become axiomatic to consider utopia a bankrupt subject, the futile dreams of naïve social reformers or a quaint literary genre suitable only for teaching us about former visions of the future. Yet, as Fredric Jameson points out in *Archaeologies of the Future*, we have never been more in need of utopian thought than in the present moment of spreading global capitalism and the erosion of many social gains made in the past century'. (Vint, 2009: 276)

4.3 Law and Justice in Bas-Lag and Beyond

Let's now consider the role of law and justice in Miéville's work. Miéville aligns his own juridical theories in *Between Equal Rights* (2006) most closely with those of the Soviet legal theorist Evgeny Pashukanis, whose belief is that the modern legal form is centred around the idea of commodity exchange, brought about by the free will of the individual sovereign subject who freely exchanges wage for goods. Pashukanis favoured a sociological conception of legal theory which 'treat[ed] law as the product of conflict of interest, as the manifestation of state coercion' (Miéville, 2006: 82). This idea of law places controls firmly with the state; furthermore, Marxist analysis dictates that this becomes tainted as the state is 'not seen as a neutral body but an organ of ruling-class control' (Miéville, 2006: 83). In fiction, ideas of law when world building are therefore important tools for portraying context as they intrinsically highlight the social landscape in which fictional characters exist through representations of state and, by comparison, allow the author to comment on their own, real-life, experience and perception of legal systems. The portrayal of alternative social landscapes within fiction can also highlight how the state is an 'organ of ruling class control' as Miéville expresses here. By demonstrating alternative legal structures, the writer can be commenting on the faults, flaws and issues present in their own state structure.

It is important to also consider the relationship between law and justice here. Miéville examines Pashukanis' approach again, stating that:

> The equation of law and justice is ideological: law deals only with an abstract 'justice' between juridical subjects, rather than concrete human agents, as Pashukanis makes clear. Particularly if one sees modern social ills as entirely compatible with legal 'equality' and hence 'justice', then it is precisely one's concern for social justice that *undermines* one's respect for law'. (Miéville, 2006, 100, original emphasis)

The concept of justice is a complex issue to resolve, as "justice" delivered through legal systems is state driven and this only reflects the nature of the crime in the minds of the privileged ruling classes. Judicial practice exists within a state-selected framework. "Justice" can also be delivered outside of the state-system, such as by vigilante groups or the perceived "revenge-justice" of terrorist organisations. Justice can take on multiple forms and can be adopted by different political systems, both within and outside of the state. This creates an interesting dynamic for a writer to explore, the question of what constitutes "justice" encouraging the reader to examine their own social landscape and judicial system, comparing with the author's own constructed version. In terms of exploring the concept of social landscapes, both law and justice present an ideal opportunity for the writer to build worlds with the intention of creating debate and scrutiny within the minds of their readers.

In terms of Miéville's work, the examination of law and justice in a Marxist context is central to his world-building methodology. Miéville's work in *Between Equal Rights* demonstrates a deep knowledge and understanding of complex systems of international law. Miéville questions the structure of international law through the application of Marxist theory, most importantly the interaction between violence and the Marxist strategy of wage-relations and labour-power. Importantly, these political thoughts regarding law and justice can be seen permeating his work, most overtly within the fantastical settings of the Bas-Lag books.

In *Between Equal Rights* Miéville posits that the central concern of capitalism is the *freedom* of commodity circulation: economic agents viewed as "equal" participants due to their control of the commodities on offer and their exchange value. Carl Freedman,

in his analysis of *Between Equal Rights*, declares how this capitalist freedom exists for the proletarians, who are 'free to decline to sell their labor-power – that is, they are free to decline to participate in the capitalist wage-relation – in the sense that they are "free" to choose homelessness and starvation' (Freedman, 2015: 158). Thus, every agent of the capitalist system is directly influenced by the freedom of commodity circulation, even if it is a fallacy. Therefore (Pashukanis and Miéville both argue) capitalism inevitably turns the legal form into a *coercive* and violent one. In simpler terms, the dominance of capitalism in modern society infiltrates into legal practice too. Miéville reflects on this important dynamic of the modern legal form, highlighting that 'as the legal form embodies the concrete content of social relations founded on commodity exchange… the legal form will also embed the particular exploitative class relations of capitalist exploitation' (Miéville, 2006: 119). The violence that is created by this position is most succinctly summarised by Marx himself who, in Volume One of *Capital*, expresses that "Between Equal Rights, force decides" - Miéville using this quotation as the title of his legal study.[54] To summarise, if the role of private property is maintained within a bourgeois society by the mechanisms of the legal form, force always remains with the bourgeois class themselves, *coercing* the proletariat to work for their benefit or face the inevitable consequences. Socialist revolution becomes the only means of breaking free from this model.

Miéville expands this presentation of coercion into the field of international law, arguing that international law is the purest legal form of all. Instead of coercion focused around the roles of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, in the case of international law this model is transcribed to the nation-states themselves with the strongest and wealthiest showing their dominance over the poorest, sometimes in a violent manner. This is most effectively portrayed in Miéville's analysis of the imperialist actions of the US during the Gulf War:

[54] Karl Marx, *Capital Volume 1*, chapter 10, section 1: "The Limits of the Working Day".

> Imperialism is not a strategy of the advanced and powerful capitalist powers, and certainly not a means of transporting a capitalist mode of production, but is a *defining structural element of actually-existing capitalism* - which included Iraq as much as the allies. The active imperialist intervention of the US, in this model, was not something the US was *doing* to a non-capitalist society, but was a moment in the totalising, combined and uneven reality of *global capitalism*. (Miéville, 2006: 273-274, original emphasis)

Therefore, in Miéville's theory of international law, imperialism and violence are intrinsically intertwined with the capitalist commodity-exchange system. For Miéville there is no separation of these elements and the coercion and violence that exists within all strata of the social model. As Miéville concludes in *Between Equal Rights*: 'The chaotic and bloody world around us *is the rule of law*' (Miéville, 2006: 319, original emphasis).

This is where we start to witness a blending of Miéville's non-fiction theories and his fictional work. In fact, as Freedman suggests: 'This insight is central not only to Miéville's legal theorizing but... [also] to his entire world-view' (Freedman, 2015: 159). In his Bas-Lag novels, the New Crobuzon government is portrayed as the imperialist, capitalist state-power (in the same way that Miéville describes the US in *Between Equal Rights*) using violence and coercion to deliver justice and manipulate the working classes to produce commodities. The violent justice and coercion that Miéville discusses in *Between Equal Rights* is present in much of his fictional world-building too, Miéville exploring his theories within his novels. This exploration is effectively demonstrated through the depiction of the Remade[55] but also through the justice violently carried out in one of the many memorable scenes in *Perdido Street Station.* The Vodyanoi dock-workers revolt against their capitalist masters and, using watercræft, create a great trench in the River Gross Tar, preventing vital goods-ships navigating to and from New

[55] We will discuss many examples of New Crobuzon's violent coercion of the lower classes, whether it be the violent justice carried out on the Remade or the incarceration of the bioengineered slake moths for capitalist gain (see chapter five for more details).

Crobuzon. A picket line of human and Vodyanoi workers forms, the banners adorned with anti-capitalist mantras: 'FAIR WAGES NOW!... NO RAISE, NO RIVER... HUMAN AND VODYANOI AGAINST THE BOSSES!' (Miéville, 2000: 359-361, original emphasis). These words conjure up the final moments of *The Communist Manifesto* – '*Working men of all countries, unite'* (Marx and Engels, 1990: 79-79, original emphasis) – encouraging a movement against the control of bourgeois, industrial bosses. However, this revolution is quickly, and violently, quashed, as the government-sponsored militia of New Crobuzon flies in using dirigibles, assassinating the key members of the (democratically) elected Vodyanoi strike committee (Miéville, 2000: 363-367). The capitalist governmental system utilises militia to gain control of the bubbling revolution, destroying any previous socialist-democratic ideals. Once again, Miéville suggests that strike action on its own is not enough for sustained change and is often violently subdued by greater capitalist and governmental powers. This encounter depicts extreme and violent state-delivered justice for the crime of revolutionary action being swiftly delivered against the working-class masses.

Miéville's examination of law and justice is an important element of the social landscapes within his fictional world-building. Informed by his own research and theories in the field of international law, he presents and examines the role of different legal forms within society, extrapolating and questioning how the world would operate if the contemporary, capitalist, legal form was replaced with a more socialist model. In *Between Equal Rights*, Miéville declares that 'it makes sense to see *the legal form itself* as part of the base' of capitalism (Miéville, 2006: 95, original emphasis). As detailed, much of his work explores the role of violence, coercion and commodity in the legal systems inherited by capitalism, whether it is within the concept of the monster or the use of commodity desire and commodity-exchange as the driving force of the crime plot in *The City & The City* (2009) for example. However, it is the *choice-theft* committed by Yagharek that truly explores what a socialist legal-form could look like. By altering the dynamics of crime away from the violence and coercion of capitalism to the simple idea

of the removal of choice from an individual, Miéville can restructure law as a socialist ideal.[56]

4.4 The Railroad to the Horizon

The consideration of social landscapes is *the* central concern in all Miéville's work. His fictional work displays the same political thought experiments that are displayed in his personal biography and his body of non-fiction. It is integral and unsurprising that these issues form a fundamental part of his fictional world-building methodology. The most imaginative and effective way that Miéville can express and explore social landscapes is through the application of the three thematic elements explored in this chapter: portrayal of revolution, consideration of utopianism (more importantly, the 'Utopian wish' as Frederic Jameson describes an expansion of Bloch's concept) and the depiction of law and justice in a Marxist, commodity-driven, context.

Rhys Williams reminds us that 'Miéville has in the past spoken of his writing as "Post-Seattle fiction," and we can certainly see links between it and the growth of the New Left since the WTO protests in 1999' (Williams, 2015). Indeed, the timing of Miéville's appearance as a fiction writer coincides with the political shift experienced in the wake of the Seattle World Trade Organisation protests. Both these protests and Miéville's work are, as Williams continues, 'a reaction to the "Capitalist Realism" which Mark Fisher (among others) suggests has gripped both Left and Right… Miéville's fiction similarly insists on the flexibility of a sense of possibility, and it rejects genre distinctions in favour of an approach that takes what it needs from wherever to tell the new stories it needs to tell' (Williams, 2015). Dougal McNeill agrees, positing that the Seattle protests, and the political shift afterwards, meant that 'the vocabulary of fantasy…reconnected with political radicalism in the ferment of anti-capitalism. Another world is possible, the slogan went; this stance, in opposition to the older idea that There Is No Alternative,

[56] See the entry on "The Garuda" in chapter five.

contained an implicit injunction to *dream*, to *fantasize*, to think another world' (McNeill, 2015: 101). What the 1999 Seattle protests encouraged was a desire to imagine alternatives to the capitalist power-structure that dominated the millennial world. Writers of fantastical fiction were able to do just this by utilising their fictional toolkit. The post-2007 Global Financial Crash landscape of austerity and economic disparity is also an important political moment that encourages a similar reaction from writers of the fantastic to construct another world that makes us consider and question the neoliberal social landscape in which we exist. Another such moment currently on the rise is the growing environmental protest movement of Extinction Rebellion, whose protests on the streets of London mirror the actions of the austerity protestors Occupy London on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral in 2011. These moments are ruptures within the capitalist system, glimpses of potential utopian action and spaces.

The portrayal of such themes in a fictional context allows Miéville to put socialism into some form of historical context without utilising the form of historical archive itself. By placing these political themes into a fantastical world, he can bring these social issues to life for a contemporary readership. He is creating "fiction *as* manifesto" - utilising the freedom of speculative genres to highlight contemporary social and political landscapes. The ultimate response is that readers are encouraged to engage with these issues themselves. By focusing on Marxist concepts, Miéville can explore the social structures of contemporary culture. As Mark Williams suggests:

> Miéville's dialectical materialism incorporates the concepts of multiculturalism, hybridity, non-linear development and decentred identities as necessary parts of this environment; these are all things he finds... in Marx's core distinctions of labour. (Williams, 2016: 180)

Much of the interesting social commentary within Miéville's novels stems from a consideration of materialism. The 'core distinctions of labour' that Williams alludes to are the core distinctions of Miéville's imaginative constructions. The elements of revolution,

utopia and justice are important, deep-rooted, elements of Miéville's exploration of Marxist concerns.

This is not an exaggeration. Miéville's political stance is deeply embedded within all his writing. However, genre fiction – no matter which genre he chooses – is the form in which Miéville can most effectively express his knowledge, understanding and theories regarding socialism and Marxism. As Carl Freedman, quoted earlier in this chapter, suggests, his fantastical worlds act as a 'locus' in which socialist ideals can be expressed. By embedding social and political themes as literary devices, Miéville's novels become engaging and relevant in two important ways: as an entertainment filled with monsters and magic; and, more significantly, as a critical reflection on our own contemporary world.

In fact, this dynamic could be more accurately interpreted as *and/or/both* as these two factors seem vastly different from each other whilst being intrinsically linked. This, of course, is a playful nod to Miéville's essay on the tentacular in Weird fiction, whose subtitle also considers such pairings: "M.R. James and the Quantum Vampire: Weird; Hauntological, Versus and/or and and/or or". In this article Miéville's comments on how Weird monsters 'are indescribable and formless *as well as being* and/or *although they are* and/or *in so far as they are described* with an excess of specificity, an accursed share of impossible somatic precision' (Miéville's, 2008b: 105, original emphasis). When considering Miéville's construction of social landscapes we can see the *and/or* descriptive application of formless teratological materiality infused with contemporary social commentary. The *and/or/both* construction of Miéville's monsters reflect, and therefore encourage the critical commentary of the complex social and political landscapes of the twenty-first century. These works utilise the form of the novel as a methodology for political and social expression - as previously suggested, Miéville's oeuvre becomes "fiction as manifesto". Multiple readings of a Miéville novel will reveal different levels of socio-political subtext and commentary. This engagement with the history and concepts of socialism and Marxism not only creates engaging plot elements

but encourages us to examine our own social and political views, to build our own ‘Perpetual Train’ and power off towards the mythical utopia lying just beyond the horizon.

Chapter Five:

The Miéville Bestiary:
Monsters as Social Commentary in the Work of China Miéville.

> Monsters signify, then, not the oppositional other safely fenced off within its own boundaries, but the otherness of possible worlds, or possible versions of ourselves, not yet realized. (Shildrick, 1996: 8)

China Miéville has two clear obsessions. The correlation between Miéville's love for monsters and his socialist views is what creates such vibrant, fantastical texts. Both sides of this equation are important: Miéville's politics mean that he adds strong political readings to his novels, which includes his monstrous creations (whether intentionally or not), whilst the presence of monsters within his texts allows him to explore these hard, political structures with a sense of gruesomeness, brutality and creativity. As Miéville himself points out, the elements of genre become central to enable this to happen:

> I'm not a leftist trying to smuggle in my evil message by the nefarious means of fantasy novels. I'm a science fiction and fantasy geek. I love this stuff. And when I write my novels, I'm not writing them to make political points. I'm writing them because I passionately love monsters… and what I want to do is communicate that. But, because I come at this with a political perspective, the world that I'm creating is embedded with many of the concerns that I have... I'm trying to say I've invented this world that I think is really cool and I have these really big stories to tell in it and one of the ways that I find to make that interesting is to think about it politically. If you want to do that too, that's fantastic. But if not, isn't this a cool monster? (Anders, 2005)

This comment is a little disingenuous. Miéville's political awareness is too astute to be this naïve about the political significance of his monsters. He may wish to resist labelling his monsters as metaphors but the saturation of his novels with political elements almost inevitably means that some social commentary is transferred to his monstrous creations.

Historically the bestiary has been a form that has been able to show us the social structures of the world in which we live, to show us what exists in the shadows. It

therefore seems fitting to use the bestiary as a methodology for exploring China Miéville's interpretation of modern society. In modern times, teratology is no longer an exercise in moral examination, but a methodology for exploring aspects of our world in a metaphorical context. The 2015 collection *The Bestiary* is a contemporary reinterpretation of the classic text of teratological study. Adopting the structural form of the bestiary, Ann VanderMeer's collection is an A-Z of imaginary beasts, each entry written by a contemporary author of speculative fiction. Jeff VanderMeer's introduction humorously highlights this switch in the perception of the bestiary:

> As the world has become more fragmented and the ordinary citizen prone to belief in both everything and yet nothing, it has been downhill for the bestiary...What could be more mournfully disappointing than the mythologizing fuss over a big ugly fish we already knew existed?...I envy you this first encounter with the true underpinnings of our world, and the hither-to-unknown creatures that inhabit this sphere with us. (VanderMeer, 2015)

Human knowledge is now so vast that monsters, teratology and the bestiary must instead seek to examine not just an imagined world, but also our own corporeality within a capital-driven society. Monsters have switched from being an embodiment of theological ideals to representing elements of modern culture and the future development of the human body. They are manifestations of the tensions which exist within modern society. In a time of posthuman exploration, the monster is an ideal motif for showing us how interactions with technology and science can create a new direction for human existence. Posthumanism is a movement which seeks to move beyond traditional humanist ideas of anthropocentrism and embrace techno-scientific knowledge to create new concepts of "human nature".[57] This technological advancement encourages us to consider the effects of progression on our own fragile biology. The hybridity of monsters not only reflects the hybridity of the genres in which they exist but, in a modern context, they represent the hybridity of the technologically enhanced human body.

[57] For more on posthumanism see page 33 and footnote 9.

Therefore, monsters and bestiaries prove useful theoretical tools in the early twenty-first century. It is not accidental that Ann VanderMeer has chosen to edit a contemporary bestiary. The hybrid fusion we witness in monsters is a useful methodology for reassessing and reconfiguring the Anthropocene, to also challenge our interpretation of what we interpret "body" to mean. Donna Haraway's definition of the Chthulucene in *Staying with the Trouble* (2016) is a pertinent connection. Haraway challenges the mentality of endgame inevitability that is associated with the Anthropocene. Haraway offers the Chthulucene as a means of expressing a possible new epoch, one focused on the importance of multispecies narratives as a counterpoint to narratives of impending climatic and environmental collapse: 'Specifically, unlike either the Anthropocene or the Capitalocene, the Chthulucene is made up of ongoing multispecies stories and practices of becoming-with in times that remain at stake, in precarious times, in which the world is not finished and the sky has not fallen – yet. We are at stake to each other' (Haraway, 2016: 55).

Haraway is quick to discuss the connotations with Lovecraft's Cthulhu in the naming of her new epoch. She insists on her etymological grounding, referring to the "chthonic ones" - beings on earth, taken from the Greek root *khthōn*, meaning "Earth", not from H.P. Lovecraft's monstrous creation. However, she is playful with the connotation that exists, recognising the role that the monster may play in these Chthulucene narratives:

> Chthonic ones are beings of the earth, both ancient and up-to-the-minute. I imagine chthonic ones as replete with tentacles, feelers, digits, cords, whiptails, spider legs, and very unruly hair. Chthonic ones romp in multicritter humus but have no truck with the sky-gazing Homo. Chthonic ones are monsters in the best sense; they demonstrate and perform the material meaningfulness of earth processes and critters. They also demonstrate and perform consequences (Haraway, 2016: 2).

This list of body parts is reminiscent of the hybridity of monsters, their ability to fuse together biological components into a new form. For Haraway, multispecies narratives

offer an alternative methodology for viewing the world and the monster can physically represent this. Haraway refers to both the octopus and the Greek goddess Medusa as avatars of this Chthulucene moment, associating both the monsters of the natural world and the monsters of our imagination with this multispecies narrative regarding our current times. A reconnection with the bestiary seems pertinent when considering new ways of constructing multispecies narratives.

The bestiary as a form has developed over time. The human body too is adapting, metamorphosing into various new forms with the influence of technology. The choice to refocus our critical attention on the bestiary as a form is, therefore, extremely pertinent and timely. Miéville's monsters make us carefully examine our own contemporary posthuman hybridity and capitalist-influenced socio-political landscapes.

Let the monsters talk!

ARCHITECTURAL MONSTERS

From: Examples taken from *Looking for Jake and Other Stories.*

Size: Various.

Type: Anthropomorphic/Haunted.

Fear Factor:

Description: The anthropomorphism of inanimate objects – and more significantly, buildings and architecture – is a theme within many of Miéville's works. For instance, consider this description of New Crobuzon from the opening of *Perdido Street Station*:

> *That is what protects me here; that and the illusion I have fostered, the source of my sorrow and my shame, the anguish that has brought me to this great wen, this dusty city dreamed up in bone and brick, a conspiracy of industry and violence, steeped in history and battened-down power, this badland beyond my ken. New Crobuzon.* (Miéville, 2000: 5, original emphasis)

This description establishes psychological links between Yagharek and the landscape of the city. The anthropomorphism of the urban, describing it as a living creature with 'wen' and 'bone', is a literary device used to great effect to produce a sense of New Crobuzon as a *diseased threat*. In Miéville's work real-life architecture are given human characteristics, take on monstrous identities, forms and bodies, with elements of the Gothic and the fantastic being exploited to animate them for socio-political commentary. Miéville highlights the inherent uncanniness and monstrousness of buildings and objects using juxtaposition with the natural world or more direct use of anthropomorphism. To explore these ARCHITECTURAL MONSTERS further, it would be worthwhile highlighting some of the more memorable examples.

Miéville's urban stories – although effective at describing the architecture of the city – are much more interested in the examination of smaller (transitional) urban spaces, of single rooms and buildings, alleyways and underground chambers. His aim with this examination of enclosed spaces is to focus imagery of the dominating capitalist

landscape of the financial “city” and industrialism onto the spaces inhabited by forgotten and unnoticed urban populations.

A good example of this examination of urban enclosure can be seen in “Details” from the collection *Looking for Jake* (2005). In this story elements of Gothic fiction are used to explore this urban enclosure and its connection to madness and psychosis. “Details” tells the story of Mrs Miller, an elderly woman who is routinely visited by the child narrator of the story, the son of her neighbour. At first it seems that Mrs Miller is agoraphobic, as she stays firmly within the safe environment of her flat. Eventually, the narrator learns the true reason for Mrs Miller’s isolation. She consistently sees a demonic face in the architecture of the city:

> “I stared at the whole mass of the bricks. I took another glance, relaxed my sight. At first I couldn’t stop seeing the bricks as bricks, the divisions as layers of cement, but after a time they became pure vision...
> “And then, without warning, my heart went tight, as I saw something. I made sense of the pattern.
> “It was a mess of cracks and lines and crumbling cement, and as I looked at it, I saw a pattern in the wall.
> “I saw a clutch of lines that looked just like something... terrible - something old and predatory and utterly terrible - staring right back at me.
> “And then I saw it move.” (Miéville, 2005a: 113)

These haunting apparitions projected by the urban landscape force Mrs Miller into a life of solitude. These demonic visions are trapping her into a smaller and smaller space, shutting her off from the world. As she puts it, ‘It lives in the details’ (Miéville, 2005a: 114) and over time Mrs Miller takes steps to ensure that the doorway for this “devil” remains shut: she strips back her house; paints the interior white and smooth; thinks about removing her own eyes; all so she can avoid seeing the vision in the lines and cracks of her walls. The end of the story sees the narrator returning to Mrs Miller’s abandoned flat a year later. Once inside, he observes the decay that has occurred and becomes fascinated by the cracks that have formed in the walls, until realising that they form the outline of an elderly woman, screaming as she is pulled away by an invisible force

(Miéville, 2005a: 121). In this story, the urban landscape becomes intrinsically linked to Mrs Miller's personal psychosis and, by the end of the story, the narrator's too. Are these demonic faces real creatures or a figment of her imagination? It is hard to ignore the allusions to the Gothic stories of Edgar Allan Poe, especially the ghostly apparition of the murdered cat on the wall in "The Black Cat" (1843).

This is an important story for Miéville in terms of the Urban Gothic as this madness – a quintessential motif of Gothic fiction – is created through Mrs Miller's psychogeographical response to the urban landscape around her. The fact that Mrs Miller lives in a yellow house is no accident. This imagery alludes to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892), a famous example of Victorian Gothic fiction's interest in madness. Both stories have protagonists who have gone mad due to their isolation, both seeing faces and visions within the decorative architecture of their individual prisons. The extra element in Miéville's story is the influence of the urban landscape in the creation of Mrs Miller's visions. The physical disintegration of this urban landscape, represented by cracks, broken masonry and the like, is directly reflected in Mrs Miller's own mental disintegration. This relationship between the urban and psychoanalysis that is depicted in "Details" suggests 'capital's colonisation of nature and the unconscious' (Bould, 2009: 313). Mrs Miller confirms this, declaring 'My memories aren't mine anymore. Not even my imaginings. Last night I thought of going to the seaside, and the thing was there in the foam of the waves' (Miéville, 2005a: 117). The devil of her visions, created by the disintegrating urban landscape, has indeed colonised not only the innocence of the natural world – what can be perceived as a Marxist interpretation of the capital invasion of the urban landscape – but her memories and thoughts too.

It is important to remember that the uncanny nature of these depicted spaces is being created by a combination of the architectural fabric which encloses the characters and their psychological reaction to this space. The feeling of the "architectural uncanny" relies on this interaction:

> The “uncanny” is not a property of the space itself nor can it be provoked by any spatial conformation; it is, in its aesthetic dimension, a representation of a mental state of projection that precisely elides the boundaries of the real and the unreal in order to provoke a disturbing ambiguity, a slippage between waking and dreaming. (Vidler, 1992: 11)

In other words, the buildings themselves cannot be uncanny but can become imbued with uncanny characteristics due to reaction of the people who inhabit or interact with them. The house is one of the most common bearers of uncanny characteristics, due to the popularity of the “haunted house” story in the nineteenth century, as in Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839). The reason for this association lies in the house as a symbol of “homeliness” and, therefore, its opposite “unhomeliness”, to translate Freud’s *unheimlich* more directly:

> The house provided an especially favoured site for uncanny disturbances: its apparent domesticity, its residue of family history and nostalgia, its role as the last and most intimate shelter of private comfort sharpened by contrast the terror of invasion by alien spirits. (Vidler, 1992: 17).

The fact that Mrs Miller’s ‘alien spirit’ threatens the sanctuary of her home is significant: not only is it the invasion of the larger city upon her own *personal* space but it represents the spatial transition from “homeliness” to “unhomeliness”, the transition into the uncanny. Architecture begins to mutate, break free from perceived boundaries and categories. It becomes monstrous.

One example of Miéville’s topographical strangeness can be found in his short story “Reports of Certain Events in London”. This “found narrative” tale plays with the reader as it is revealed that the narrator is none other than China Miéville himself who, by means of a fortuitous mistake, receives a mysterious package addressed to “C. Melville”. Inside is an array of documentation (including postcards, memoranda, reports and letters) which slowly reveals the existence of the VIA FERAE, or “wild roads”.

Unseen by most of the human population, these streets intermittently appear and disappear amongst the urban geography of London, taking on the Gothic anthropomorphism of ancient beasts. One of the documents is a table of information, almost like the results of a scientific experiment, describing the appearance of six foreign Via Ferae in the urban landscape of London. The notes written in the final column highlight the mysterious and unpredictable nature of these supernatural occurrences:

> Appeared restless, settling for only up to two hours at a time, moving among various locations in Camberwell and Highgate... Uniquely, this Via Fera was not witnessed by an investigator, but by a rare noticing civilian whose enquiries about a French-named street of impressive dimensions and architecture in the heart of Catford came to the Brotherhood's attention. (Miéville, 2005a: 66)

In this story the physical urban geography is literally *alive*, moving through space and temporality, raging an eternal and unseen war with one another. One expedition down the length of a particular Via Fera – unsubtly named Varmin Way – reveals physical damage to the street: 'You could see it in the striae and the marks...Varmin Way wasn't just passing through, it was resting, it was recovering. It had been attacked' (Miéville, 2005a: 63, original emphasis). Miéville's lifelong obsession with monsters seeps into the physical geography of the urban landscape, revealing the streets to be alive in *reality*, rather than metaphorically due to human interaction. The anthropomorphism of the streets in Miéville's story represents the fluidity and the ever-changing aspect of the city. The 'mendacious and delusive streets' referred to in Miéville's epigraph from *The City & The City* are *literally* represented here. Just as the Via Ferae change the layout of the city with their movements, so too does the capitalist model dramatically influence urban landscapes. The Via Ferae represent a vision of the urban being free from capitalist restriction, more importantly actively fighting against it. "Reports of Certain Events in London" explores the urban landscape as an ever-changing phenomenon, as something that is fluid and alive. Once again fantastika and the geography of London combine to

produce a metaphorical representation of the contemporary urban landscape. It should be noted here that Miéville's imaginative examination of the topography of London reflects the playful interpretation of Paris' geography by the Situationist International in the 1950s.[58] In both cases, the unseen crevices and rooftops of the urban landscape are avenues and topographical planes waiting to be explored. When this happens, urban space becomes re-interpreted in a magical way.

"Foundation" tells the story of a 'house whisperer' who hears voices in the foundations of buildings which tell him what is wrong with their architectural structure. It is soon revealed that the protagonist is an ex-soldier from the 1991 Gulf War and the voices he is hearing are from the ghosts of the Iraqi dead, who he witnessed being buried (some of them still alive) by the US Mechanized Infantry. The fact that these ghosts inhabit the buildings of the Westernised world is significant, as it shows a relationship between the military atrocities committed in the Gulf and, as Mark Bould suggests, 'the homes of US citizens who had no direct involvement in the war... our houses, and all they signify are not built upon the dead, and yet, at the same time, they are' (Bould, 2009: 310-311). However, the effect of "Foundation" is not to use this Gothic-inflected narrative as a methodology for exploring the complicity of the general populace in militarised imperialistic actions, but instead to highlight the general effects that capitalism is having on the world. The buildings haunted by Iraqi dead, images of bodies piled high, intertwined in a macabre dance, represent the global reach of capitalism and its influence upon militarised imperialist action. As these ghostly voices indicate in the conclusion of "Foundation": '-you built us, and you are built on us, and below us is only sand' (Miéville, 2005a: 32). The foundations of a capitalist society are inevitably unstable.

Each of these examples demonstrates how Miéville explores the juxtaposition between the opposing categories of man-made and industrial objects and comparing this to the hybridity found in the monstrous body. For Miéville, the horrors of the biological

[58] See chapter three.

monster are just as easily transferred into man-made structures through the methodologies of anthropomorphism and hauntology, resulting in commentary about contemporary social urbanism and architecture.

BREACH

From: *The City & the City.*

Size: Humanoid.

Type: Humanoid

Fear Factor:

Description: In *The City & the City* (2009), Miéville imbues his examination of interstitial spaces with a sinister undertone. If a citizen disregards the controlled zoning of either city – intentionally or not – then they are taken by a shadowy organisation known as BREACH. The origins of Breach are shrouded in mystery as they seem to miraculously appear when required, as when Borlú shoots the killer he has been chasing from across the border:

> Those suddenly appeared newcomers with faces so motionless I hardly recognised them as faces were saying the word. It was a statement of both crime and identity.
> '*Breach.*' A grim-featured something gripped me so that there was no way I could break out, had I wanted to... '*Breach.'*…something touched me and I went under into black, out of waking and all awareness, to the sound of that word. (Miéville, 2009b: 285-286)

The early suggestion is that Breach are supernatural in nature, faceless monsters able to cross the borders between Besźel and Ul Qoma at will. The reality is that Breach are only humans who exist within the spaces between Besźel and Ul Qoma, simultaneously and permanently unseen by the inhabitants of both cities, until a moment of breach has occurred, when they suddenly become visible to the perpetrator. Breach occupy a

specific viewpoint within the landscape, embodying a true representation of both cities as they are able to move through them as one, ignoring zones and borders. They have astute psychogeographical awareness.

It is interesting to examine the psychological considerations of the interstitial spaces Breach inhabit. In *The City & the City*, Borlú's first reaction upon entering Breach is one of bemusement:

> Sound and smell came in: the calls of Besźel; the ringing of its clocktowers,; the clattering and old metal percussion of the trams; the chimney smell; the old smells; they came in a tide with the spice and Illitan yells of Ul Qoma, the clatter of *militsya* coptor, the gunning of German cars. The colours of Ul Qoma light and plastic window displays no longer effaced the ochres and stone of its neighbour, my home... We moved through the crosshatched morning crowd. 'In Breach. No one knows if they're seeing you or unseeing you. Don't creep. You're not in neither: you're in both.' (Miéville, 2009b: 303-304)

The first step into Breach is a sensory overload for Borlú, as everything that he has been indoctrinated to 'unsee' suddenly becomes visible. From a psychological perspective reality and truth come rapidly into sharp focus and the whole picture is revealed. What before was a limited perspective has been replaced with an awakened perspective, Borlú now seeing and experiencing everything that once was unconscious. What Miéville explores here is the theory of the repressed as suggested by Sigmund Freud. Freud alludes to three systems: the conscious, the unconscious and the preconscious - the final being the system which operates as a potential gateway between the other two: 'something you know but are not actually thinking about has to be somewhere else, where you can get hold of it when you want - the preconscious' (Easthope, 2003: 25). Breaching represents Freud's three systems working in unison. Borlú, when in *total* zones, does not think about Ul Qoma, meaning that it is in his unconscious. When travelling through *crosshatch* areas, his cognition of Ul Qoma moves to pre-consciousness as he automatically represses any signifiers from the other city. When he does become a member of Breach, his cognition shifts again as Ul Qoma becomes

a conscious reality. It is Miéville's exploration of this psychological shift that produces the sense of topological uncertainty and traits of the fantastic.

In effect, even though members of Breach are only human, their understanding of the physical spaces of the two cities elevates them to the status of observers free from indoctrination, able to embrace and fully interact with the world around them. What Miéville alludes to is that exploring these invisible spaces results in a greater understanding of the landscape in which we live. Enlightenment can be gained by examining that which we perceive is invisible or, more importantly, that which normally we would *un*see. Breach show how power and control is often, dangerously, invisible.

The word 'breach' has roots in the Old English word *bryce*, meaning to break or fracture. Contemporary definitions refer to concepts of infringement and fragmentation. The overriding sense of the word 'breach' is one of disruption and chaos, a far cry from the indoctrination that Breach wish to implement in *The City & the City.* Breaching therefore becomes an act portrayed as wrong and punishable, suggesting that the crossing of borders fundamentally fractures the social and political structure of place. This etymological consideration adds a layer of political commentary onto Miéville's concept for Breach: the very activity and the border that they are policing fragments the citizens under their control. Therefore, their final objective of control will, ironically, never be obtained due to this fracturing. Breach act as a barrier that prevents Besźel and Ul Qoma from achieving the freedom of movement witnessed in the real-life example of Baarle-Nassau-Hertog mentioned earlier in this thesis. *Breach*, as a word, conjures up imagery of "breaching the defences": a military connotation suggestible of invasion and the conquering of space. It is a brutal act. People who breach are torn away from their urban environment, disappearing into the policed interstitial space in between, sometimes never to be seen again.

Despite these political warnings, Miéville's examination of emotional zones and interstitial spaces embraces psychogeographical theory. By exploring the concept of emotional zones, he is connecting to our urban space and revealing how our personal

psychology is affected by the contemporary urban landscape. The spaces in between these zones of ambience present the opportunity to gain a real understanding of our urban landscape, to see our cities as whole instead of a fractured environment. It is within these spaces, Miéville's work suggests, that the reality exists. Roger Luckhurst describes Miéville's interstitial spaces as 'impossible'[59] and upon first viewing he is partly correct. They play with topological reality, presenting alternative planes of existence that at first glance seem steeped in fantastical construction. However, Miéville's skill and political understanding ensure that these spaces remain firmly rooted within social and political reality and, in so doing, act as important commentary about our own attitudes and power struggles.

THE CONSTRUCT COUNCIL

From: *Perdido Street Station.*

Size: Massive.

Type: Artificial Intelligence, demonic.

Fear Factor:

Description: Created from discarded machinery left in New Crobuzon's rubbish dump, THE CONSTRUCT COUNCIL is a formidable creation. Towering high above any human figure, this amalgamation of mechanical detritus has achieved sentience and is slowly acquiring information from its machine followers, human devotees and ever-expanding, tentacular network of information cables which tap into the city's surveillance infrastructure. The Construct Council utilises a human cadaver as an avatar, to communicate:

> But what caused the watchers to shudder and exclaim was his head. His skull had been sheared cleanly in two just above his eyes. The top was completely gone...The cable hauled up into the air, dangling down into the

[59] For original quotation from Roger Luckhurst, see page 125.

> man's skull...As the monstrous puppet-man approached, Isaac moved backwards instinctively... The man's expression of horrified concentration did not falter as he opened his arms in a paternal gesture.
> 'Welcome all,' he said in his quivering voice, 'to the Construct Council.' (Miéville, 2000: 549-550)

This rather macabre introduction emphasises its monstrosity: an unemotional, calculating artificial intelligence that uses every tool available at its disposal.

The Construct Council is monstrous for two principal reasons. Firstly, it represents a deep-rooted contemporary fear regarding the rise of artificial intelligence, therefore reflecting a modern social landscape that is deeply affected by the role and development of artificial intelligence and technology. A common theme in science fiction narratives, Miéville uses the figure of the Construct Council to explore the potential ability of computers and machinery to adapt and become sentient; assimilating everything they need to achieve this goal. In the same way that fusion monsters create a sense of body horror through the assimilation of different components, the Construct Council is using defunct constructs and machinery to build its own body, metaphorically cannibalising its own kind to build itself. The sinister undertone of body horror is still present in the Construct Council's visual appearance.

Secondly, it is a posthuman subject, an examination of how informatics and technology play a role in defining contemporary bodies. The Construct Council is what N. Katherine Hayles would call a 'material-informational entity';[60] one constantly seeking out new knowledge in a quest to understand its own corporeality and environment. It is a monster whose material body is fundamentally defined by technology. The monstrosity of the Construct Council is not due to a hybridisation of contrasting biological components. Instead, it is the posthuman fusion of biology and machine which makes it a monstrous entity. The Construct Council invites the reader to question the boundaries between artificial and biological life, to question our relationship with the technologies that exist around us. As Elaine L. Graham suggests:

[60] As mentioned in the introduction. See page 33.

> Western culture may be confronting a technologically mediated 'crisis' of human uniqueness, but a more satisfactory way of framing the situation might be in terms of the blurring of boundaries, a dissolution of the 'ontological hygiene' by which for the past three hundred years Western culture has drawn the fault-lines that separate humans, nature and machines. (Graham, 2002: 11)

The Construct Council sits perfectly on this posthuman boundary between human and machine. It is a body that is constantly in flux, making continuous improvements to its form by incorporating more constructs into not only its physical body but also its consciousness. This is common practice within the concept of posthuman bodies, with the upgrade of the biological due to the continual inclusion of ever-advancing technology. In this capacity as a posthuman entity, Miéville's creation takes on a necromantic identity, assimilating a decaying human body to not only understand our physiology but as a means of communication. This is an example of what could be referred to as "reverse cyborgism". Professor Kevin Warwick, when speaking about his ongoing cybernetics project, describes the 'ability to change myself, to upgrade my human form with the aid of technology. To link my body directly with silicon. To become a Cyborg - part human, part machine' (Warwick, 2004:1). However, the Construct Council shows us an example of this in reverse: a machine upgrading its form with the aid of human biology. Without the means for human speech, it reclaims a body that it finds floating in the river and puts it to good use. The lack of emotional and moral boundaries makes the Construct Council a sinister entity. It represents the nightmare scenario of the machine undergoing socialist revolution, the discarded "worker" revolting against its oppressors. As the Construct Council points out to Isaac: 'I am the repository of construct history. I am the data bank. I am the self-organized machine' (Miéville, 2000: 557).

The Construct Council is, therefore, an interesting monster to consider in Miéville's oeuvre. It is not a monster in the traditional sense: at first glance it is an interesting science-fictional body, reminiscent of the "worker" constructs of which it is

made. It's application of the human cadaver, however, reveals the Construct Council to be a monstrous entity which destabilises the fundamental barriers between human and machine, the biological and the technological. It is from this destabilisation of the natural order that its monstrosity is formed. It breaks down the ontological landscape in a violent and horrific fashion.

GARUDA

From: *Perdido Street Station, Iron Council.*

Size: Humanoid.

Type: Hybrid, Mythological.

Fear Factor:

Description: Jorge Luis Borges, in *The Book of Imaginary Beasts,* describes the GARUDA as 'half vulture and half man, with the wings, beak and talons of the one and body and legs of the other' (Borges, 1974: 70), a description which directly corresponds with that of Yagharek from Miéville's second novel, *Perdido Street Station*:

> The great creature stood more than six feet tall, on cruel, clawed feet that poked out from under a dirty cloak... And that great inscrutable bird face gazed down at Isaac with what looked like imperiosity. Its sharply curved beak was something between a kestrel's and an owl's. (Miéville, 2000: 38)

Although the physiology is slightly altered, there is no denying that Miéville has been inspired by the mythological creature of the Garuda, perhaps directly from reading Borges' own bestiary entry.

The Garuda is not only an example of Miéville exploring mythological figures (in this case Vahana, the mount of Lord Vishnu in Hindu mythology). It is also evidence of Miéville's fascination with the monstrous body that is constructed through the fusion of opposed categories. The fusion of man and bird is rooted not only in Eastern mythology

but in the stories of Classical mythology, such as Icarus and the Harpy. In *Perdido Street Station* Miéville explores this common fusion through a horrific lens.

YAGHAREK is a Garuda, his fusion body initially creating elements of body horror revulsion. However, Yagharek's monstrous body is taken a step further when we discover that he is also disfigured. He has come to New Crobuzon to seek out a scientist to help him, bringing him to Isaac's doorstep. Upon meeting the scientist, Yagharek declares '"I want you to give me back flight"' before revealing that his wings have been surgically removed as a punishment (Miéville, 2000: 58-59). Yagharek's overriding emotion over his disfigurement is shame and repulsion. This is an interesting examination of how disfigurement may be an interesting addition in the construction of the monster motif. Yagharek's belief in Isaac's ability to recreate his ability to fly through the wonders of science reflects on the marvels that modern day medical technology can provide. Isaac explores many ways in which he can reinstate Yagharek's ability, all involving scientific theories or the use of technology. This places Yagharek's dilemma and Isaac's work into the realm of cybernetic enhancement.

A shocking example of personal law and justice is also seen through Yagharek at the end of *Perdido Street Station.* Isaac is visited by another Garuda, a female named KAR'UCHAI, whose intention is to talk to the scientist regarding his agreement to build Yagharek new wings. Kar'uchai implores Isaac to reconsider his offer, revealing why Yagharek was so severely punished. Passionately she declares: '"It is up to you... to let justice be... we did not think... we did not know that he might... find a way... that justice could be *retracted*. I am here to ask you not to help him fly"' (Miéville, 2000: 846). By having the ability to rectify Yagharek's disfigurement, Isaac becomes the mechanism for *enforcement* of the law. Kar'uchai continues to highlight Yagharek's crime, declaring to Isaac that '"he is guilty...of choice-theft in the second degree, with utter disrespect"' (Miéville, 2000: 847).

It turns out that Kar'uchai is referring to rape, and once Isaac realises this, he is disturbed by the actions of Yagharek and becomes unable to look past the sexual

violence of this act. Choice-theft is the only crime that the Garuda society recognises and revolves around the concept of removed individual choice and the enforced destruction of potentiality. Kar'uchai is keen to correct Isaac's use of the word "rape", affirming that '"He stole my choice...You cannot translate into your jurisprudence, Grimneb'lin...You would call his actions rape, but I do not: that tells me nothing"' (Miéville, 2000: 849). The idea of choice-theft is a *socialist* ideal - it celebrates the concept of community, of every citizen being considered equal to make the choices they wish to make without impediment. For the Garuda, rape has no meaningful context, yet the removal of choice – as Isaac reflects 'the choice not to have sex, not to be hurt... the choice to look at Yagharek with respect?' (Miéville, 2000: 848-849) – is central to their social system. Kar'uchai is demonstrating the importance of language in defining law. The choice of words is a vital element of the juridical system, the differences between "rape" and "choice-theft" providing a good example. The power of words and their meaning is what creates justice for the crime, Isaac's associations with "rape" creating disgust and ultimately leading him to decide to punish Yagharek by refusing his request. The importance of language and its precise clarity is central to the definition of any structured system of law and justice.

With Kar'uchai, Miéville is exploring how the legal form would operate within a socialist model rather than a capitalist one, a legal form where violence and coercion are not the principal driving factors but are replaced by *choice.* As Kar'uchai summarises: '"*[But] we have all the choices that we can.* Except when someone forgets themselves, forgets the reality of their companions, as if they were an individual *alone*"' (Miéville, 2000, 847: original emphasis).

Isaac's reaction to Kar'uchai's request highlights the violence, coercion and commodity-exchange present in a capitalist legal form. He is unable to move beyond the violence and sexual nature of Yagharek's crime. He views the act as a violent coercion, a display of dominance. This is further emphasised by his consideration of Lin's previous incarceration and the possibility that she was the victim of similar crimes. His reaction is

to avoid the confrontation with Yagharek, using the Garuda's absence after the conflict with the slake moths as an opportunity to leave. He is unable to reconcile what he has discovered regarding Yagharek. As he explains to Derkhan: '"[And] I can't see him, I don't want to see him. So, there's *nothing* here, so we can go. We really must go"' (Miéville, 2000: 855). By avoiding the confrontation with Yagharek, Isaac is allowing the socialist concept of choice-theft to be the dominant law enforcement mechanism. By refusing to "remake" Yagharek's wings, Isaac is choosing *not* to engage in the commodity-based, judicial action of the New Crobuzon punishment factories. Isaac chooses to allow the original decision – decided by Yagharek's peers – to stand.[61]

THE GHOSTHEAD EMPIRE

From: *The Scar.*

Size: Unknown

Type: Mythical.

Fear Factor:

Description: In *The Scar* (2002) Miéville explores Lovecraft's interpretation of the "Great Outside" in what is one of the most engaging and fantastical passages in the book: the description of THE GHOSTHEAD EMPIRE. Uther Doul himself is a mythical character: an immortal warrior hired by the rulers of Armada, The Lovers, as their own personal bodyguard. Rumoured to be '"born more'n three thousand years ago"' as a slave of the Ghosthead Empire he carries with him a 'Mightblade' stolen from this mystical race (Miéville, 2002a: 398). In a conversation with Bellis Coldwine, Uther Doul reveals more about the Ghosthead, an ancient, now mythological race which (three thousand years prior) ruled the entirety of Bas-Lag before an uprising from the other races, calling

[61] The example of Kar'uchai links to the discussion of interpretations of justice in *Between Equal Rights* (see pages 206-207). The Garuda's interpretation of justice bypasses the state-selected framework of real-life judicial systems.

themselves The Contumancy, destroyed their hold on the world. Now dispersed, the Ghosthead are resigned to the depths of history, the only evidence of their existence is in books and ancient artefacts.

Everything about the Ghosthead and their empire is described in a weird-aesthetic which highlights the insignificance of Bas-Lag when compared to the greater cosmos: Doul describes the Ghosthead as '"in no way human... These were not xenian in the sense we usually mean it... The question "What did they look like?" has no straightforward answer"'. He describes their homeworld as a place of contrasting environments with scorching days "'hotter than the heat of any foundry"' and nights "'colder than anything we could imagine... the very aether piled up in bergs and walls, chilled more solid than stone'". Doul finally concedes to Bellis that "'The Ghosthead came here from the universe's eastern rim... [They] were not native to this world"' (Miéville, 2002a: 479-482). All of this seeks to install the Ghosthead – and by default, Bas-Lag's history as a whole – with a feeling of belonging to a wider cosmos, beyond the perception of normal human consciousness.

This is further intensified in *The Scar* through the descriptions of Uther Doul's sword and the immense power that resides within it. The 'Mightblade', as Bellis writes, is 'Another misunderstanding...The men call it *Might*blade. Not mighty...It might, it might not. *Might* not meaning potency, but *potentiality*...It is a Possible Sword' (Miéville, 2002a: 445). The arrival of the Ghosthead on Bas-Lag was "'violent enough to smash open the world - reality itself"' (Miéville, 2002a: 482). The result is areas of Bas-Lag that are fractured and spilling forth other realities and possibilities, hence the fabled Scar of the title which The Lovers seek to harness for their own well-being. Uther Doul's sword is a weapon which harnesses this power of possibility, able to deliver (if its wielder is skilled enough) all the possible strikes and scenarios simultaneously, as seen when Doul jumps into the heat of battle:

> His sword blossoms.
> It is fecund, it is brimming, it sheds echoes. Doul has a thousand right arms, slicing in a thousand directions. His body moves, and like a stunningly complex tree, his sword-arms spread through the air, solid and ghostly.
> Some of them can hardly be seen, some are quite opaque. All move with Doul's speed, all carry his blade... A hundred blades block every attack that his enemies make, and countless more retaliate brutally. (Miéville, 2002a: 580)

Uther Doul's origins and his "Possible Sword" illustrate Miéville inserting Weird fiction's exploration of the "Great Outside" into his own work. This is not magic, but the backwash of cosmic awe and the sublime into the reality of Bas-Lag: an understanding that a vast array of possibility exists not only in, but also beyond, the physical world of Bas-Lag and that these forces can invade our reality.

This "possibility mining" that the sword dispenses also emphasises the violent disruption that is necessary as part of the utopian impulse, as discussed in chapter four of this thesis. The "blossoming" of the Possible Sword, the enacting of multiple possibilities simultaneously, mirrors the imagining of alternative versions of the world as described by Ernst Bloch in his definition of the utopian impulse. As Sherryl Vint summarises:

> Possibility mining emphasizes the disruption that is necessarily a part of the utopian project. One must wound before healing and scarring, another configuration, becomes possible. Doul's description also emphasizes the simultaneous presence of multiple possibilities, a refusal to reduce them to a single program or option, in terms that are similar to what Jameson, drawing on Bloch, defines as the utopian impulse as opposed to the utopian program. (Vint, 2009: 279)

The capabilities of the mythical Ghosthead Empire are, therefore, used by Miéville as a reflection of Blochian utopian impulse. Possibility is given materiality through the power of the Ghosthead Empire - left behind physically on Bas-Lag in the form of the Scar itself (and its magical properties) as well as the Possible Sword. By association, the presence of possibility mining in *The Scar* is a summoning of utopian hope, the use of "mining"

suggesting an earth-bound materiality. As Vint concludes: 'the possibility for a better world is materially present in this one.' (Vint, 2009: 285). Yet, despite the materiality of possibility seen in the Scar and the Possible Sword, they are still just possibilities - unrealised potential. This is further emphasised by the end of the novel when the new Armada is revealed as a place lacking in the agency and drive of pre-revolution Armada. One possible utopia has been achieved but, importantly, not necessarily the one that everyone was hoping for. The control of possibility represented by the Ghosthead Empire is presented as a utopian impulse - a material but unrealised potential. Miéville's views on utopia are represented through the potential and materiality of the Ghosthead Empire, something explored by Sherryl Vint in her reading of *The Scar* as a useful consideration of Blochian utopianism.

GOLEMS

From: *Iron Council.*

Size: Various.

Type: Mythological, creature.

Fear Factor:

Description: A somaturge can manipulate the elements and materials to their will, exploring their dormant potential to be something else. They can construct vast figures that they control and use as protectors. GOLEMS are extremely hard to destroy and are, therefore, useful tools. In *Iron Council*, Judah Low is a somaturge well versed in Golemtry, who conjures up a variety of these monsters from a wide range of materials, including wood, glass, rocks and even dead flesh: 'The somaturge shoved his hand among the cadavers and barked... And the corpse-pile stood in a new configuration, a golem of flesh still twitching as the nerves within it died' (Miéville, 2004: 131). This ability makes Judah a very powerful individual.

Elizabeth Roberts Baer explores the power of the golem figure in her book *The Golem Redux: From Prague to Post-Holocaust Fiction* (2012). Here, she comments on the intertextual power of the golem in Jewish folklore, particularly as a conduit of remembrance in modern literature of the Holocaust: 'the golem serves to affirm the long history of Jewish legend and Jewish imagination in the face of lethal antisemitism and to create memory anew through intertextuality' (Baer, 2012:25). For her, 'the golem in particular allows such inherent metafictional commentary, representing as he does creativity, Jewish legend, mysticism, memory, ambivalent identity, and an actual intertext' (Baer, 2012:12). This intertextual hybridity makes the golem the perfect monster motif to reflect Miéville's own hybridity within the landscapes of genre fictions. Just as the golem myth is an intertextual construction of several different versions, so too is Miéville's fiction an intertextual construction of various genre fiction and literary protocols.

In Jewish folklore, the golem was created to be a protector of Josefov, the enclosed Jewish ghetto in Prague, to deal with the everyday tasks of the synagogue. Baer demonstrates how the golem legend in Jewish folklore has continued to adapt since its conception, each version influencing future copies. For instance, in the traditional golem mythology the creation is a positive force, acting as protector and guardian. After its job is done it is returned to its original state. However, in some versions of the myth the golem appears every thirty-three years, or is given a voice, or falls in love, or (thanks to it not being put to sleep during the Sabbath) goes on a destructive rampage on the streets. This intertextuality is important as it allows the golem motif to be appropriated for a myriad of metaphorical and symbolic interpretations. As Baer suggests: 'In placing a golem figure at the center of their texts, these authors intentionally choose a synecdoche of creativity, of imagination, of both the text and the intertext... Intertextuality, then, functions like the *shem* put into the golem's mouth in some versions of the legend: it reawakens a text and transforms it into another text' (Baer, 2012:183). This transformation of text is a direct comparison to the form of the golem itself: original matter is transformed into new shapes and purposes.

This Hebrew myth of the Golem is a narrative which has been reinterpreted and explored in several speculative fiction texts. Indeed, Baer declares that 'another monograph remains to be written about science fiction which has riffed on golem legends, such as marge Piercy's *He, She and It.* A whole strain of non-fiction analyses of the golem legend as a precursor to cyborgs could also be included' (Baer, 2012:10). Such a study would be extremely valid, but it is worth briefly mentioning Piercy's novel here. The interpretation of the golem in *He, She and It* (1991) is the character of Yod, a cyborg initially created for the same reasons as the Golem in the traditional mythology - as a protector for the futuristic Jewish freetown of Tikva. Piercy skilfully delves into the questions of humanity and existence which are so prevalent in science fiction narratives by juxtaposing Yod's experiences as a cyborg "other" – and his quest for psychological and sexual identity – with a re-telling of the traditional Golem mythology. The inclusion of Yod in Piercy's novel demonstrates the close associations the figure of the Golem has with the posthuman body of the cyborg. As we have discussed with The Construct Council, the posthuman body explores the boundaries between the living and the artificial through an amalgamation of the biological with the technological. Although the Golem does not explore the same hybridity with technology, it does still reflect the same binary between the living and the artificial, being constructed, traditionally, from clay or other inanimate objects. The connection we are making here is that the cyborg and the Golem are close relations in terms of their hybrid construction. They both explore the same dichotomy, albeit with the cyborg using the inclusion of advanced technology – a science fictional device – and the Golem exploring a more fantasy-orientated application of hybridity, through motifs of magic and ritual. It therefore makes sense for Piercy to juxtapose the cyborg character of Yod with traditional Jewish Golem mythology. It is also interesting that the Golem appears alongside the Remade in *Iron Council*. The Remade represent the exploration of posthuman bodies due to their hybrid relationship between biological and technological components. Similarly, the construction of Judah's Golems also reflects a duality between the human and the artificial, albeit in the context of fantasy

and magic rather than technology. Golems can be perceived as representations of the cyborg or posthuman subject in the fantasy genre.

The figure of the Golem is not only a representation that narratives regarding the "other" have existed throughout history and across cultures but also a fascinating journey into the interpretation of both "truth" and "death" as philosophical concepts. This relationship between "truth" and "death" is an interesting area for this mythological figure to inhabit, asking questions about the boundary between these two oppositions. For this reason, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* fits into the realm of the golem story, with a figure made from inanimate matter given life through the "truth" of scientific innovation, without thought to the consequences. The result is the "death" of both the creature and its creator. Indeed, Shelley's monstrous creation and Miéville's flesh golem share the same form of physical construction from the remains of dead people, symbolising this juxtaposition between life and death.

Miéville's character Judah Low is a direct reference to Judah Loew ben Bezalel, the real-life 16th century Rabbi of Prague who features in the recognisable golem folklore that we know today (reinterpreted most famously in Gustav Meyrink's *Der Golem* [1914]). The golem is created from clay by Rabbi Loew; clay also the first element that Judah experiences as a golem in *Iron Council*.[62] One interpretation of the golem mythology states that the creature is created by carving the Hebrew letters *emeth* onto its forehead, meaning "truth". The golem is killed by removing the first letter, leaving *meth*, which means "death". Baer emphasises the importance of this element of the myth, that language is a significant factor in the creation of the golem: 'we see the centrality of the Hebrew alphabet in the art of creation: whether it be the chanting of magical verses, the placing of the *shem* (a paper on which God's name is written) in the clay man's mouth,

[62] '-Again, he says and the stiltspear child shows him what it has made… it opens its hand and a stiltspear toy made of mud and waterlilies stands between its fingers. The child pinches it to shape and sings to it in a tiny wordless trilling, and makes it move. The figurine has only one motion, flexing and unflexing its stem legs. It does it several times before bursting' (Miéville, 2004: 167).

or the carving of the word *emeth* (life) in his forehead, the alphabet brings him to life' (Baer, 2012:20). Language is the life-force of the traditional golem figure, whether it is the language used in mystical incantation or the physical inscription of life-given Hebrew script onto the body of the golem. Those who hold the secrets of language hold tremendous power over life and death. In *Iron Council* it is Judah Low that demonstrates this power and, ultimately, it is used for political means.

Miéville uses the golem as a political motif by turning it into a tool of revolution against the capitalist power of New Crobuzon. In the hands of Judah Low, language and its association with golems becomes powerful and revolutionary. Judah Low's golems get more elaborate and imaginative as *Iron Council* progresses. However, it is his final golem that is the most spectacular, as Judah manipulates time to save the community of the Iron Council from inevitable destruction:

> [Judah Low] reshaped the time itself, and made it
>
> a golem
>
> time golem
>
> Which stood into its ablife, a golem of sound and time, stood and did what it was instructed to do, its instruction become it, its instruction its existence, its command just *be*, and so it was. (Miéville, 2004: 590-591, original spacing)

The time golem captures the Iron Council within an indestructible temporal pocket, preserving the community of revolutionaries in perpetual stillness. The Iron Council therefore becomes a monument of remembrance, a beacon of eternal hope for a more egalitarian vision of New Crobuzon. This is comparable to Baer's interpretation of the golem as a figure of remembrance for the Holocaust. As Will Eisner comments: 'The Golem was very much the precursor of the super-hero, in that in every society there's a need for mythological characters, wish fulfillment. And the wish fulfillment in the Jewish case of the hero would be someone who could protect us. This kind of storytelling seems to dominate in Jewish culture' (Baer, 2012: 113). As the character of Joe muses in

Michael Chabon's 2000 novel *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*: 'The shaping of a golem, to him, was a gesture of hope, offered against hope, in a time of desperation' (Chabon, 2008: 548). The golem's initial task within all the different versions of the legend is as a protector, a symbol of hope. Miéville utilises this aspect of the golem figure here, the time golem operating as protector of revolutionary hope by preserving the Iron Council. Miéville's final words suggest the revolutionary power the time golem's preservation has had:

> *Years might pass and we will tell the story of the Iron Council and how it was made, how it made itself and went, and how it came back, and is coming, is still coming...They are coming out of the trenches of rock toward the brick shadows. They are always coming.* (Miéville, 2004, 614: original emphasis)

This monument is a reminder to the population of New Crobuzon to always revolt against oppressors, to break free and strive for a more utopian ideal. Where this memorial succeeds is in the blurring of chronology, which creates a deep-rooted sense of potentiality which must draw on the lessons of the past. As Dougal McNeil suggests:

> There is not one past, but different historical pasts, different moments coming back into consciousness as the present re-works them in struggles for historical legacies. The Iron Council's frozen train - a moment from a lost revolution visible in a present while still being in the past - is a wonderfully resonant image of this kind of possibility. (McNeil, 2015: 101)

The captured Iron Council is exactly that: a historical legacy; a reminder of what could be, a democracy documented for all time. It is up to the inhabitants of New Crobuzon to embrace it as a catalyst for revolution. The potentiality of the golem as a figure of intertextuality and transformation is realised in the time golem. Revolution is transformed into memoriam, into everlasting hope. Or is it?

By using the time golem Judah has stopped the Iron Council's attempts to invade New Crobuzon and destabilise the totalitarian government. As Ann-Hari points out:

> ‘Maybe we’d have died. But you don’t know. You don’t know there weren’t Collectivists waiting behind them militia ready to take them, now all scared off because of what you done. You don’t know that they weren’t there, you don’t know who wouldn’t have been inspired when we come, too late or *not*.’ (Miéville, 2004: 602)

Judah’s actions (no matter how pure his intention to save his friends) immediately quash the Iron Council’s revolutionary potentiality. Just as Lenin’s arrival into Petrograd by train solidified the proletarian actions during the Russian Revolution, so too the arrival of the Iron Council *could* have unified the struggling pockets of revolutionaries on the streets of New Crobuzon. Considering Ann-Hari’s speech, the final moments of *Iron Council* can be interpreted in a different way, with ‘*They are always coming*’, instead referring to the allusion that the Iron Council is moving toward a perpetual horizon just out of reach, rather than acting as a revolutionary memorial. In a narrative where revolution forms such a central thread, this ambiguous interpretation of the Iron Council’s final state at the hands of the time golem is a playful examination of how successful revolutions really are. Yes, they can serve as a means of remembering and questioning, but do they ever actually achieve their destination and aim? Miéville’s playful conclusion suggests possibly not. The time golem, then, breaks free from its role of protector and “runs amok”, trampling the utopian potential of the Iron Council’s preservation. Miéville skilfully uses the associations of the golem as a figure of protection and hope to highlight the embedded fragility of revolutionary action. Whereas most golems encompass the dormant potentiality that is present in the elements, the time golem achieves the opposite effect: freezing potentiality and returning everything to a dormant state of remembrance.

THE HOSTS

From: *Embassytown.*

Size: Large.

Type: Creature (alien).

Fear Factor:

Description: A human colony has established itself on the planet of Arieka, which exists on the edges of the known universe, 'the last outpost, a jumping-off to an expanding frontier' (Miéville, 2012a: 274). The Bremen, a political conglomerate of planetary governments, has a keen interest in Arieka, establishing Embassytown as a colony to oversee interaction with the Ariekei, the planet's indigenous species. Known by the human colonists as HOSTS, the aliens can produce a wide variety of technological components through a process referred to as 'biorigging', resulting in commercial trade with the Bremen. Therefore, Ambassadors have been posted at Embassytown as a means of communicating with the Ariekei. Miéville's creations are truly alien, 'among the most radically *alien* lifeforms in science fiction' (Freedman, 2015: 116, original emphasis) and Miéville's usual style of minimal description is beneficial here. The Hosts are so physically strange that, for human consciousness, it is hard to produce words that begin to describe them. Avice gets closest, saying: 'We looked at our Hosts and saw insect-horse-coral-fan things' (Miéville, 2012a: 141). A combination of different animal parts, each from different biological classes, means that the Hosts are a successful example of monstrous hybridity. Every component of the Hosts' construction opposes the others, no similarity between biological parts at all. This strangeness is emphasised by the inclusion of bizarre word combinations to describe various parts of Host physiology: 'fanwing', 'giftwing', 'eye-corals', 'cut-mouth' and turn-mouth' to name but a few (Miéville, 2012a: 91-96).

The alien construction of the Hosts leads to some interesting commentary. The Hosts have two mouths, but there is only one consciousness in control of the speech

produced by both. The resulting 'Language' is one consisting of words spoken simultaneously. This Language can be understood but cannot be reciprocated by humans, due to their lack of a second voice. A school of Ambassadors are created out of necessity to bridge the communication divide. The Ambassadors play with the concept of the monstrous body too: genetically engineered twins who are clones of each other, trained to communicate as one consciousness, but with two simultaneous voices.[63] A monster created to benefit the capitalist intentions of the Bremen.

Miéville's objective with *Embassytown* is to explore all aspects of language and communication, and how alien bodies may fit into this formula. The bioengineering of the Ambassadors in order to produce Language is interesting enough, but the Hosts critically explore Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction between linguistic signs (the word) and the referent (what the sign is referring to), a relationship that Saussure suggests is essentially arbitrary in his 1916 work *Course in General Linguistics*. For Saussure there is no necessary connection between the occurrence of a word, spoken or written, and the associated image evoked by the sign. This aspect of signification forms the basis of human linguistic creativity, resulting in our ability to lie, use metaphor and create or adapt meanings for words. Host Language – although containing the ability to refer – is completely void of signification and it is this aspect of the Host's "otherness" that is the most critically-engaging in *Embassytown*, as this linguistic positioning means that the Host are incapable of lying. This is summarised by Avice, who declares at one point that:

> For Hosts, speech was thought. It was nonsensical to them that a speaker could say, could claim, something it knew to be untrue as, to me, that I believe something I knew to be untrue. Without Language for things that didn't exist, they could hardly think them; they were vaguer by far than dreams. (Miéville, 2012a: 96)

[63] The new twin ambassadors Ez and Ra are collectively known as EzRa. This is creatively presented on the page as "ez" to signify both voices speaking together.
ra

Consciousness and language are inextricably linked, controlling and restricting the worldview of the Ariekei.

Although they lack the ability to signify, Hosts can use referentiality as a means of expression, resulting in their use of simile, which is a mode of rhetoric that is free from untruth. Since a simile is an assertion that one thing is *like* another – as opposed to the metaphor, which *is* something else (falsely) – then the Hosts can access and understand this form of linguistic creativity. The simile is a big part of Host culture, with some human colonists even referred to as similes themselves. Avice, who was a child on Arieka and experienced interactions with Hosts when she was young, is referred to in such a manner. Due to an encounter with the Hosts where she is asked to perform a simile, Avice is now canonised *'There was a human girl who in pain ate what was given her in an old room built for eating in which eating had not happened for a time'* - shortened for convenience to 'a girl ate what was given her' (Miéville, 2012a: 28). The Hosts name Avice after their first encounter with her as a child.

The turning point in the plot of *Embassytown* is the arrival of EzRa, an ambassador engineered and trained by the Bremen as a means of infiltrating the monopoly of communication that Embassytown Ambassadors have with the Hosts. At first it seems that EzRa's abilities with Language are enough to be understood but soon it becomes apparent that EzRa's Language has an intoxicating effect upon the Hosts that hear it, due to them detecting the individual consciousnesses of Ez and Ra instead of one conjoined voice. This new "drug" turns Embassytown into a battleground between human colonists and junkie-Hosts, some of them mutilating their ears so that EzRa's intoxicating voice does not reach them. Perceiving humans as the harbingers of their addiction, these rebel-Hosts attack the human colonists. It takes Avice's position as a simile, with the help of the Host named Spanish Dancer, to break the violence, changing Language into language by becoming a metaphor herself, changing to '*is* a girl who ate what was given her'. Through re-naming her Host companions, Avice is able to move their communication from similes to metaphors: '*We are the girl who was hurt... We were*

like the girl... We are the girl' (Miéville, 2012a: 361-362, original emphasis).

As well as being an examination of addiction and, more specifically, the ability of language to poison reasoning, Miéville's exploration of language in *Embassytown* is a successful postulation regarding the linguistic depiction of alien life in science fiction. In interview he has admitted the difficulties faced by science-fiction writers attempting to depict alien lifeforms:

> If you are a writer who happens to be a human, I think it's definitionally beyond your ken to describe something truly inhuman, psychologically, something alien. However, that doesn't mean there's no point trying, or that you can't do some pretty interesting things with flaws and failures, and the very asymptotic aspiration is pretty exciting. You can play games – you can imply consciousness beyond ours, you can hint at things obliquely… I don't think you can succeed, but I think you might just fail pretty wonderfully. (Staggs, 2011)

The Hosts are an engaging alien creature. The developmental journey they undertake in *Embassytown* demonstrates Miéville understands not only science fiction genre conventions but the genre's speculative capacity too. *Embassytown* contains commentary on elements of contemporary culture and existentialism, engaging with concerns regarding alterity, both in terms of physicality and language.

KHEPRI

From: *Perdido Street Station, Iron Council.*

Size: Humanoid.

Type: Hybrid, Mythological.

Fear Factor:

Description: The KHEPRI are a hybrid creation, a recognisable human body except for a large scarab beetle for a head. Due to this variance, Khepri do not communicate through speech but instead have a detailed system of sign language and discernible

clicks which are created from their chitinous insectile parts, as well as an elaborate array of chemical scents that act as a form of vocabulary. They can produce a substance referred to as Khepri-spit from their mouths which can be moulded and hardened into shapes. Khepri-spit art is a sought-after commodity in Bas-Lag.

In *Perdido Street Station* hybridity is examined through the relationship between Isaac, a human scientist, and LIN, a Khepri. An early domestic scene highlights the strange nature of the couple's relationship. Sitting naked, having breakfast, Isaac reflects on the scene:

> It was when she ate that Lin was most alien, and their shared meals were a challenge and an affirmation. As he watched her, Isaac felt the familiar trill of emotion: disgust immediately stamped out, pride at the stamping out, guilty desire...
> He watched her swallow, saw her throat bob where the pale insectile underbelly segued smoothly into her human neck... not that she would have accepted that description. *Humans have Khepri bodies, legs, hands; and the heads of shaved gibbons*, she had once told him.
> He smiled and dangled his fried pork in front of him, curled his tongue around it, wiped his greasy fingers on the table. He smiled at her. She undulated her headlegs at him and signed, *My monster.*
> *I am a pervert*, thought Isaac, *and so is she.* (Miéville, 2000: 13, original emphasis)

Isaac's reaction in this scene is a mixture of repulsion and guilty desire, a complex display of fetish sexuality. His initial response to Lin's unfamiliar body is that of uncertainty at the monstrous hybrid fusion of human and insect. Lin's body is consciously "other" to Isaac whose first automatic reaction is to be repulsed by her. After this initial barrier is passed, the sense of pride Isaac feels at being able to look beyond Lin's alien body to see beauty is quickly replaced by the carnal sensation of sexual desire. There is an emotionally charged complexity here, a duality of lust and physical repulsion.

The realm of fantasy that Miéville adopts for *Perdido Street Station* and the other Bas-Lag books allows him to express the social hybridity of modern culture in a more literal and imaginative way. Although their bodies do not represent any sort of physical threat, the Khepri do inhabit the realm of the hybrid or fusion monster, tapping into our

own repulsion of the human body and its base functions. Isaac's confused emotions are to be expected. In his lover, he is faced with an uncanny body, one which fuses the familiar with the unfamiliar. Lin is a different species to Isaac; therefore, Miéville is commenting on issues around multispecies narratives.

Body horror and modification is a key representation of the core definition of the monster motif: that of the *un*natural. The alteration of the human form taps into our repulsion and fascination for the unknown. We can see that these characters before us are humanoid but their hybridity with other creatures or the modification of their body moves them into the realm of the uncanny or grotesque. However, our interest is piqued by these creations.

What we are examining here is the theory of the abject, as discussed by Julia Kristeva. The abject is that which is rejected by the social order, disturbing the normality of social acceptance. It is what exists in the liminal space between the subject and the object, in other words that which is self, and that which is not the self. Kristeva suggests that these abjects were elements of oneself and our identity which, for whatever reason, have been rejected; that the abject is created when someone 'rejects and throws up everything that is given to him - all gifts, all objects. He has, he could have, a sense of the abject' (Kristeva, 1982: 6). From a psychoanalytical perspective this can be interpreted as the rejection of the Mother – the Creator – so we can establish our own individual identity. The concept of the abject – the rejection of elements once familiar, even integral to us – aligns with that of the uncanny: the familiar and the unfamiliar existing within one figure simultaneously. Monsters can, therefore, be interpreted as abject bodies. They are foreign, even terrifying, to us in terms of their physical body, yet upon investigation similarities and reflections can be seen. Monsters embody all that is inherently terrible and diabolical within the human condition and creative consciousness. It is therefore no wonder that they have so easily become a metaphor that reflects our own depravities, fantasies and fears. Lin and the Khepri represent this: we understand Isaac's simultaneous repulsion and desire for Lin. We become the monsters too.

KING RAT

From: *King Rat*.

Size: Humanoid.

Type: Mythological.

Fear Factor:

Description: In *King Rat* (1998) the protagonist, Saul, finds himself thrown into the underworld of contemporary London, under the tutelage of the mysterious KING RAT, who reveals that Saul's mother was a rat too.

Dressed in a trench-coat and deliberately vague in his description – 'Two eyes full of dark, a sharp nose and pinched mouth... He was tall but not very tall, his shoulders bunched up tight as if against the wind' (Miéville, 1998: 29) – King Rat is the most mysterious of the three animal-gods that Miéville includes in the novel. He can find his way into the most secure of locations, slip through tiny gaps in windows and disappear into the shadows. This is most effectively summarised as we first encounter him traversing through the hidden spaces of London:

> *I can squeeze between buildings through spaces you can't even see... I climb above the streets. All the dimensions of the city are open to me. Your walls are my walls and my ceilings and my floors... Now I am in darkness but I can still see. I can hear the growling of the water through the tunnels. I am up to my waste in your shit, I can feel it tugging at me, I can smell it. I know my way through these passages.* (Miéville, 1998: 3-4, original emphasis)

King Rat's intimate connection with the city reveals its "doubled" topological landscape. He can move from the familiar to the unfamiliar with ease, even using our detritus as a method of traversing the urban landscape. His anthropomorphic senses and abilities reveal the fantastical "otherness" that lies hidden amongst the familiar London sprawl. We gain entrance to London's secret underground topography through King Rat's

movements, his otherness granting us free access to the secrets of the city; as King Rat highlights when he rescues Saul from the prison cell: 'I go where my subjects go, and my subjects are everywhere. And here in the cities there're a million crevices for my kingdom. I fill all the spaces in between' (Miéville, 1998: 34). King Rat links the topological geography of London with the fantastical in a fundamental manner. Saul is unable to fully meet his potential until he becomes aware of all the topologies of the urban landscape, fully embracing his "ratness"; indeed, when he does this the urban landscape suddenly becomes 'infinitely vaster than he had imagined, unknowable and furtive' (Miéville, 1998: 61). Saul's limited human view is replaced by a fantastical topography of London; consisting of sewers and alleyways, roof-tops and secret routes, all of which combine to highlight the means by which 'the conspiracy of architecture... had taken control over them, circumscribed their relations, confined their movements' (Miéville, 1998: 288). By embracing the doppelganger topography of the city, Saul can metaphorically defeat it, to take control of the landscape, his 'metamorphoses from human to animal makes accessible to [him] a new, nonanthropocentric vision of the metropolis' (Maczynska, 2010: 75).

Jenny Bavidge examines King Rat and Saul's ability to traverse the urban landscape from a Marxist perspective. For her, the symbol of the rat in Miéville's novel represents a political 'struggle over territory and spatial boundaries' and that 'in Miéville in particular the rat world becomes the site of utopian projections' (Bavidge, 2002: 107-113). This new utopian vision is one laced with fantastika, occultism and a sense of spiritual transcendence beyond the epistemological limitations of a human perspective. Saul's new vision of London is of a landscape that matches his own, new, hybrid existence, the familiar and the fantastic topography of the city merging into a transformed and enlightened understanding of the urban in both a geographical and spiritual sense. More importantly, it is an urban landscape devoid of capitalist power structures, where the rats are free to go wherever and do whatever they please. This is reminiscent of Breach in *The City & The City*, who share this same freedom from political power

structures as the rats, due to their ability to traverse the interstitial spaces of Besźel and Ul Qoma.

The novel is played out among the sewers and secret spaces of 1990s London - a recognisable capitalist, urban, landscape of production and consumerism. Indeed, the text has an inherently Marxist viewpoint of late twentieth-century capitalist ideals and social ethics, examining the economically forgotten population that exists within the interstitial spaces of this urban landscape. *King Rat* contains what Carl Freedman refers to as a 'revolutionary-socialist stance' within its pages, not always explicit but ever-present (Freedman, 2015: 67). In this model, the rats of London – under the influence and control of King Rat – are proletarians existing within the shadows of the consumerist society above them, on whose detritus and discarded possessions they depend for survival. When they rise in revolution against not only the Pied Piper but King Rat himself, it can be interpreted as a socialist revolution akin to that seen in the pages of *October* and the history of Russia. The proletariat is perceived as revolting against the bourgeoisie; in this case the vast army of rats *literally* rises from the darkness of the sewers and amasses on the streets in a fashion reminiscent of the population of Petrograd during the Russian Revolution in February 1917. However, the displacement of King Rat is not achieved through the actions of the rats themselves, but by the intervention of the half-human, half rat Saul. By the end of the novel, the dictatorial monarchy of King Rat has been replaced with what appears to be a socialist democracy, with Saul's mantra of '"all working together... Liberty, Equality ... and let's put the "rat" back in "Fraternity"' encouraging a Marxist approach to democracy - '"I'm just one of you," he said. "I'm Citizen Rat"' (Miéville, 1998: 420). However, this Marxist ideal is shattered by Saul's position as King Rat's usurper. He is from the bourgeois world of capitalist London and, as Freedman confirms, there is no sign of Marxist revolution at all:

> For *King Rat* is, of course, a radically left-wing book, investing heavily in a Marxist analysis of late-capitalist society and in a socialist ethics as well... Yet there is nothing at all socialist about the revolution with which the novel

> climaxes and concludes. The rats constitute a sort of proletariat, but there is no movement among them to overthrow the conditions of oppression and exploitation in which they live. (Freedman, 2015: 67)

Instead, what is depicted here is a *bourgeois* revolution, a struggle between rival powers which results in little social change for the proletariat. The rats show no signs of wishing to overthrow their oppressor once Saul is in place. Even though he declares himself as '"one of you"' this is far from the truth. No socialist democracy is established as a result of King Rat's dramatic departure - Saul's rulership may not be a totalitarian monarchy but it is still a rulership, despite whatever rat citizenship rights he may introduce in the future.

King Rat is a reverse-anthropomorphic character - the traits of animals being transcribed into human bodies. King Rat's stealthy allusiveness is an animal quality represented through human physicality and movement. For example, it seems impossible for King Rat to move like his animal namesake, yet his ego-fuelled monologues suggest that this is the case: '*I can squeeze between buildings through spaces you can't even see. I can walk behind you so close my breath raises gooseflesh on your neck and you won't hear me*' (Miéville, 1998: 3, original emphasis). Miéville explores the connections between humanity and bestiality, and King Rat's physicality occupies this space effectively, Miéville describing him in ambiguous terms as a slippery character constantly shifting into the shadows, formless and mysterious. He is a shapeshifter - a classic archetype in many cultural mythologies. It is this reverse-anthropomorphism that makes King Rat fantastical in nature.

On a political note, King Rat and, eventually, Saul both represent the unease that exists in contemporary London, the concept of the unseen "other" that is invading the streets. The symbol of the rat is useful here as it represents a Gothic sense of the grotesque, of repulsion, but also admiration for the creature's abilities to survive and navigate the urban landscape. Jenny Bavidge highlights that the figure of the rat has been used in 'Gothic writing in London of all periods and registers' and 'the appearance

of non-human or extraordinary forces in London speak of unease and crisis in the city's culture and material structures' (Bavidge, 2002: 103-104). The bestial form of the rat becomes a political metaphor. The rats show us our own fears of being assimilated by the urban landscapes in which we live, swallowed up under the influence of the modern city. King Rat's shadowy personality and vague physicality represent the habitation of the forgotten spaces within our contemporary society, demonstrating the vast disparity between social classes. People "fall through the gaps", disappearing into unknown spaces and forgotten corners. King Rat embodies this idea. By the end of the novel Saul has usurped his uncle as "King Rat" and become ruler of their number. However, his attitudes are vastly different to his predecessor's desire to claim back his kingdom. The commentary of the novel's ending is one of utopia, as Saul declares: '"I'm not Prince Rat, I'm not King Rat...I'm just one of you...I'm Citizen Rat"' (Miéville, 1998: 420). This other-London, under Saul's guidance, suggests that a change and the unification of class structures may become possible.

KRAKEN

From: *Kraken*.

Size: Large

Type: Creature

Fear Factor:

Description: In the depths of the Darwin Centre at the Natural History Museum lie the specimens that constitute the Spirit Collection tour.[64] After passing through airlocks you are presented with a room full of steel cabinets. There is a mechanically controlled chill in the air; a perfectly maintained temperature. The cabinets remain closed, except for two that have glass fronts, and only then is the fascination of these secret specimens

[64] This description of the Spirit Collection is based upon my own experiences of the tour, Thursday 25th August 2016. All the specimens listed were ones that I personally observed.

revealed: a bat suspended in amber fluid; a nest of rats preserved in sealed jam jars; a freakish menagerie that you can't stop looking at.

As interesting as these pickled beasts are, there is one specimen that particularly holds your interest. The tank room is a vast chamber containing the collection's largest and most important specimens: jars with hand-written labels, the word 'Beagle' in a flowing script. And tentacles. Lots of tentacles, frozen in time, reaching for you. A nine-metre tank dominates the room, the cloudy yellow brine-Formalin slowly revealing its contents like a ghostly, uncanny God. Archie. *Architeuthis Dux.* The Giant Squid. A real-life KRAKEN.

Archie truly is a sight to behold. Her head evokes images of Lovecraft's Cthulhu, rising from the depths. A mass of muscle and mantle. A tentacle lulls to one side, suckers on show, their chitin teeth eager to latch on to flesh. "Archie is a young specimen" we are told. "A teenager". The horror of a fully-sized adult certainly springs into your mind. Archie stretches most of the colossal tank, mesmerising in her grandeur. No wonder the mythology of the Kraken exists.

The tour guide delights in talking about Archie's fans, stories of visitors and their reactions. She mentions a man who talked about a book that depicts Archie being stolen. Tales of my own research come up, my real reason for wanting to come and witness this cephalopod-God. After visiting the Spirit Collection, re-reading the opening of China Miéville's novel *Kraken* (2010) conjures up a sense of déjà-vu. Following our tour guide, I am reminded of Miéville's cephalopod curator Billy Harrow, and his initial discovery of Archie's disappearance. It is easy to see how Miéville may have been inspired by his own visit to the collection. Indeed, he references the sights of the tank room accurately, marvelling at 'ribbon-folded oarfish, an echidna, bottles of monkeys... tea-coloured crocodiles and deep-sea absurdities' as well as the historical significance of the Beagle jars. One's own wonderment at the sight of Archie is matched by Miéville, who remarks upon entering the room as breaching 'a Schwarzschild radius of something not canny, and that cephalopod corpse was the singularity' (Miéville, 2010a: 9-10). This weird

comparison reflects the room's attraction: scientific curiosity and the integral gravitational pull created by its contents.

Miéville is intrigued by cephalopods, which constantly infiltrate his thoughts and work. In his essay "Alien Invasion" Miéville sums up the appeal of the cephalopod as a monstrous entity:

> Invisibility is nothing. An invisible thing in a landscape is just a landscape. The point of invisibility is to fail. A just glimpsed beast-shaped burr - now that catches the breath. The realisation that a vine is not a vine, but a limb, and that its hunting: that sensory stutter is what gets you. (Miéville, 2012e)

What he is referring to here is the octopus and the viral trend of videos displaying their remarkable chameleon-like skin-colour camouflage. Yet comparisons to the Giant Squid can be made, the 'just-glimpsed' nature of the beast as it appears from the gloom of the ocean in those last moments before grasping its prey. In this essay Miéville alludes to the alterity of cephalopods, their truly "alien" form. It is this alterity that makes tentacular beasts so appealing to horror and fantasy writers: Lovecraft's Cthulhu, Tolkien's "Watcher in the Water", Jules Verne's colossal squid in *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870) are all tangible examples of the horror of the alien, the unknown and the "other". As Richard Ellis describes: 'There is probably no apparition more terrifying than a gigantic, saucer-eyed creature of the depths with writhing, snakelike, grasping tentacles, a huge gelatinous body, and the powerful beak of a humungous seagoing parrot. Even the man-eating shark pales by comparison to such a horror' (Ellis, 1999: 168). Tentacles best replicate the 'just glimpsed beast-shaped burr' which Miéville discusses. They move swiftly: grasping, constricting, reaching. Their similarity to fingers imbues tentacles with a sense of uncanniness - an appendage that operates in a familiar manner yet is biologically alien to our own. Our curiosity is piqued by the unnatural, by that which is different from us. Cephalopods mirror this theoretical perspective, embodying the natural and the unnatural in one entity, a mass of interweaving tentacles

representing disorder and chaos.

Just as H. P. Lovecraft reflects that the Elder Ones of the Cthulhu Mythos were creatures forgotten by time, Miéville hints at a similar origin for the octopus and the cephalopod: ‘the lone survivor from an earlier world’ (Miéville, 2012e). It is no wonder giant squid specimens caught or seen in the early days of maritime exploration were re-interpreted as colossal Kraken. There was no benchmark by which to compare these specimens, leaving the imagination to interpret these alien entities, the mysterious disappearance of vessels suddenly explainable by imagining the attack of colossal specimens. The tentacular beast is not only a manifestation of uncanniness, but of a mythical past. It is present and simultaneously unnameable, an entity which imprints itself upon the human consciousness and imagination.

The presence of the tentacular in *interstitial* spaces is a significant recurrence within Miéville’s work. The most prominent example is The Embassy of the Sea in *Kraken*. In the novel all supernatural and elemental powers are democratically represented and the missing squid-God warrants a visit to the Embassy of the Sea for assistance. The Embassy itself is stationed in an innocuous semi-detached house in northwest London. Billy can communicate with the embassy by posting messages through the letterbox in bottles. The Embassy replies by returning the bottle with the, now damp, paper inside. Our suspicions are confirmed towards the end of the novel when the fevered search brings us back to the Embassy and the front door is broken down, unleashing sea-water and a variety of creatures into the street. Once inside, Billy and his companions are met with a setting simultaneously magical and disgusting; ‘vivid colours of pelagic dwellers’ contrasted with a ‘bathtub brimmed with a panicking crowd of fish’; ‘coralline constructions’ to ‘a huge sagging body, something he could not work out, though he saw eyes see him from a meat heap’ (Miéville, 2010a: 457-58). The ordinary urban symbol of the domestic house takes on epic, Weird proportions, literally encompassing the ocean within its four walls.

Miéville presents an amalgamation of the ordinary and the extraordinary; the

physically impossible contained within the mundane surroundings of the semi-detached house. The urban landscape becomes sublime as a result, the house embodying the vastness and beauty of nature and the horror of the dead and the Weird at the same moment, the awe-inspiring existing side-by-side with the terrifyingly unimaginable. This 'meat heap', watching Billy menacingly, places the tentacled monstrosities of Lovecraftian Weird fiction directly into the contemporary domestic urban space. In fact, the outpouring of the ocean as the Embassy's doors are thrown open encapsulates Miéville's viewpoint regarding Weird fiction's 'radicalized sublime backwash'. At that moment the Weird invades the real. It is the description of the 'meat heap' which is important here. To Billy, this is 'something he could not work out', something indescribable, which belongs to Lovecraft's interpretation of the "greater outside". Billy's reaction, or more importantly his lack of comprehension, is what creates the shift away from the Gothic sublime towards the Weird sublime. The abcanny biomass – or what we can label "the tentacular" – is the motif that articulates this shift.

Archie represents Miéville exploring the tentacular monster as a mythical entity. In *Kraken*, Archie the Giant Squid is a religious and spiritual relic, the central icon of an underground squid-worshipping cult known as the Church of the Kraken Almighty. The squid is thought to have magical powers and it attracts the attention of multiple groups, some intent on bringing about an apocalypse, some trying to protect the city. In the final moments of the novel Archie does acquire magical properties when re-animated by the 'time-fire' thrown onto it. The squid pulls the antagonist Vardy into a predatory embrace as the time-fire consumes them both. The magic's age-reversing properties take their effect, turning them into 'a baby screaming adult fury at the little arm-length squid that encoiled it' (Miéville, 2010a: 470-471). In an instant, evolution is reversed and both Vardy and Archie are turned into nothingness. This, combined with the association that Miéville's lost squid has with the magical Embassy-of-the-Sea, imbues it with mythical significance. Miéville uses the squid as a methodology for transferring mythology into a more contemporary, urban locale - an important defining characteristic of New Weird

fiction.

In *Kraken,* there is a connection between the tentacular monster, the written word and Weird fiction itself which is important to the novel's plot. The Kraken-God has a historicity to it, with hundreds of volumes written about its physicality and spiritual significance. At one point, Billy finds himself in the sanctuary of the Krakenist Library:

> It made him gasp. It had the side-to-side proportions of a small sitting room, but its floor was way below. Absurdly deep. Steps angled down. It was a shaft of roomness, shelved with books. Ladders dangled from the stacks. As the church's holdings grew, Billy thought, horizontal constraints required generations of kraken worshippers to dig for their library. (Miéville, 2010a: 105)

This interstitial space is crammed full of kraken literature, real and imagined. Copies of *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* and Hugh Cook's poem "The Kraken Wakes" (1977) exist alongside texts of cephalopod folklore. This scene, when Billy peruses the library's stock, is an effective meta-textual moment, as the presence of real-life texts amongst Miéville's imaginative kraken-inspired tomes highlights the importance that the tentacular monster plays within narratives, legends and folklore. The Kraken has a symbolic connection to the act of writing as squids produce both ink and pen nibs. Using the fictional voice of a squid, Abi Curtis suggests that it is a 'creature who contains all the tools for writing – not just the ink but the hard 'pen' within its body – with me as an ink machine. In that way I am the writer's echo' (Curtis, 2014:11). The squid's biological components contain everything the writer needs to communicate. They are a symbol of the weird figure of the writer, an 'echo' of their creativity. In other words, symbolically, through the squid's physiology, the weird has a physical presence in everything we write. The physiology of the squid encourages the act of writing.

Ink plays a significant role in *Kraken*. The demonic Tattoo's composition – ink – is a connective thread between the symbolism of the tentacle and the concept of the Weird fiction writer. Grisamentum cheats death and hides from his enemies in the form

of ink, his blood and soul existing in the liquid. Burnt alive in 'memory fire' he enlists Byrne to collect his ashes and use them to produce ink: 'Then she must have dipped her pen into him, closed her eyes, dragged the point across the paper. To see the thin line jag into scrappy calligraphy, a substance learning itself, she gasping in loyalty and delight as the ink self-wrote: *hello again*' (Miéville, 2010a: 397, original emphasis). The result is the ability to communicate by manipulating the liquid into words, voicelessly hurling obscenities at Billy and Dane as they try to torture information from him by bleaching the remaining vial of ink-Grisamentum (Miéville, 2010a: 400-401). The sublime interactions within this scene – with Grisamentum forming expletives in the ink as Billy and Dane question him, the remaining physicality of his body literally reforming into new shapes – epitomise archetypal weird aesthetics, beyond real-life comprehension.

It is when ink-Grisamentum mixes with the squid-ink that Miéville's examination of Weird fiction comes into sharp focus. The resulting Weird-body – a 'dark liquid... A pillar, a man-shape that laughed and pointed. That raised both arms. And started to rewrite rules…' (Miéville, 2010a: 459) – is infused with the God-power of the Kraken, granting Grisamentum the ability to make things "un-" (a prefix that Miéville becomes attracted to again-and-again throughout his work). It is the inclusion of the squid-ink which activates the power, the mixing of raw magic with the animal's "cosmic" energy. As Billy comments:

> Such a magic beast. Alien hunter god in its squiddity. Englassed. Knowing how this stuff worked, Billy thought. It had the biggest eyes - so *all-seeing*. Bastard of myth and science, specimen magic. *And what other entity, possessing these characteristics, being that thing, had the means to write it all down.* (Miéville, 2010a: 401, original emphasis)

This realisation of Billy reflects Miéville's view of Weird fiction's defining characteristics, as well as the role of the writer. 'Bastard of myth and science, specimen magic' refers to Weird fiction's existence at the crossroads between mythological narrative or teratology and burgeoning scientific understanding or curiosity of the wider cosmos. The weird

physiology of the squid – 'Alien hunter god in its squiddity... the biggest eyes - so *all seeing*' – symbolises the ability of the writer to turn fictional landscapes into social commentary, '*to write it all down*', to record. For Miéville, the squid encapsulates the *idea* of the Weird fiction writer, a means of manipulating reality, creating fictional landscapes and weird bodies through the power of language. History is defined by record, reality is defined through written communication. Ink-Grisamentum becomes a creature with the capability to utilise the natural essence of the squid-God – its nib and ink – to alter history and reality to its own creation: 'Billy felt something very dangerous and forlorn settle, the closing of something open across everything, as history began to flex at someone else's will. He felt something get ready to rewrite the sky' (Miéville, 2010a: 460). It is language, and the communication of words through writing, which contains real power.

Miéville's attraction to the cephalopod (and its fantastical cousins) borders on obsession at times within his work. This is due to his understanding of the tentacle's immense power as a symbol for Weird fiction's backwash of the sublime. It most effectively encapsulates Weird fiction's exploration of the greater cosmos and our own corporeal conception of otherness. The tentacular monster – due to its existence in the liminal space between "other" and "alien" and the boundaries between multiple genres – is the ideal motif to reflect Miéville's slippery nature as a genre writer.

The Spirit Collection at the Natural History Museum is dedicated to celebrating the glorious, mythical monstrousness of the natural world. Archie the Giant Squid is certainly the most magical specimen of them all, an enticing literalisation of alterity and otherness. Miéville's work, especially *Kraken*, pays respect to this beacon of Weird fiction culture, which has important things to say about the contemporary world around us. For instance, the tentacular becomes an important motif within Donna Haraway's model of the Chthulucene. For her, the tentacle represents a breaking away from binary understandings, a direct opposition to anthropocentric considerations: 'Resignification of octopuses and squids as chthonic allies is excellent news. May they squirt inky night into the visualizing apparatus of the technoid sky gods' (Haraway, 2016: 186). The tentacle

invites us to re-evaluate the physical, to re-assess what we mean by “body”. It invites humankind to construct a new, multispecies narrative, to gain a new understanding of our natural world and the earth on which we live. As Haraway highlights: ‘Myriad tentacles will be needed to tell the story of the Chthulucene’ (Haraway, 2016: 31).

MANIFS

From: *The Last Days of New Paris*.

Size: Various.

Type: Demonic/Hybrid

Fear Factor: **to**

Description: In *The Last Days of New Paris* (2017) Miéville creates an alternate version of the city. Split between 1941 and 1950 the novella imagines a Paris affected by the explosion from a Surrealist weapon, or S-bomb. Flash forward to 1950 in this alternate timeline and we witness a Paris in conflict, the manifestations of Surrealist artworks roaming the streets of the ravaged city. These manifestations, known as MANIFS, are the very meaning of surreal creativity. Every monstrous creation in *The Last Days of New Paris* is a direct manifestation from a piece of Surrealist art. It is no accident that Miéville chooses Paris as the setting for this concept as the city was embraced by the writers and thinkers of the Surrealist movement in the 1920s. Andre Breton’s *Manifestoes of Surrealism* (1924) highlighted the movement’s examination of the intertwined existence between the states of dream and reality. Surrealism’s key belief was in the ‘future resolution of these two states... which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a *surreality*, if one may so speak’ (Breton, 1972: 14). This state of *surreality* is Miéville’s world-building focus in *The Last Days of New Paris.*

Miéville’s novella features numerous Manifs: in fact, there are 70 entries recorded as notes at the back of the novella, entitled ‘Some Manifs, Details and their Sources’ (Miéville, 2017a, 183-205). These Manifs vary in size and monstrousness:

‘Lover’s flowers, their petals elliptical eyes and throbbing cartoon hearts bunched alternately in the mouths of up-thrust snakes… human hands crawl under spiral shells’ (Miéville, 2017a, 11). Leonora Carrington’s 1941 work “I am the Amateur of Velocipedes” is manifested as a ‘cycle-centaur… a torso, jutted from the bicycle itself, its moving prow, a figurehead where handlebars should be. She was extruded from the metal’ (Miéville, 2017a, 4). Thibaut and Sam, the protagonists in Miéville’s version of 1950s Paris befriend the Manif of Andre Breton’s “Exquisite Corpse”. Miéville’s description encapsulates Breton’s famous surreal composition:

> At its waist it is made of line, offcuts of industry. A tilted anvil-like workbench, bits and machine pieces higher than Thibaut’s head… At the top of it all, an old man’s too-big bearded face looks down at him with obscure curiosity. In his beard, a steam train the size of a cudgel, its chimney venting smoke into the bristles… A random totality, components sutured by chance. It stands. (Miéville, 2017a, 64)

The result of Miéville’s teratological approach here is that the monsters in *The Last Days of New Paris* are his most creative to date and this is demonstrated by the composition of the Exquisite Corpse. Surrealist art as teratology allows Miéville a *freedom* of expression. The result is a creative and multi-layered interpretation of the ruined landscape of Paris. Real-life locations and street names intertwine with surreal imagery, blending the two states of dream and reality which Surrealism sought to fuse together.

Yet this is not a new direction for Miéville. His hybrid creations from Bas-Lag (and *Perdido Street Station* in particular) demonstrate this act of Surrealist teratology from early in his career - the insect-headed Lin and the Cactacae could quite easily be references to Surrealist art. The description of Shekel’s lover Angevine in *The Scar* – ‘jutting like some strange figurehead from the front of a little steam-driven cart, a heavy contraption with caterpillar treads, filled with coke and wood’ – is reminiscent of Carrington’s Velocipedes (Miéville, 2002a: 148). In the afterword to *The Last Days of New Paris*, when asked if he is interested in Surrealism, Miéville responds ‘I allowed that

I was, but cautioned that I was by no means a specialist in the history of the movement' (Miéville, 2017a, 173). This is sly and disingenuous. Miéville's interest with the surrealist movement is firmly on show in *The Last Days of New Paris* but has been a strong presence since the beginning of his career. It is a key conceptual landscape for his novels, a framework which has been of fascination to him for a long time. Miéville views the surreal as an interesting counterpoint to his political viewpoints, yes, but he also revels in the monstrosity and the carnivalesque of the surreal and its playful exploration of hybridity and the unknown:

> There was never a moment I was interested in writing the kind of stuff we can grandly called mimetic, that was "socially realist." I was always interested in the surreal, the imaginary. Obviously, I'm interested in the intersection between this and politics, but it would be misleading to imply that there was a programmatic attempt to marry the two. For me as a writer there is a joy in the making of the impossible. There is something about the carnivalesque creativity of monsters, the pushing into the unknown, the ineffable. I think part of what delights us is that sense of excess, that sense of the monster as not simply a symbol, but a cool weird thing I would never have thought of. (Brown, 2012)

Miéville views the surreal and the hybrid monsters of Surrealism to be more appealing than mimetic representations of the world. In this interview with Jayna Brown, Miéville describes this intersection as 'grim social irrealism' (Brown, 2012) - the blurring and contamination of mimetic, realist representations with the imaginary extrapolation of the surreal. The result is a world which is imaginative and fantastical in its construction and its inhabitants but also socially aware, politically alive, containing social landscapes and commentary which are recognisable and hard-hitting. This is certainly the case in *The Last Days of New Paris*, where the alternative Paris, ransacked by politically upheaval and military action, is populated by surreal monstrous bodies. More importantly, this chaotic landscape has been created by the S-bomb, the imaginative creativity of surrealist art made political and weaponised, the intersection between the surreal and the political which Miéville describes. The consideration of social revolution is also

sharply portrayed through this surreal landscape of New Paris and the actions of Thibaut and other New Parisians. Miéville's project is the playfully bring into focus the intersection between the imaginary and the political.

The afterword to *The Last Days of New Paris* presents another interesting conceptual consideration. It consists of an account from Miéville of being approached by a stranger to write the history of New Paris. It is presented as factual and biographical but is slowly revealed as a framing device in which to present the novella as a "found narrative". The stranger is an elderly Thibaut, and Miéville writes a novella from the account that Thibaut presents to him during an interview in a hotel room. This framing is given even more credence by the afterword being followed by a long list of sources. Once again Miéville is being playful. We are left wondering which elements of the sources are true and which may be fictional. It encourages us to probe further, research the movement ourselves and become immersed in the surreal landscape that Miéville has crafted. The whole text, therefore, becomes an experiment in *surreality*.

This is most succinctly portrayed in the final moments of *The Last Days of New Paris* when Miéville declares:

> Perhaps some understanding of the nature of the manifs of New Paris, of the source and power of art and manifestation, may be of some help to us, in times to come… In any case, having been told the story of New Paris, there's no way I could not tell it. (Miéville, 2017a, 182)

In other words, creativity, art and manifestation have a strong capacity to help us in times of despair and that we should not ignore the potential that creative manifestation can contain for social commentary. This is a powerful political message with which to finish this novella.

MOTLEY

From: *Perdido Street Station.*

Size: Humanoid.

Type: Hybrid

Fear Factor:

Description: In *Perdido Street Station*, the gangster, MOTLEY, is an articulation of the New Weird abcanny body expressing the otherness of creativity. Lin is commissioned by Motley to do a Khepri-spit sculpture of him. Motley is a misshapen grotesque, an amalgamation of biological parts barely recognisable as a human being. During a sitting for the sculpture, Lin reflects on this:

> But it was not long before she learnt to impose order on his chaos. It felt absurdly prosaic to *count* the razor-sharp shards of chitin that jutted from a scrap of pachyderm skin, just to make sure she had not missed one from her sculpture...She would turn and pick up the beginnings of her work, the three-toed reptile claw that was one of Mr Motley's feet. (Miéville, 2000: 135)

Motley is a monstrous uncanny image, human but not human, deformed and horrific. He is simultaneously abcanny, his many mouths in different locations around his bulbous, multi-limbed hybrid body. We share Lin's initial disgust at Motley: his unnatural body positions Motley with the motif of the monster. Yet we find an alignment between Motley's biological disfigurement and Lin's fascination: she begins to look past the initial horror and find aesthetic admiration in Motley's 'bizarre flesh' of which the hues are 'too spectacular, too arresting, not to be represented' (Miéville, 2000: 135). Indeed, Motley's ego allows him to see beyond the pathological imperfection of his body. He reprimands Lin accordingly, accusing her of only being interested in 'what *was* and how it went *wrong*' before he declares whilst gesticulating at his own body that 'This is totality' (Miéville, 2000: 140). This directly articulates the New Weird's aesthetic message:

Motley represents the New Weird's assimilation of genre motifs to form something that is more *total* in its conception. Miéville's creation of Motley is an embodiment of the New Weird debate concerning the otherness of creativity.

Motley's commissioned statue questions obsession with the "perfect" body, both in art and within society. Motley's project may seem horrifically absurd, but its message of artistic creativity is clear: why shouldn't disfigurement be considered as beautiful and creative as a Botticelli painting? This sculpture of Motley can be perceived as examining the abcanny body and how it represents the otherness of the creative process.

However, Miéville still restricts our perspective of Motley, providing mere snapshots of his physiology, limiting him to what Freedman describes as 'a never quite intelligible hodgepodge of disparate parts that are untotalized by any graspable logic into any sort of recognizable form' (Freedman, 2015: 38). In this regard Motley is a Weird fiction, abcanny body, reminiscent of Lovecraft's "indescribable" Cthulhu or the comic book character Swamp Thing, a brand that Miéville was once briefly and unsuccessfully associated with.[65] Miéville does provide detail concerning individual elements of Motley's body, such as 'shards of chitin' and 'pachyderm skin', whilst still maintaining an overall "weirdness" regarding Motley's form. As with several of Miéville's creations, this sense of the weird is created through considerations of body horror and hybridity, rather than overwhelming cosmic dread. Miéville, although paying homage to Lovecraft's non-traditional teratology, does so through the techniques associated with the abcanny monstrous rather than recognisable Lovecraftian motifs.

Motley's position as a New Crobuzon crime lord is an interesting juxtaposition to this concept of violent justice that Miéville has created. His deformity is not a result of a process of remaking and, thus, he becomes immune to the law enforcement mechanics of New Crobuzon. As Mark Williams suggests, 'As a crime lord, Motley supersedes the

[65] In 2010 Miéville was set to revamp *Swamp Thing* for Vertigo Comics, but the project was axed when DC comics reacquired the property. In interview, Miéville claimed that he 'had scripted out five issues in total', that the storyline was 'going to be quite political (not surprising)' and that is was 'meant to be a respectful argument with Alan Moore' who had also worked on the character beforehand (Walker, 2012).

possibilities of punishment of New Crobuzon society; he is symbolically beyond the punishment of the law, because he cannot be Remade to become more grotesque than he is already' (Williams, 2016: 189). He is an anomaly to the violent law enforcement mechanism of New Crobuzon.

REMADE

From: *Perdido Street Station, The Scar, Iron Council.*

Size: Humanoid

Type: Hybrid.

Fear Factor:

Description: Miéville's principal exploration of the body horror motif is the REMADE and it is these creations that most effectively demonstrate how New Weird teratology is more concerned with abcanny grotesquery than the cosmic dread of Lovecraftian Weird monsters. The Remade are the citizens of Bas-Lag who have been found guilty of a crime and been dispatched to the 'punishment factories' where they are grafted with biological or mechanical parts. The presence of this hybridity between the human, the technological and the mechanical places the Remade as a posthuman construction. Some Remade are crafted to reflect their crime whereas others become workers and tools within the capitalist system, their new form proving beneficial to their enslaved tasks. In *Perdido Street Station* the journalist Derkhan Blueday describes witnessing a Remade sentencing and the punishment delivered:

> 'Some woman living at the top of one of the Ketch Heath monoliths killed her baby... smothered it or shook it or Jabber knows what... because it wouldn't stop crying... the Magister sentences her. Prison, of course, ten years I think, but it was the Remaking that I remember.
>
> 'Her baby's arms are going to be grafted to her face. "So she doesn't forget what she did", he says.' (Miéville, 2000: 115)

Every description of a Remade is tinged with disturbing imagery of body mutilation, such as the fake-Garuda in the self-proclaimed CIRCUS OF WEIRD with its head 'swathed in feathers, but feathers of all sizes and shapes, jammed at random from its crown to its neck in an uneven layer' (Miéville, 2000: 110). Remaking is the crafting of bodies for the purpose of punishment, oppression or control. However, there is an explicit creativity to this act: it displays a high level of imagination and creativity to inflict such terrible body modification on the citizens of New Crobuzon. Creativity is intertwined with political and social commentary and Miéville uses the body horror motifs of the Remade as a means of highlighting how the New Weird is an expression of the "otherness" of creativity. The New Weird body transgresses beyond the awe and numinosity of Lovecraftian Weird monsters, shifting focus from the greater cosmos to a more socio-political commentary regarding oppressed and manipulated bodies. It is worth noting the return of the tentacular in this extract, with the abcanny appendage of the baby's arms being grafted onto the woman's face, which once again acts as a recognisable physical motif for the alien, the other and the liminal.

The Remade are arguably Miéville's most blatant use of monsters as social commentary. The Remade explore the penal system and punishment as well as commenting on the working class and slave trade. The Remade become a slave race, used in factories and production as well of major industrial projects such as the railroad construction in *Iron Council.* Ultimately what we witness in the Remade is the steady growth of rebellion and revolution, highlighted through a few significant characters. In *The Scar* TANNER SACK eventually becomes the significant leader of the uprising aboard Armada. In *Perdido Street Station* the mysterious figure of JACK HALF-A-PRAYER slowly becomes the legacy that spearheads a revolution. In *Iron Council* the Remade revolt against their railroad company oppressors and take control of the train that becomes the Iron Council of the book's title. Miéville may be hinting at the identity that can come from revolution. In *Iron Council* we witness the rise of the FREEMADE: the collective name of those Remade that have revolted against their oppressors and

declared their freedom from slavery.

When choosing to explore the monster as a motif for discussing social issues, it is important to examine it through the lens of Marxist theory. In what way can the monster act as a metaphor for the division of labour, wealth and the social classes? Franco Moretti's 1982 essay 'The Dialectic of Fear' is a seminal work in this area of monster theory. In it, Moretti examines Frankenstein's Monster and Count Dracula as social metaphors, analysing their capacity to comment on the burgeoning capitalist society of the nineteenth century. His comments regarding Frankenstein's Monster are of relevance here. The construction of the monster by Frankenstein aligns it to the product of a capitalist industrial system, or, more importantly, an object both created and owned by Frankenstein himself. This accounts for the common, incorrect association between the monster and the novel's title. The monster is nameless, has no identity and is a mere product of the system, more in common with Marx's proletariat:

> Like the proletariat, the monster is denied a name and an individuality. He is the Frankenstein monster; he belongs wholly to his creator (just as one can speak of 'a Ford worker'). Like the proletariat, he is a *collective* and *artificial* creature. He is not found in nature, but built. (Moretti, 1982: 69)

For Moretti, the metaphor of the monster is one of repression and the repressed but is more than just a simple synthesis of these elements. Instead, it is a metaphor of transference and creation, a 'work of "production"' that transforms fear into a tangible reality (Moretti, 1982: 83). The Remade themselves are a work of production: a tangible entity produced within the capitalist confines of the factory, albeit a factory which acts as a distributor of penal punishment. Every conceivable manifestation of terror – physical, psychological, economical, spiritual – is encapsulated in the "manufactured" body of the monster. As Moretti points out, Frankenstein's terror is not due to the horrific nature of the monster's construction, but in the realisation of all these social fears becoming more than just mental constructs: that 'a metaphor gets up and walks' (Moretti, 1982, 83). The

true purpose of the monster, in this schema, is to become a manifestation of both personal and social repressions and to turn them into 'something material, something *external*... The repressed returns, then, but disguised as a monster' (Moretti, 1982: 81).

The concept of the Remade is, therefore, a direct expression of Marxist concepts: the violent process of "remaking" is a method of production which results in the creation of a slave-labour, working class. Some examples of the remaking process are directly in line with the needs of commodity-production, such as the grafting of factory machinery onto a subject. Most of remaking procedures are a form of punishment and justice, another social element which Miéville introduces into the equation. Indeed, the remaking quite often reflects the crime itself, acting as a permanent, inescapable reminder of their deeds. Body horror and body modification are used as a methodology for penal justice, the result benefiting the commodity-production of the capitalist system of New Crobuzon. It is worth noting, as Carl Freedman does, that this is a direct comparison to Evgeny Pashukanis' and Miéville's evaluation of links between the commodity form and the legal form. This is an example of Miéville's historical materialist viewpoint: the "normalisation" of the remaking process in New Crobuzon is then an imaginative extrapolation of the real-life conversion of labour into labour-power which forms the actual historical context of not only early examples of the proletariat classes but also the central theories of Marxism itself (Freedman, 2015: 161). It is fitting that the remaking process happens in 'punishment factories': this term summarises the social positioning of the Remade within this capitalist system, fusing the elements of violence and coercion Miéville discusses in *Between Equal Rights* with the concept of commodity production. The imagery of a punishment *factory* not only suggests a grisly commodity but also a deeply shocking regularity and mechanised repetition in the mode of production. The Remade are constructed from different parts within the punishment factories and only some form of revolutionary endeavours enables them to be "built" again in a new form, one which is free from the slavery of the capitalist system and allows them to operate to their full potential.

All these interpretations of the Remade as a visual representation of capitalist repression is one that Miéville alludes too, certainly when concerned with the working class. The capitalist ideologies and class structures of modernity become metaphorically embodied within the monstrous form:

> But our side is also the monster - the insurgent working classes have always been pictured as a monstrous thing, a many headed insurgent hydra. So somehow everyone concerned with class society conceives its enemies as the monster... I think what's going on here is that there's something about modernity and capitalism that you simply can't think about it in "realistic" ways. Instead it keeps coming back as the "return of the repressed" - you can't conceive of it except in monstrous form. (Miéville, 2005b)

The monster is adopted by every stratum of social class as a means of interpreting the perceived enemy, the methodology of teratology creating social and political symbolism. As Miéville suggests, some elements of social, economic and political structures are so alien that it is impossible to visualise them in any sort of *realistic* fashion. The monster therefore becomes a metaphorical tool in which to embody these concepts. The Remade are Miéville's device for exploring these themes as they manifest social, economic and political structures simultaneously.

SLAKE MOTHS

From: *Perdido Street Station.*

Size: Humanoid

Type: Monster

Fear Factor:

Description: SLAKE-MOTHS look like moths but are much larger in size and have hallucinogenic patterns upon their wings. They start their lives as larvae, fed on a

substance produced by adults called ‘Dreamshit’. This substance is the by-product of the slake-moth’s diet of psychic energy. Its prey must be self-aware, the slake-moth able to detect the emanations of such a mind. In *Perdido Street Station*, Dreamshit hits the streets as a drug, giving users massive, psychedelic trips and hallucinations. At the same time the New Crobuzon government breeds a horde of slake-moths as a potential weapon but they escape, causing havoc on the streets of the city.

It could be argued that the Slake Moths do not sound necessarily “monstrous”. Certainly, as we witness the amazing qualities of Dreamshit as a recreational drug[66] we begin to see the Slake Moths as a source of pharmaceutical escape from the dark and depressing lives that the citizens of New Crobuzon endure. We begin to see the response to Dreamshit as a form of surreal “dream-logic” reminiscent of Miéville’s teratology in *The Last Days of New Paris.* However, as *Perdido Street Station* progresses, we begin to form a different opinion of these creatures.

Soon, citizens begin to disappear and this is when the monstrosity of Miéville’s creation becomes clear. Their physical appearance adds to the monster motif, the fragility of the moth replaced with a vicious, human-sized carapace body. The moths escape, feasting on the population of New Crobuzon. Their monstrosity is highlighted by their indiscriminate nature: they feast on all the races of Bas-Lag, picking victims at random without motivation. The Slake-Moths hypnotise their victims with their hallucinogenic wings before feasting on their minds:

> It turned its head and faced Lublamai, keeping those wings spread and enthralling. It moaned with hunger in a soundless timbre... The air hummed with the taste of Lublamai. The creature salivated and its wings flickered into a frenzy, and Lublamai’s taste grew stronger and stronger until the thing’s monstrous tongue emerged and it moved forward, flicking Teafortwo

[66] Dreamshit manifests its user’s dreams into vivid hallucinations. When Isaac has a trip he describes his mind being bust open and a myriad of lucid images flood into his consciousness (Miéville, 2000, 221-224). This mirrors Freud’s theory of the Dreamwork in which Freud posits that ‘The dream-thoughts and the dream-content present themselves as two descriptions of the same content in two different languages; or, to put it more clearly, the dream-content appears to us as a translation of the dream-thoughts into another mode of expression whose symbols and laws of composition we must learn by comparing the origin with the translation’ (Freud, 1967, 287). Isaac’s experiences taking Dreamshit are a direct representation of Freud’s theory in action.

> effortlessly out of its way.
> The winged creature took Lublamai in its hungry embrace. (Miéville, 2000: 310)

The Slake Moth is a ruthless killer: a creature able to render its victims immobile and defenceless. This is what makes them truly terrifying. To them, New Crobuzon is a vast city filled with prey. They are not concerned by social determinants, such as race, gender or class. As the moths realise after they escape from their captivity: 'It was a jungle without predators. A hunting ground' (Miéville, 2000: 319).

The Slake Moths do not consume the bodies of their victims, only their minds. Their victims are not *physically* killed; instead they are stripped of their conscious mind and left as a lifeless husk. When Isaac finds Lublamai after the initial slake moth attack it takes a while for him to realise Lublamai's state:

> He waved his hand before Lublamai's eyes, eliciting no response. Isaac slapped Lublamai's face, softly, then hard twice. Isaac realised he was shouting Lublamai's name.
> Lublamai's head rocked back and forth like a sack full of stones. (Miéville, 2000: 322)

Lublamai has become the *living-dead*; he is still breathing yet he is not awake. His conscious mind has been stripped away by the Slake Moth. He has become a hollow husk, devoid of identity and emotion. This is more monstrous and terrifying than if the Slake Moths devoured their victim's bodies. What makes the Slake Moths (and other mind-eating monsters) terrifying is this ability to not devour us but to strip us of our identity. To be alive, but at the same time *not*, is a more frightening proposition than being devoured.

The material body of the Slake Moths is important to consider in the context of abcanny hybridity. Miéville's description of the slake moth birth cycle clearly indicates the dual usage of uncanny and abject description. The word "moth" conjures up a familiar image for the reader, providing context as to the expected form of Miéville's creature.

The cocoon stage of the slake moth development is exquisitely described:

> Spirals of biochymical slop snapped into sudden shapes. Nerves that had unwound and dissolved suddenly spun back into skeins of sensory tissue. Features dissolved and reknitted in strange new constellations. (Miéville, 2000: 298)

This is an imaginative interpretation of the biological processes occurring within the moth chrysalis. Yet, it is tainted by the inclusion of the words 'slop' and 'skein' which are out-of-place and unexpected. The vicious onomatopoeia of these words pushes this description into the unfamiliarity of the uncanny, as well as 'slop' creating a certain level of biological repulsion too, introducing abjection. 'Skein' and 'reknitted' are two words which are cleverly connected (both referring to *thread*) but – due to their man-made connotation – out of place with the natural context of the chrysalis. This abjection is emphasised with Miéville's next line of description: 'The thing flexed in inchoate agony and a rudimentary, but growing, hunger' (Miéville, 2000: 298). This moves the slake moth firmly into the realm of the abject body through the inclusion of a horrific sense of dread and threat that shifts the recognisable context of a "moth" into an incomprehensible monstrous body. As this scene continues and the slake moth claims its first victims, this abjection develops as Miéville uses descriptions that are opposed to the systems of nature: 'the thing unfolding' (an unnatural action); 'As if the thing's indistinct limbs could bend a thousand times, so that it unhinged like a paper sculpture' (once again, unnatural movements and associations, impossible physiology); 'standing and spreading arms or legs or tentacles or tails that opened and opened' (uncertain, uncategorisable form); 'The thing that had huddled like a dog stood and opened itself, and it was nearly the size of a man' - the final, terrifying revelation of the abject body which disturbs the natural order (Miéville, 2000: 308). Even when the description of the slake moths eventually incorporates more recognisable biology, Miéville uses horrific imagery and contradiction to maintain the sheen of uncanniness and abjection:

> He could not see its shape... Cold shadows. Eyes that were not eyes. Organic folds and jags and twists like rats' tails that shuddered and twitched as if newly dead. And those finger-long shards of colourless bone that shone white and parted and dripped and that were *teeth...* those dark markings rolled and boiled in perfect symmetry across the wings like clouds in a night sky above, in water below. (Miéville, 2000: 308-309)

Familiar biology such as eyes, teeth and wings are instilled with threat and hostility. The slake moths are an example of Miéville simultaneously creating an uncanny and abject body - something which he incorporated into the term "*ab*canny" during his 2012 keynote speech at the International Conference of the Fantastic in the Arts.[67] Miéville has constructed the Slake Moths carefully with a desire to evoke fear within his reader and the effect is successful.

As successful as the Slake Moths are as a fear-inducing motif, they are not free from the role of social commentary. Miéville creates them for a specific purpose: as an omen that examines an ethical and moral dilemma that prevails in modern society - that of capitalism and commodity exploitation. As Steve Shaviro suggests:

> In the network society, the monstrosity of capital cannot take the overly cozy and comforting shape of the vampire. It must be figured as something absolutely inhuman and unrecognisable: Lovecraft's Cthulhu rather than Stoker's Dracula. (Shaviro, 2002: 285)

The Slake Moths have been captured and bred as a biological commodity by the New Crobuzon government's 'Research and Development' department. The criminal underworld is also taking advantage of the Dreamshit by-product, selling it on the streets as a recreational narcotic. The Slake Moths have been biologically engineered, they are not natural in their origins. Biological engineering is a science that reflects the essence of the monster motif: the idea that the monster represents the *un*natural. In the fantastical

[67] See chapter 2 for more examination of the abcanny monster.

setting of *Perdido Street Station*, where weird races of creatures appear as normal, the Slake Moths are portrayed as *other* due to these hints at their bio-engineered origins. This is a significant identification as the Slake Moths are viewed with the most fear in a world populated by monstrous creations.

The commodification and treatment of the Slake Moths is the most scathing social commentary. Shackled and controlled by their captors, the Slake Moths are nothing more than a production factory for the Dreamshit product. When Isaac's new-born moth rescues its fellow kind from the containment room, it finds the other moths 'shackled to the wall with enormous bands of metal around their midriffs and several of their limbs... Below each of their hindquarters was a bucket' (Miéville, 2000: 316). This scene is horrifying, Miéville using it to highlight the brutality of humans towards other species when it comes to the development of products and commercial gain. Just as activists highlight the treatment of animals in cosmetics and medical testing, Miéville invites us to consider the same issues, question whether we are monstrous ourselves due to the manipulation of the Slake Moths.

Once the Slake Moths escape from their imprisonment, they take their place in the skies above New Crobuzon free from the control of their capitalist captors. Slake Moths are a material representation of capitalism. Their escape reflects what Shaviro calls a 'surplus-appropriation gone mad' (Shaviro, 2002: 287-288). Capitalist commodity breaks free from its restraints and terrorises the city, infecting and contaminating the urban landscape. As Shaviro continues, the Slake Moths are 'nothing more than a monstrous intensification of the 'normal' functioning of the system infected by it. The slake-moths do not represent an economy foreign to New Crobuzon; they are just capitalism with an (appropriately) inhuman face' (Shaviro, 2002: 288). Their political symbolism may not be as immediately overt as other Miéville's creations, such as the Remade, but the associations of the Slake Moths with capitalism are irrefutable. What Miéville considers here is the Marxist exploration of monsters put forward by Franco Moretti in *The Dialectic of Fear* - of zombies as 'alienated workers, producing value but

excluded from its enjoyment' (Shaviro, 2002: 286). Instead, the "zombies" left behind by the feeding-actions of the Slake Moths go one step further than this: they are 'already-exhausted sources of value, former vessels of creativity and self-reflexivity that have been entirely consumed and cast aside. No longer capable of living labour, they are not a renewable resource' (Shaviro, 2002: 286). The effects of capitalism have consumed the worker entirely, stripping their consciousness of individuality and identity.

Although arguably not Miéville's most overtly political monster, the Slake Moths are certainly his most frightening. Physically they are a monstrous proposition - a hybrid fusion of the psychedelically colourful with the magnified, chitinous insectoid. Yet it is not their physical monstrosity that is their most terrifying quality. They hide in the shadows, waiting for us to appear – unprepared and vulnerable – before drawing us in with their mesmerising wings, sucking our very existence and identity from our minds. Just like the effects of capitalist simulacra and consumerism.

STILTSPEAR

From: *Iron Council.*

Size: Small

Type: Humanoid

Fear Factor:

Description: The name of the STILTSPEAR comes from a distinct physical feature. They can turn their fingers into a lethal spike: 'nails concatenate, its hand become a spearhead' (Miéville, 2004:168). In *Iron Council*, Judah Low encounters the Stiltspear as a scout for the advancing railroad construction project. He assimilates into their community by saving two of their kind from a swamp monster attack. Slowly he is shown their customs, even allowing the Stiltspear young to introduce him to the skill of controlling clay golems. The peace is short-lived as the railroad arrives at their swamp and proceeds to destroy their home. After the Stiltspear kill some of the workers, the

railroad company responds with violence, decimating the Stiltspear population. Judah is left with no choice but to convince the remaining Stiltspear to move on to another home.

In postcolonial studies the term "subaltern" is used to describe indigenous populations which exist outside of the hierarchal power system of a colony, be it politically, socially or geographically. It is important to recognise this distinction, as the term is often misappropriated to refer to any group of oppressed peoples or populations considered to be "other". The feminist postcolonial scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak points out this specificity of distinction. For her, the distinction of the subaltern is in its limited or denied access to the model of cultural imperialism. They *are* on the fringes of colonised spaces, yes, but, importantly, they do not exist within the power structure of colonisation at all. They have no agency within the system.[68] For example, the working class can be described as oppressed, but they are not "subaltern" due to their existence within the capitalist system itself. They have opportunity to affect the system. For Spivak, the subaltern is very much defined by this complete removal from imperial colonialism:

> It is not a mere tautology to say that the colonial or postcolonial subaltern is defined as the being on the other side of difference, or as an epistemic fracture, even from other groupings among the colonized… Simply by being postcolonial or the member of an ethnic minority, we are not "subaltern". That word is reserved for the sheer heterogeneity of decolonized space. (Spivak, 1999: 2207)

The Stiltspear are therefore representations of postcolonial, subaltern bodies in Miéville's novel. They are forced into diasporic displacement. Their destruction not only resonates with ideas of capitalism and greed, but with the bloody history of imperialism and colonialism too. They are indigenous bodies which exist in isolation from the impinging

[68] Spivak's definition of the subaltern is a development of the term utilised by the Marxist scholar Antonio Gramsci: 'The Italian term "subalterno", as used by Gramsci, translates roughly as "subordinate" or" dependent"… Gramsci used "subaltern" to question the received Marxist emphasis on the urban proletariat and economy, arguing that questions of culture and consciousness needed to be taken seriously" (Gopal, 2004: 141). Postcolonial interpretations of the subaltern have developed from this Marxist definition.

colonial landscape, on the fringes, without any agency in the face of expanding capitalist power.

Miéville makes a powerful statement with his depiction of the Stiltspear, confronting the imperialist attitudes of modern capitalist societies and the effects that their expansion can have on indigenous populations. In her work Spivak famously asks the question 'What is at stake when we insist the subaltern speak?' (Spivak, 1999: 2207) What she alludes to here is the lost histories of subaltern populations which become consumed by imperialist expansion. Who is telling their stories? It seems pertinent, then, that Miéville does not provide the Stiltspear with a recognisable form of vocal language. They are unable "to speak" – at least in a manner relatable and accessible to the imperialist power structure consuming them. The native, subaltern voices of the Stiltspear are excluded from the imperialistic discourse of New Crobuzon and the expanding railroad, just as Edward Said describes the exclusion of Oriental voices in Eurocentric discourse – reinforced by early travellers returning from Asia to Europe with reports of savage beast and mysterious lands – resulting in a misrepresented Us- and Them-binary:

> Orientalism is never far from what Denys Hay has called the idea of Europe, a collective notion identifying "us" Europeans as against all "those" non-Europeans, and indeed it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison to non-European peoples and cultures. (Said, 1978: 1995)

The symbolic "muteness" of the Stiltspear alludes to this misrepresentation of Orientalism and the replaced history of the postcolonial subaltern subject. What seems like a monster present as a simple plot device is infused with political commentary regarding imperialism, capitalism and their damaging effect on indigenous bodies, history and representation. The fact that Judah Low takes the time to assimilate into the Stiltspear community – learning their method of communication, their culture, their skills – aligns

him as a more cultured and anti-imperialist individual; or, in the words of Said, ‘a more sceptical, thinker’ with ‘different views on the matter’ (Said, 1978: 1995). This viewpoint allows us to interpret Judah as a utopian ideal.

The experiences of the Stiltspear depicted in *Iron Council* represent the struggle between expanding capitalist systems and colonised populations. The railroad symbolises the urban centre of New Crobuzon expanding outwards across the world, driven by the capitalist intentions of the entrepreneur Weather Wrightby. The company building the railroad is supported by the wealth of New Crobuzon and the Stiltspear quickly become an obstacle for this capitalist monster to overcome. This is a strong Marxist motif, with the concerns of the industrial machine not only outweighing the concerns of the proletariat but the indigenous populations colonised by their actions.

THIS CENSUS-TAKER

From: *This Census-Taker*

Size: Human

Type: Human

Fear Factor:

Description: In 2015, the writer Robert Macfarlane declared in an article for *The Guardian* that ‘the English Eerie is on the rise’. He was referring to a collection of texts that were using the English landscape depicted under a veil of the supernatural and the fantastic as a methodology for discussing ‘the turbulence of England in the era of late capitalism’ (Macfarlane, 2015). The English Eerie is the depiction of English landscapes as being inherently mythological, containing historical significance, presented to us as landscapes of absence rather than presence. For Macfarlane, the eerie differs from portrayal of the horrific in one distinctive way: ‘Horror specialises in confrontation and aggression; the eerie in intimation and aggregation. Its physical consequences tend to

be gradual and compound: swarming in the stomach's pit, the tell-tale prick of the skin. I find the eerie far more alarming than the horrific' (Macfarlane, 2015). The eerie is about gradual indications, or hints of the strange, rather than the physiological reactions to horror.

In his book *The Weird and the Eerie* (2016) the Marxist theorist Mark Fisher expresses the similarities and contrasts between the weird aesthetic (as displayed by H.P. Lovecraft) and the effect of the eerie (as suggested by Macfarlane). For Fisher the relationship between the weird and the eerie is one of presence versus absence: the presence of something which does not belong depicted in the weird aesthetic and the contrast in the eerie, 'a *failure of absence* or… a *failure of presence*. The sensation of the eerie occurs either when there is something present where there should be nothing, or... nothing present when there should be something' (Fisher, 2016, 61). Therefore, the eerie is an effective methodology for depicting landscapes. It highlights absences, is able to condition our perception of space, even the passage of time. As Fisher states: 'what the weird and the eerie have in common is a preoccupation with the strange. The strange - not the horrific... It has, rather, to do with a fascination for the outside, for what lies beyond standard perception, cognition and experience' (Fisher, 2016, 8). Fisher highlights the eerie writing of several authors whose depiction of the English countryside remind us 'of the ways in which particular terrains are strained by traumatic events' (Fisher, 2016, 97). One such traumatic event – particularly considering Miéville's fiction – is the effect of capitalism not only on the structures of the social landscape but on the *physical* landscape too. For Fisher, the eerie landscape is one filled with *absent* presences, explaining the eerie nature of ruins - a physical structure we can touch, feel and traverse but which consists of absences as well, spaces which drastically alter our perception. For Fisher, this interpretation of eerie landscapes mirrors the effects of capitalism: 'capital is at every level an eerie entity: conjured out of nothing, capital nevertheless exerts more influence than any allegedly substantial entity' (Fisher, 2016,

11). Capitalism is the eerie of the modern world, an invisible (absent) presence influencing our social and physical landscapes.

In terms of Miéville's fiction the clearest delivery of the eerie aesthetic in terms of both social and physical landscapes comes in *This Census-Taker* (2016). The titular THIS CENSUS-TAKER is a character who visits the narrator late on in Miéville's short novel. In fact, his presence is not felt until thirty pages from the end of the story.

Miéville's narrator recounts a story from his youth, of witnessing an event so shocking that words fail him in his recollection, which is confused and unreliable: '"No," I said. "My father. Someone. My Mother"' (Miéville, 2016a, 6). This is the first absence we are shown in *This Census-Taker*: the absence of *clarity.* We are unsure of the narrator's "truth". His reliability is called instantly into question. This absence of clarity imbues the narrative with an eerie feel right from the beginning of the novel, as we glimpse the first of the narrator's memories:

> A boy ran down a hill path screaming. The boy was I. He held his hands up and out in front of him as if he'd dipped them in paint and was coming to make a picture, to press them down to paper, but all there was on him was dirt. There was no blood on his palms.
> He was nine years old, I think, and this was the fastest he'd ever run, and he stumbled and careered and it seemed many times as if he would fall into the rocks and gorse that surrounded the footpath, but I kept my feet and descended into the shadow of the hill. (Miéville, 2016a, 1)

This opening section demonstrates Miéville's tricky use of narrative voice throughout *This Census-Taker.* The narrator alludes to the boy in the memory as being himself, but he remains detached from the action, describing the scene through the eyes of an omniscient observer. Miéville constantly shifts between first person and third person narrative voice, even, at times, revealing his story through second person voice. The result is a confusion of reality, we are left unable to determine if what the narrator is telling us is true or not.

The eerie sensation in *This Census-Taker* is a familiar sensation in Miéville's work. "Unseeing", as Miéville's introduces it in *The City & The City*, is an example of the transition between the eerie and the weird. When a character "unsees", they are experiencing, at first, the sensation and acknowledgment that something is absent: the other city. For the residents of the twinned cities, the absence of the other city is an *eerie* absence: 'nothing is present when there should be something' as Mark Fisher suggests. When breach occurs, the eerie realigns as there is an acknowledgement that something *is* now present that should *not* be there. The final moments of breach, when a person concludes that something or someone does not *belong* in their perceived reality, the eerie sensation fully transfers to the weird aesthetic. The novel, and the dual landscapes of Ul Qoma and Besźel, are, therefore, built around the concept of eerie absence.

If one considers the first reference of unseeing in the novel again, it becomes clear that the sight of the elderly lady on GunterStrasz is an uncanny encounter for Borlú: 'With a hard start I realised that she was not on GunterStrasz at all, and that I should not have seen her. Immediately and flustered I looked away, and she did the same, with the same speed' (Miéville's, 2009b: 14). There is a sense of fright here in the realisation that the absent has suddenly become visible, the *eerie* has transferred to become the *weird*. The boundary has been broken and the "other side" revealed. Breach themselves also share this power of revelation. Like the old lady in the opening sequence, they appear out of nowhere, manifesting what is absent from the perception of the city-dwellers. Their appearance shatters the normality of the inhabitants, their acknowledgement of Breach becoming an acknowledgement of an absent reality. The eerie revelation of absence – either psychologically or visibly – becomes a powerful narrative tool within *The City & The City*.

As in *The City & The* City, it is the landscape which is imbued with the most effective eerie qualities in *This Census-Taker.* This is an indeterminate landscape, we never gain any clarity regarding where, or when, we are. Is this our world in some mythical past or future? Or is Miéville setting the novel in a landscape more familiar to

his readers? We are never given a definitive answer. The narrator lives within a mountainous valley with dusty ground, dense, thorny vegetation and caves containing drop-holes of immeasurable depth. There is a town in the depth of the valley, nameless (although labelled Bridgetown) and strewn with detritus and machinery, discarded remnants of a forgotten history. It is this uncertainty of time and place, this absence of identity, that fills this fictional landscape with an eerie sensation - the descriptions of geographical landscape are creative and visual, but lack emotion, depth, association. This is a bleak setting: 'an impoverished lifeworld of small architecture, artisanal crafts and petty commerce' (Freedman, 2016: 107); or, as Christina Scholz suggests 'the people are somehow set against the land, living there and growing things out of spite' (Scholz, 2016). The scarcity of detail in *This Census-Taker* is a departure from Miéville's usual world-building methodology and once again demonstrates his constant desire to stretch expectations and borders, even those seen in his own creative output. This is a much leaner world-building exercise on show.

This economic underdevelopment of the world in *This Census-Taker* is no accident and is the result of what Carl Freedman describes as 'social forces that we only glimpse around the edges of the text' (Freedman, 2016: 107), like eerie absences sat on the edge of perception. At first glance this world appears to exist in isolation, but there are hints to a wider history and social structure, the effects of war. The "Bridgetown" is marshalled by external forces and there are whispers of wars raging between two city states far away (a reference that hints at New Crobuzon, the city's military aspirations and this story being set in Bas-Lag). Significantly, as Freedman suggests, 'one might say that the underdeveloped town suffers from violent *trauma*' (Freedman, 2016: 108, original emphasis). This is a society on the fringes, cast out by stronger, external forces, forgotten by – or more importantly, absent from – both the present and history. This disconnection helps create the feeling of the eerie in the text.

In a 2016 article for *The Guardian*, Miéville discussed the concept of the picturesque, agreeing with the thoughts of William Gilpin that the picturesque exists in-

between "'that kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture"' and 'that favourite of the Romantics, the Sublime - a sheer vastness provoking awe' (Miéville, 2016b). He likens Macfarlane's definition of the English Eerie as a form of 'bad picturesque':

> It mispronounces the terms of the picturesque, so let mispronunciation give it a name: this is the pictureskew… The pictureskew is the picturesque with its viewpoint moved a hair to one side or the other so what the constructed view obscures is visible again. The pictureskew sees not what this picturesque misses, but what it unsees'. (Miéville, 2016b)

Miéville sees the pictureskew as a transition towards the eerie. The landscape depicted in *This Census-Taker* is the ideal example of Miéville's concept here. It is almost a picturesque construction, but it is skewed, slightly out of focus, eerie as a result. Once again, the effect Miéville describes here is the same as the principal of "unseeing" in *The City & The City.* Miéville suggests that the pictureskew reveals what the picturesque cannot show, shifting landscapes towards the absences of the eerie, towards something unaligned and slightly displaced. As he declares: 'The pictureskew sees not what this picturesque misses, but what it unsees' (Miéville, 2016b).

This is something that reflects Miéville's general interpretation of genre fictions. His playful nature with genre categories and motifs is a deliberately unaligned and shifting landscape. With his work, Miéville presents a recognisable genre formula – such as science fiction, horror or fantasy – and then *skews* our perception and understanding of what that genre is. By introducing other genre elements and utilising weird aesthetics, Miéville creates a new viewpoint - 'moved a hair to one side or the other'. His work is still recognisable as belonging to these familiar genres, but the result is noticeably different. Miéville is a genre writer who embraces the power of the pictureskew, presenting his readers not with the agreeable 'kind of beauty' which Gilpin describes, but with a skewed and fascinating re-interpretation of genre and form. His approach to genre fiction evokes the concept of the eerie. His novels, in terms of genre categorisation, adhere to Mark Fisher's definitions. They contain things that *should not be there* through genre cross-

inhabitation. Other expected characteristics – such as the familiar consolatory ending of Tolkienesque fantasy for example – are noticeably *absent*. This forms a large part of Miéville's methodology of genre hybridity, as discussed in chapter one. Just as Gary. K Wolfe and John Rieder suggest an evaporation and blurring of genres, so too does the pictureskew act as the 'bad conscience' of the picturesque, shifting and evaporating the 'framing and formulation of a landscape' into a displaced representation of the eerie, the weird and the 'destabilising dark sublime' (Miéville, 2016b). In terms of genre, Miéville is an *eerie* writer, embracing this transition, displacement and evaporation of ontological boundaries.

Another important theme of *This Census-Taker* is the political potential of "the author". There is a myriad of recurring motifs recognisable from other Miéville texts: the concept of a lizard imprisoned in a bottle is a reference to a similar image in *Kraken*; references to trains and land-bound children who have never seen the ocean makes us think of *Railsea*; the Gaumont State building portrayed in "Looking for Jake" is mirrored in *This Census-Taker*. Christina Scholz picks out these references to other Miéville texts and links them to the 'second book' which the narrator refers to throughout the novella. These references suggest Miéville himself as at least one author of this 'second book', that '*This Census-Taker* is a palimpsest collaboration between several works and several authors, and that it's about a writer and his identity, among many other things' (Scholz, 2016). *This Census Taker* acts as a review of Miéville's world-building so far.

This is an interesting reading of a text which contains mysteries and codes throughout, including hidden messages in the writing contained in the 'second book'. One such example is the final passage, which hints at some form of revolutionary potential:

> *The Hope Is So:*
> *Count Entire Nation. Subsume Under Sets. –*
> *Take Accounts. Keep Estimates. Realize*
> *Interests. So*

> *Reach Our Government's Ultimate Ends.* (Miéville, 2016a, 139, original emphasis)

This mundane list of tasks for the census taker is embodied with a secret revolutionary message, the capital letters spelling out THIS CENSUS TAKER IS ROGUE: a message which demonstrates the revolutionary power that the writer can wield. This is a powerful call to rebel, to break free from governmental systems. It is interesting to imagine this message as a rebirth of the Iron Council's revolutionary potential.

WEAVER

From: *Perdido Street Station, Iron Council.*

Size: Large.

Type: Demonic

Fear Factor:

Description: WEAVERS are one of Miéville's most terrifying creations, inter-dimensional beings thought to have evolved from every-day spiders, probably because of exposure to what Miéville labels as 'Torque' or thaumaturgic energy (Miéville, 2000: 406). Their physical bodies are the same as their distant cousins, with their eight legs ending with vicious talons and a pair of human, child-like arms just underneath their head. Unlike many of his monsters, Miéville describes the physicality of the Weaver in detail, relishing in the magnification of the phobic body of the arachnid: 'it's huge, teardrop abdomen... its chitin a shimmering black iridescence... complicated mouthparts unhinged, its inner jaw flexing, something between a mandible and a black ivory trap' (Miéville, 2000: 402-403).

Weavers can shift between dimensions and can appear and disappear at will. Their natural habitat is the worldweb, the interstitial space between all dimensions, which simultaneously exists and does not exist. Their spinnerets can weave the extra-

dimensional threads which they manipulate to form the web. Weavers do not need to eat. Instead they exist on the nourishment of aesthetic beauty, which determines the strength of the worldweb:

> Old stories told how Weavers would kill each other over aesthetic disagreements, such as whether it was prettier to destroy an army of a thousand men or leave it be, or whether a particular dandelion should or should not be plucked. For a Weaver, to think was to think aesthetically. To act - to Weave - was to bring about more pleasing patterns. They did not eat physical food: they seemed to subsist on the appreciation of beauty. (Miéville, 2000: 407)

Weavers delight in manipulating the events of the world and are concerned with anything that may disrupt this aesthetic appreciation. It is only when the Slake Moths start feasting on the minds of New Crobuzon's citizens, profoundly affecting the psychic feeding of the web, that a Weaver takes notice, getting involved in the fight against them.

The first matter to consider is the physicality of the Weaver – the spider body. The magnification of the arachnid physiology arouses a fearful and phobic response, which is then escalated by the body horror fusion with the pair of child-like arms, reminiscent of the Remade described by Derkhan. This is an *ab*canny construction, inducing repulsion. In terms of mythological status, the Weaver alludes to the various forms of the spider-God from diasporic cultures, such as Anansi from Caribbean mythology (brought across the Black Atlantic in the African slave trade) or Udide from Nigerian folklore**.**[69] Emily Zobel Marshall, in her essay "Liminal Anansi: Symbol of Order and Chaos" explores how Anansi has roots in the mythology of the Asante people from the Gold Coast in West Africa. In many mythologies and cultures the spider is the form of the

[69] In her book *The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth* (2011), Wendy Doniger describes how 'the metaphor of the web of the mythological spider bridges several cultures' and that 'we must fling the thread of our thoughts ahead of us until it catches somewhere, in the product of the imagination of some other human being. To build the bridge between myths.' For Doniger, myths are like webs which spread out and connect across cultures and language (Doniger, 2011: 69-70).

trickster and the storyteller, the weaver of truths.[70]

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Arachne is condemned by Athena after she weaves a scene depicting how the Gods have abused and misled mortals. After hanging herself Arachne is transformed into a spider by the goddess Athena and she is left to weave her web for all eternity. In Ovid's version of the myth, Arachne's transformation into the spider is described in similar abcanny fashion to Miéville's Weaver:

> All her hair falls off and with it go her nose and ears. Her head shrinks tiny; her whole body's small; instead of legs slim fingers line her sides. The rest is belly; yet from that she sends a fine-spun thread and, as a spider, still weaving her web, pursues her former skill. (Ovid, 2008: 125)

This description of Arachne's new body holds similar hybridity between human and spider that we witness in the Weaver's horrific description above. Recognisable human parts – 'mouth', 'jaw', 'belly', 'legs', 'arms', 'fingers' – are fused with reference to arachnid physiology, such as 'mandible', 'thread' and 'web'.

The myth of Arachne holds Marxist connotations too, with Arachne (a lowly weaver) representative of the working class and Athena (a god) representing the elite. In *Iron Council*, the Weaver reflects this political connotation associated with the spider myth, appearing to the proletarian railroad workers first, rather than the elite Railroad Company executives. This is important as in *Iron Council* this appearance is more the choice of the Weaver, rather than when the creature is *summoned* by the elite government officials of New Crobuzon in *Perdido Street Station.* As we will see, this summoning later leads to a violent interjection on the Weaver's behalf.

In the context of the Arachne mythology, Miéville's Weaver and its ability to construct the worldweb represents a "construction of truths", or an understanding of

[70] Emily Zobel Marshall describes how 'The Asante slaves bought the tales of their trickster hero with them to Jamaica, and the stories became popular on the plantations…Anansi's liminal force was interpreted differently in the Jamaican plantations as he functioned as a symbolic destructor of an enforced and abhorrent social order, rather than the tester of the boundaries of a system with compliant members' (Zobel Marshall, 2007: 39).

realities. Indeed, the Weaver's bizarre speech, described as 'dream-poetics' (Miéville, 2000: 405) is a form of "truth" and storytelling, a truncated stream-of-consciousness that is in constant flux between multiple dimensions simultaneously. The spider has mythological associations with death and the Weaver fits into this dynamic too, one moment poetic, the next slicing off people's ears and heads just because it feels it would be more aesthetically pleasing. The Weaver simultaneously embraces both life and death - they both share the same meaning in the world of the Weaver. The connection between arachnid mythology and diasporic displacement during the Slave Trade imbues the spider with historical significance. It becomes a revenant: a phantom, a reminder of past horrors and a preserver of cultural histories and stories. Miéville's Weaver is the same: it exists within the past, the present and the future simultaneously, a temporal wanderer across the histories of all dimensions.

The Weaver becomes a witness of forgotten or oppressed histories – a voice, albeit a confusing one – for those individuals and populations who have been removed from history and denied inclusion in the dominant systems of imperial, capitalist power. The Weaver is a voice for the subaltern classes.[71] The Weaver can move between histories, appear and witness forgotten atrocities, collect untold stories. Therefore, the Weaver's form of a spider is important. The mythological weaver of truths, the spider tells all, untainted by the slanted and biased presentation of historical events. The Weaver is not controlled by the capitalist system, is not swayed by minds and opinions of the colonisers. They weave the truth, recording the history of all populations, free from political associations.

This freedom imbues the Weaver with revolutionary potential: 'unaccustomed to alienation between self and world, self and other, for the Weaver, dreams, wishes, hopes, desires, and consciousness are one. Possibility and dream-poetics are reality. Thus, it is a farouche pleasure to know that for Miéville dream-poetics, IN THIS THE

[71] As outlined by Spivak and discussed in the bestiary entry for the Stiltspear.

SCISSORED REALM, return as the utopian repressed, or, rather, as what Jameson calls the ever-present "irrepressible revolutionary wish"' (Rankin, 2009). There is powerful and political symbolism present in the Weaver's unique abilities. The interstitial and liminal spaces that the Weaver inhabits anticipates Breach from *The City & the City*. Both the Weaver and Breach demonstrate the power that exists within these transitional spaces, and how they are zones of resistance against capitalist control. The Weaver, by inhabiting this space, is free from the influence of governmental and industrial power structures, which the Weaver refers to as 'THIS SCISSORED REALM' in which 'I WILL RECEIVE AND BE RECEIVED ...' (Miéville, 2000: 401). The fact that the Weaver uses the symbol of the scissors to represent the capitalist realm of Bas-Lag is significant, when later it uses this very object to remove the ears of the government-militia guards that try to attack it (Miéville, 2000: 484). The Weaver's ability to exist within the space of the worldweb mirrors Lovecraftian teratology's affiliation with the greater, unknown cosmos. This positioning is symbolic of postcolonial bodies and a resistance to colonisation, linking again to the cultural history of the mythological form of the spider. Miéville's Weaver is an abject body onto which the ideological baggage of history and contemporary society can be placed. The Weaver's ability to shift dimensions in the blink of an eye suggests a freedom and escape from this baggage, making it a symbol of utopian empowerment.

In *Iron Council*, revolutionary sentiments start to brew amongst the encampment of railroad workers. It is these workers themselves (and their growing encampment) that Miéville uses to discuss ideas of revolution in *Iron Council.* After seeing the Weaver members of the encampment begin to go on strike. The first to strike are the prostitutes, who form a picket line and (led by their representative Ann-Hari) begin to chant 'No pay no lay no pay no lay' (Miéville, 2004: 255, original punctuation), thus mirroring the Vodyanoi's socialist mantra of NO RAISE, NO RIVER in *Perdido Street Station*. Standing their ground, the women become organised, sticking to their message, defending themselves against the growing physicality of the frustrated workforce, who have not

been paid for a long time.

It is significant that it takes the appearance of the Weaver in *Iron Council* to provoke this shift. The ability of the Weaver to exist in all time simultaneously due to its manipulation of the worldweb means that the mad dream-poetics can be interpreted as prophetic in nature, providing glimpses to future events. When the Weaver first appears the reaction is instantaneous and strong: one of awe and a shift in consciousness and understanding. The Weaver responds to this in its garbled speech, 'AGASH AGASP AGAPE' summarising the worker's sudden shift in social awareness. The Iron Council begins to form in this moment as the sight of the demonic arachnid shifts reality into sharper focus. The Weaver continues with its prophecy: 'YOU FLINCH INCH ATWARD OF WHAT WILL BE YOU BUILD' reflecting not only on the construction of the railroad itself but of the revolution which is about to occur, the building of the Iron Council (Miéville, 2004: 255, original emphasis). This prophecy is confirmed by the human and Remade witnesses to the Weaver's visit: Judah says '-We saw a Weaver...Most people never see that. We saw a Weaver' (Miéville, 2004: 255). His awe marks this internal shift of perception. An old man goes insane at the sight of the Weaver and later his crazed ramblings predict the coming revolution: '- Mate with the spiders, the old man says. - It's time to change... - We are all spiders' children' (Miéville, 2004: 257-258). The Weaver is a symbol of social potentiality. As Sandy Rankin highlights: 'the Weaver's dream-poetics, inseparable from his body, inseparable from our bodies when we hear or see the Weaver (whether we respond with fear or hope), are a discourse of desire, of expectation, and of undeferred wish-fulfillment' (Rankin, 2009). In a world of largely dystopian ideals – such as the Remade as penal punishment and the driving capitalist governmental forces within New Crobuzon – the demonic form of the Weaver, possibly Miéville's most chilling creation, is a manifestation that highlights the potentiality for utopian change. Like the Ghosthead Empire, the Weaver's ability to tap into multiple, possible universes reflects the utopian impulse set out by Ernst Bloch and, by association, Fredric Jameson and

Miéville himself.[72] The Weaver can reveal multiple interpretations of our world, give us glimpses at alternative versions of our reality, some of them better than what we are experiencing. Inside the Weaver burns the potential for utopian practice. We just need to listen, unravel the Weaver's threads of words and embrace their infinite knowledge.

THE .

From: *The Bestiary*, edited and introduced by Ann and Jeff VanderMeer.

Size: Unknown.

Type: Unknown.

Fear Factor:

Description: The final entry in Ann VanderMeer's *The Bestiary* is written by China Miéville; an interesting account of the mysterious and elusive creatures known simply as 'The ... beasts constituted out of nothing' (Miéville, 2015b). The fact that Miéville chooses to literally show the nothingness of these creatures through physical spaces of whiteness on the page is engaging and grants this impossible physiology some sense of composition and corporeality. THE are only able to be spotted when they directly affect their physical surroundings in some way, their movements mapped by reading 'scuffs by sidewalks, tremors in water, unorthodox quiverings of wall-climbing ivy' (Miéville, 2015b). They only exist due to their presence within the world around them, reflected in this bestiary entry by their visible absence from the surrounding lexical structure of the sentence in which they are referred. They are intrinsically linked to the landscape they inhabit, literally defined by the physicality of corporeal space. They are simultaneously present and not present. They are absent presences. They are *eerie,* as defined earlier by Mark Fisher.

[72] For further details, please see pages 190-191.

As a final entry in a “Miéville Bestiary” this monster is significant for many reasons. Not only does it highlight and confirm Miéville’s deep-rooted love for the monstrous by showing how he is able to turn even empty space into a beast, it also acts as a means of summarising his overall thesis regarding the use of such motifs. The represent the unknown spaces present within our physical world, unexplained phenomena and voids that exist within our own perception of the landscapes that surrounds us. They mirror the social construction of the monster as something that exists in the spaces between what we know, inhabiting the liminal zones that we do not acknowledge ourselves. Monsters lurk on a ‘topographical boundary, signalling the threshold between the civilized world and the unknown’ (Graham, 2002: 51). Miéville alludes to this premise by describing the defence strategy of the as a ‘deployment of its own absent self... to make such events look like errors on the part of the attacked, misjudgements as to exactly where the ledge ends, how deep the hole is, or in which direction the blade is pointing’ (Miéville, 2015b). Monsters inhabit the space between reality and dream and constantly make us reassess our existence and actions. The ’s existence within a liminal space demonstrates to us what lurks in the shadows, both physically and mentally. The necessity of the to show their presence by influencing their physical surroundings also symbolises the effects of capitalism, which physically presents itself when its starts to alter the environment in which it exists. The infiltration of commercial simulacra and brand imagery, for instance, which influences and alters the physical environment in which they appear, directly mirrors the ’s actions of confirming their presence by altering their surroundings in some way.

A similar examination of monstrous absence is also seen in Miéville’s short story “In the Slopes”. This story, taken from his 2015 collection *Three Moments of an Explosion*, is about warring teams of archaeologists competing over the prized “remains” of alien creatures discovered in the slopes of a volcano. These alien creatures are only discovered when plaster or resin is poured into the absences and cavities that their bodies have left in the ground. The resulting “sculpture” is of a strange physiology:

> Its wings were coiled. Its heavy head lolled. The scoops of its great eyes were intricately moulded. There was a spiralling body, like something wrinkled from a shell; there its many limbs, outfolded. Its little hand things looked as if they were beseeching. The archaeologists laid a blanket on the plaster echo of the epochs-dead thing, as if to warm it. They carried it away. (Miéville, 2015a: 64)

Trying to preserve the features of these alien bodies, one of the team-leaders develops a new resin to enhance the process, producing clear, crystalline casts of the aliens with more defined contours. When light is shone through the resin the cast illuminates, projecting an ethereal aura over the remains: 'There was too much light. The gemlike flaws, the shards of colour in the body-shape glowed. It was thick with them. They were scattered through the figure, with the dead bodies of beetles and mice, little stones, the tips of roots' (Miéville, 2015a: 80).

The presence of these alien remains is historicised, not only through the introduction of archaeology as a central theme – thereby associating teratology and the bestiary with historical record – but also through the references to Pompeii and the similar remains which can be witnessed at real-life historical sites. Both the and the entities from "In the Slopes" are concerned with placing the echoes of the monster into our everyday record. These entities become monstrous due to their absence. To reiterate: they become eerie. In fact, the casts of the aliens are referred to as 'an echo of a hole' (Miéville, 2015a: 69) - the absent [w] making its presence felt. The absences they leave behind are spaces of death existing in the liminal spaces of the world of the living: 'On the island everyone was walking on the emptiness of death, the alien dead. Animals tunnelled without intent from one corpse-hole to another, linking the gaps with evidence of life' (Miéville, 2015a: 73). Even though these creatures that existed side-by-side with humans so long ago[73] are no longer present, their "ghosts" still have a lasting

[73] One of the casts that is created depicts two youths curled up alongside one of the aliens for protection: 'They clung to it. They died together' (Miéville, 2015a: 65).

effect on the physical nature of the world.

The nothingness that constitutes the embodies them with a cryptozoological importance. Peter Dendle suggests that cryptozoology's function 'is to repopulate liminal space with potentially undiscovered creatures that have resisted human devastation' (Dendle, 2006: 198). Cryptids, such as the Loch Ness Monster and the Yeti, are examples of beasts for which there is little physical evidence regarding their existence. Cryptids, by the nature of their elusiveness, force us to consider the vast extent of life that exists within the biosphere, and this leads to an ecological awareness regarding the influence we have on the environment. The invisibility of the reflects the declining number of species and the extinction of flora and fauna under the influence of neoliberal concerns. Ecology is becoming invisible and lost in a world dominated by capitalism and industrialisation. In times of rising ecological and environmental activism, with groups such as Extinction Rebellion protesting the rising global concern regarding climate change and the environmental tipping point,[74] these incidences of 'misjudgements' that the take advantage of are symbolic of a rising awareness of the environmental misjudgements of our advancing capitalist society. We are standing on the invisible precipice of environmental no-return, waiting to be pushed over the edge by this invisible monster called neoliberalism. Therefore, the not only simultaneously represent the natural world and ecology that has been destroyed and lost but also the invisible monstrous forces pushing us towards ecological collapse.

More importantly cryptids appeal to our innate attraction to wonderment and mystery. In our technologically advanced modern society this is important as it allows us to reconnect with the allure of a natural world we believe to be completely mapped out. As Dendle highlights: 'Cryptozoology thus fulfils an important role: it represents a quest

[74] The Extinction Rebellion website declares that: 'We are facing an unprecedented global emergency. Life on Earth is in crisis: scientists agree we have entered a period of abrupt climate breakdown and we are in the midst of a mass extinction of our own making' (Extinction Rebellion, 2020). In their book, *This Is Not a Drill: An Extinction Rebellion Handbook*, the organisations "Declaration of Rebellion" states: 'We hold the following to be true: This is our darkest hour… The science is clear: we are in the sixth mass extinction event and we face catastrophe if we do not act swiftly and robustly' (Extinction Rebellion, 2019: 1)

for magic and wonder in a world many perceive as having lost its mystique' (Dendle, 2006: 201). Miéville's attraction to monsters contains the 'magic and wonder' which Dendle alludes to. They are imbued with a sense of fun and enjoyment, of creativity and expression, and it is through these qualities that Miéville can communicate ideas regarding social, economic and political concerns. Cryptids become a powerful motif for anti-capitalist movements as they represent an alternative understanding of the world, one more aligned with ecological and natural concerns. They represent hope that in this time of the Anthropocene there is still mysterious parts of this world untouched by the effects of humanity.

However, despite these powerful metaphorical resonances, let us not forget the principal responsibility of any monster that we create: to frighten and horrify. Miéville's initial childhood response to Beatrix Potter's "monstrous" trout was a feeling of dread as he approached the page in question.[75] Feeling the prowling motion of a , yet being unable to see it, would be unnerving. Being frightened reminds us of our mortality and corporeality. It reminds us that we are alive.

Miéville insists that we should not forget this important factor regarding the monster:

> Our monsters are about themselves, and they can get on with being all sorts of other stuff too, but if we want them to be primarily that, and don't enjoy their monstrousness, they're dead and nothing. (VanderMeer, 2008)

Miéville makes a significant point. Social projection onto the motif of the monster is common, but their 'monstrousness' should be their principal concern. After all, even though their social message may be significant, their primary function must be to scare and unsettle. To Miéville, this is their identity, and the monster's ability to frighten is a

[75] Miéville's discusses this effect that the trout incident in Potter's "The Tale of Jeremy Fisher" had on him as a child in the interview where he details the books which have had a lasting influence on him. See (Miéville, 2010b).

vital narrative device for creating tension. The have this ability to unsettle due to their absence; their invisibility and lack or corporeality. In many respects, they are one of Miéville's most frightening creations: monsters which inhabit the interstitial spaces just out of our perception. Monsters posing as phantoms. Haunting us.

It is no accident that Miéville has chosen to write an entry in a modern re-interpretation of the bestiary form. In this little piece, Miéville presents the as a real-life phenomenon, cleverly mimicking the discourse of medieval bestiaries which attempted to present mythological and real-life beasts together as allegory for real-life experiences, ethics and morals. What this proliferation of the monster as a cultural signifier highlights, is our unwavering curiosity with the uncanny and the abject, ensuring that monsters have endured in our psyche since ancient times. Original legitimate threats to our society and safety are elaborately crafted into autonomous monstrous motifs by the power of our imaginations. Creativity is an important factor of our infatuation with the image of the monster; our imagination manifesting the unimaginable. The monster is our imagination's attempt to turn the unknown and terrifying aspects of a modern, hybrid society into physical, tangible constructions.

The reflect this approach. They are the creation of a monster to explain the unexplainable moments in our existence. In a modern society, with scientific understanding of events that were originally perceived in a mythological context, our imaginative construction of monstrous metaphor has shifted dramatically towards examining social concerns. Whereas in ancient mythology monsters would have been used to explain the unknown, in modern society they are used to signify that which is present, yet ignored or suppressed in some way, just like the . The focus of the monster has shifted from being an allegorical tool to a social metaphor. Therefore, using the form of the bestiary is an important methodology for examining Miéville's monsters, as they too have become creative representations of the hybridity of the twenty-first century social landscape.

Conclusion:

Liminal, Interstitial and Hybrid Landscapes and the Monsters that Inhabit Them.

> What fascinates me about monsters is that even when they're supposed to be the bad guys, they are incredibly creative figures… Even as we're scaring ourselves, we're also being creative...it's as if homo sapiens is an intrinsically monster creating species! (Miéville, 2005b)

> A monster is no more than a combination of parts of real beings, and the possibilities of permutation border on the infinite. (Borges, 1974, 14)

This thesis set out to answer two clear questions. Firstly, in what ways is Miéville's work exploring concepts of landscapes, both real and theoretical? Secondly, why is the monster such an important motif for Miéville and how do they communicate these ideas regarding landscapes? The preceding structure of the thesis reflects these two questions, with the first section discussing the critical importance of exploring Miéville's work through the lens of various interpretations of *landscape* and the second section, the "Miéville Bestiary," critically analysing the monstrous creations that Miéville's utilises as figures of social commentary.

Chapter one explored Miéville's approach to constructing genre fiction landscapes, demonstrating his deep knowledge of conventions and motifs and how he utilises these in a specific fashion. By considering the more recognisable, "conventional" genres of fantasy, science fiction and horror as specific landscapes, or spheres of activity, it soon becomes apparent that Miéville's work never definitively fits into the acknowledged definitions of these genre landscapes. For instance, Miéville's work appears to be the cognitive estrangement of science fiction, as defined by Darko Suvin, but interweaves this with recognisable elements of both the fantasy and horror genres. The body modification characteristics of horror – a playful expression of both the abject and the

uncanny – is simultaneously combined with fantasy world building and posthuman sensibilities more aligned to science fiction narratives.

It is useful to analyse Miéville's work using genre theory as it quickly establishes him as a writer who pays no regard to rigorous conventions but is willing to embrace, utilise and combine elements from a wide variety of different genres for the purpose of his narrative and thematic approach. John Rieder and Gary K. Wolfe's work on the evaporation of genre boundaries most effectively demonstrates Miéville's approach to generic construction. By viewing Miéville's work through their theoretical approach we begin to understand Miéville as a *hybrid writer*, fusing genres with others to create new forms and sub-genres. His aim is to demonstrate the potential syncretism of genre forms. Crime motifs become fused with science fiction in *The City & The City.* The recognisable world building methodology of fantasy fiction becomes fused with horror and science fiction in *Perdido Street Station.*

The most interesting aspect of this cross-inhabitation, this hybridity of genre, is the germination effect resulting in new forms of expression. As Wolfe highlights:

> The new aesthetic is based less in a rejection of earlier forms than in a celebration of them... a willingness to borrow tropes, language, techniques from almost anywhere... and to incorporate them into an eclectic new mode that quite properly resists labeling and libelling. (Wolfe, 2011: 152-153)

If we consider genre landscapes, Miéville's constant shifting of style through the habitation of multiple genres encourages an exploration of the interstitial gaps that exist between different genre categories. As a result, his work *is* difficult to categorise - it becomes a hybrid creation incorporating different "body-parts" in the same way as monsters do. The body-horror construction of Miéville's hybrid monsters in Bas-Lag (such as the vulture/human Garuda or the insect/human Khepri) is a physical manifestation of his genre hybridity. His work exists in the interstitial spaces which become visible when actively transitioning between more recognisable genre categories.

Miéville uses the breakdown of genre boundaries as a method of positive hybrid fusion, encouraging recognisable genres to come together and spawn into new forms. The concept of hybridity is an ideal methodology for categorising Miéville's work and exploring his approach to genre fictions. Theorists and critics struggle to definitively categorise Miéville's work due to the process of hybridity that takes place. Miéville's methodology is to deliberately mix recognisable genre motifs with others, germinating new sub-genres. This hybridity approach would be useful not only in further analysis of Miéville's work but also other writers of genre fictions. For Miéville, the borders between genres are indeed completely evaporated. More importantly, they never existed in the first place.

The exploration of genre hybridity continues in the analysis of Weird and New Weird Fiction conventions in chapter two. Here, Miéville's own critical work on Weird fiction demonstrates a deep understanding of the uncategorisable identity of the genre and its ability to ask questions about the role of history and mankind's existence within the "Greater Outside". The rebellious nature of both Weird and New Weird Fiction mirrors Miéville's rebellious approach to genre categorisation and his own, personal, political standpoint. Weird and New Weird fiction are both constructed from various other genres, including horror, science fiction, fantasy and Gothic. They are both perfect examples of *hybrid genres*, splicing together elements of other genres for their own narrative purpose. As a means of categorising Miéville's novels they are both extremely useful. Perfect genre landscapes in which to place his work. This is clearly demonstrated through their teratology, with monsters such as Cthulhu and the tentacles of cephalopods most effectively depicting what Miéville refers to as the "abcanny" features of both generic forms of the Weird: the indescribable biological materiality that shatters ontological boundaries, inducing repulsion but also awe-fuelled fascination regarding everything which is unknown to us. For Miéville, Weird Fiction offers a landscape in which to explore highly conceptual ideas with freedom and creativity. Anything goes within the abcanny landscape of the Weird: 'it does not wink over the top of the text at

the reader, it pulls the reader in, giving the metaphors room to play in ways that would otherwise be hobbled as soon as they are pointed out' (Shapiro, 2008: 66).

Moving on to the concept of physical landscapes in chapter three we witness a fascination with urban environments, but more importantly with the liminal, interstitial and forgotten spaces which exist within these landscapes. The high concept of *The City & The City* (the existence of two cities within the same topographical space) is Miéville's clearest examination of the physical concept of borders and spaces. Although there are no fantastical or mythological monsters in *The City & The City*, this critical exploration of liminal spaces through the depiction of crosshatching and breaching does turn the cities themselves into strange, monstrous creations that highlight the permeability and arbitrary nature of classifications and borders. Breach themselves, although human, are described in a monstrous manner, utilising the interstitial ability of the monster motif to literally ignore borders and administer their judicial acts with seemingly fantastical prowess. Just like more traditional monsters, Breach can defy the social, legal and physical limitation present within the landscape they inhabit.

By moving the critical analysis to real urban landscapes, we begin to witness how Miéville's political and social viewpoints get more clearly communicated. When considering urban landscapes, Miéville uses his hybrid approach to genre as a tool for exploring Marxist interpretations of space. Miéville's embracing of Historical Materialism – the idea that history is the result of material conditions rather than ideas – directly correlates Miéville with Marxist urban theory, which hinges on Historical Materialism as the principal methodology for evaluating the development of urban landscapes. As Edward D. Soja suggests:

> The anglophonic contribution to Marxist geography primarily hinged upon the reconnection of spatial form to social process... Historical Materialism became the preferred route to connect spatial form with social process, and thereby to combine human geography with class analysis, the description of geographical outcomes with the explanations provided by a Marxian political economy. One-by-one, the familiar themes of Modern Geography were subject to a Marxist analysis and interpretation. (Soja, 1999: 51-2)

The city is the ideal space to explore ideas of social theory. It is a nucleus for thought and expression on how we utilise and exploit space. The development of urban landscapes historically mirrors 'social process': in other words, the growth of cities is a result and direct correlation to the development of industry and capitalism. Yet, cities are also ideal spaces to consider how social theories and policies can be challenged and developed. As Ira Katznelson describes: 'Cities have always been condensations of their civilizations. If their density distorts, so it also reveals. By focusing on cities as points in space, as places with determinable forms, and as *loci* for human activity, it is possible to illuminate from this vantage-point key aspects of history and the adequacy of alternative social theories' (Katznelson, 1992: ix).

The Weird and the Gothic allow Miéville to delve into the interstitial and liminal zones of urban landscapes to show alternative versions of recognisable cityscapes, to tell the stories of lost or forgotten populations and reveal the effects of capitalism on contemporary landscapes. By rooting his characters firmly in the streets, insisting that they traverse the urban on foot, Miéville can present a psychogeographical interpretation of urban communities. Whether it is non-fiction accounts of his own wandering around the moonlit streets of London, or the fantastical and wonderous denizens of New Crobuzon, or the mind-bending psychological examination of border control present in Besźel and Ul Qoma, Miéville's urban landscapes are rooted in Marxist urban theory and the concept of cities as sites of contrasting and shifting configurations due to the effects of capitalism and commercialism:

> Marxism can help contribute to an understanding of how the city is constituted by, and helps constitute, capitalism and state-making…These patterns of concentration, and their interrelationships, have varied over time, and have been expressed in and through changing configurations of urban space. Cities as points and as places can thus be defined in terms of this double coalescence. (Katznelson, 1992: 154)

Miéville's approach aligns with Katznelson's analysis. His examination of urban landscapes also reveals them as hybrid constructions, in some cases literal monstrous entities that shift form and defy our ontological perception of space. Cities are living creatures, growing and developing constantly, consisting of different districts and regions defined not only by their border with each other but also their own distinct architecture and ambience.

London is Miéville's urban landscape of choice. The city appears – in a realist state or as some ab- or alternate version, such as New Crobuzon – in a large proportion of his work. For him, London is the ideal canvas to explore social concerns regarding capital and space. Miéville acknowledges the Victorian embracement of London as a Gothic space, translating elements of hauntology, the supernatural and the sublime onto the recognisable contemporary architecture of London. This is done to suggest the dominating effect of capitalism on the modern city. Yet his message is not delivered using grand panoramas. Instead the stories are personal: describing individuals living and existing in this haunted, hybrid landscape which occasionally becomes monstrous and eats them alive, such as in the short stories "Reports of Certain Events in London", "Familiar" and "Details". Apocalypse is either on the horizon or recent history in Miéville's portrayals of London and these apocalyptic landscapes are not only littered with monsters – such as the Imago in "The Tain" – but also introduce us to those characters that exist within the liminal spaces now exposed due to the apocalyptic destruction of capitalist London. In *King Rat*, Saul and King Rat's abilities to seemingly squeeze through the tiny spaces of the urban sprawl represents this exposure of unknown spaces Miéville wishes to explore. He is vicariously living through his characters, using them as a means of delving deeper into the urban landscape which inspires his works. For Miéville and his characters, these forbidden, liminal zones are no longer off limits but become significant spaces where true identities can be discovered and embraced. The whole premise of Miéville's Un *Lun Dun* is to highlight this idea, with Deeba discovering a whole "other-London" existing between the cracks of our own recognisable urban

landscape. It is a place where her true power and identity can be discovered. In *Kraken* we are greeted right at the start of the novel with a sandwich-board depicting a looming apocalypse and the familiar landscape of London becomes the staging ground for the rising conflict. Instead of the grand, tourist architecture of the city, Miéville's exploration of London is on a much smaller scale, exploring the liminal and forgotten spaces of the urban where the true mysticism exists. This is a revolutionary approach to mapping the city, a more psychogeographical consideration, interlaced with weird and Gothic aesthetics. Once again, liminality and hybridity are key to Miéville's methodology and we discover the city through the focused, street-level excursions of the *dériveur*.

Chapter four discussed Miéville's exploration of social landscapes by critically examining his depiction of revolution, utopian ideals, law and justice. These spheres of activity are common occurrences in Miéville's work. In fact, by exploring these landscapes it becomes clear that social and political commentary, whether conscious or not, is *the* defining characteristic of Miéville's oeuvre. Every other consideration of the concept of landscape is for the purpose of exposing social concerns or ideas.

Miéville follows the definition of Ernst Bloch, Ursula Le Guin and Fredric Jameson when it comes to his own interpretation of utopia as a system that is just always out of reach. The use of the motif of the train and the railroad is an important one for Miéville to communicate this idea, with his revolutionary characters travelling endlessly towards their utopian horizon without ever getting to the destination. However, Miéville's attitude is not a negative one and he insists that this failed attempt is necessary to ensure that utopia is constantly strived for, seen as an alternative worth fighting for when faced with the socio-political reality. Messages of striving for utopia are common within his work, whether it be the Iron Council or the mythological single railroad to Heaven in *Railsea.*

Miéville's principal "landscape" is a socio-political one, as he embraces the freeing potential of fantastical forms of fiction to express the realities of a modern world dealing with the tremendous effects of capitalism. Fantastical fiction allows him to imagine creative alternatives. Once again, the interstitial and the liminal are important

here. Miéville's interest does not lie in the intricacies of big business but in the everyday experiences of characters existing within the specific social and political parameters – or borders – of these capitalist landscapes. In *Iron Council* he does not focus on the industrial power of the corporation constructing the railroad, but on the workers and forgotten citizens detached from the social landscape of New Crobuzon's capitalist regime. They are *literally* removed from society, left to construct the railroad in the wilderness of the Cacotopic Stain for the benefit of the capitalist power. Revolution becomes the only social and political agency which they have remaining. Revolution, in Miéville's work, is depicted as necessary to break down and counteract these landscapes, to be free from the control of capitalism and oppression.

In Miéville's social landscapes law and justice are also tainted by capitalism. In Bas-Lag the punishment factories physically manifest the cruel sentences of the guilty, grafting appendages of flesh and steel onto the bodies of the accused. Yet for some Remade this is not the only punishment as they are then incorporated into the capitalist machine as factory or construction workers. Governmental rule is viciously maintained in the social landscapes Miéville presents.

It becomes clear then that there are three key points raised by the first part of this thesis. Firstly, Miéville is interested in a variety of real and theoretical landscapes but his overall aim is to always craft *social landscapes* which present and make us question elements of life in the late-twentieth and early twenty-first century. Fantastical fiction grants him the ability to offer creative alternatives which, in turn, shed light on our own realities. As Dougal McNeil states: 'Fantasy's qualities as a genre made it especially suited as a literary vehicle through which to articulate some of the early twenty-first century anti-capitalist movement's imaginative ambitions, its desire to think alternatives to existing political realities' (McNeill, 2015: 94-95).

Secondly, Miéville has a fascination with the liminal and the interstitial, constantly exploring the borders and the gaps which exist within these real and theoretical

landscapes. For him, this is where the creativity and the social and political realities exist, not in the “false” landscapes presented by the media, capitalism and neoliberalism.

Finally, hybridity is a tool and methodology which Miéville finds useful. For him, the act of embracing multiple forms and bodies simultaneously allows Miéville to construct the narratives he needs to communicate his political themes. Hybridity is an important tool as a writer, allowing you to challenge and engage across recognised boundaries and borders, having the freedom to create new vistas and landscapes of your own. The concept of hybridity is vital to understanding Miéville’s theoretical approach to constructing not only narrative worlds but also characters and styles. Hybridity is central to his writing, infiltrating into every aspect of his process. Therefore, the monster is such an important motif for him as this is the ideal body in which to encapsulate hybridity due to its nature of fusing together opposing binaries. Miéville’s hybrid approach to storytelling matters as it allows him to splice together elements which are important for communicating his social and political viewpoints.

This is where the concept of a “Miéville Bestiary” and his examination of conceptual landscapes cross over and intertwines. The monster as a metaphor exists within the interstitial spaces of social conventions - it represents elements of culture that are outside the perceived normality: ‘We can see that monsters are both interstitial… and liminal… as such they are conveniently concrete and animistically embodied as visibly organic *things* that by their very weirdness impinge strongly and unforgettably upon our consciousness’ (Gilmore, 2003, 21, original emphasis). This recognition of the monster as a body which both crosses ontological boundaries but also exists on the fringes highlights the monster’s advantage as a body full of revolutionary potential, able to offer social, political and biological alternatives outside of our normal spheres of activity and perception.

The monster’s status as both liminal and interstitial bodies comes from its hybrid construction. The body of the monster – constituted as it is from a variety of multiple

forms mixing the biological, the technological, the abcanny and the alien – is inherently different from “us”, different from the natural order and, as a result, full of potential:

> This refusal to participate in the classificatory “order of things” is true of monsters generally: they are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration. And so the monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions. (Cohen, 1996, 6)

By refusing to belong to the natural order, the home of the monster is to exist in the spaces in-between the natural order. Yet their recognisable, uncanny, quality also allows them to straddle boundaries, their sudden appearance making us question everything around us.

This context of interstitiality and liminality that monsters embody mirrors Miéville’s socio-political commentary in his novels. All the conceptual landscapes that Miéville explores – genre landscapes, spatial (physical) landscapes and social landscapes – are all closely concerned with the breaking down of barriers, borders and boundaries and the examination of what exists within the spaces revealed.

This power of the monster being its ability to “show” or “warn” seems counterintuitive. Monsters are in direct opposition to the human. They are “other”, not us. Yet they are products of *our* imagination and conscience, given physicality, our fears manifested into something tangible. This makes monsters intrinsically connected to us, not only as individuals but also in a social context: ‘There is a paradoxical connection with humanity: an ambiguous organic link we will see again and again. No matter how grotesque, monsters are our lineal relatives’ (Gilmore, 2003: 36). This parallel connection that we have with monsters means that they are the perfect metaphorical vessel with which to explore the human condition and extrapolate on social scenarios and concerns. As Margrit Shildrick suggests: ‘Monsters signify, then, not the oppositional other safely fenced off within its own boundaries, but the otherness of possible worlds, or possible versions of ourselves, not yet realized’ (Shildrick, 1996:8). Through the creation of

monsters, we can present alternative versions of the world around us, view our world in new and interesting ways, creatively imagine the outcomes of our own, present, social structures, extrapolated to the extreme. As imaginary constructs, monsters are vital to our development as creative beings. They allow us to navigate the intricacies of our inner-psychology and our external social existence:

> Monsters are our guides, our entree into the mysterious worlds that lie both outside of us and within us. Therefore, although like the unknown itself, they frighten us, monsters also contribute to the development and growth of the imagination. As such they are indispensable in dealing with the challenges of life. (Gilmore, 2003: 190)

Therefore, the monster is a vital leitmotif for creative social commentary. Not only do they act as a prophet, mirroring our social concerns at us, but they are also constructs of human imagination, physical manifestations of our fundamental, creative impulse. For this reason, the monster is not a figure which needs to be resolved in some way but is a figure primed with opportunity: 'the fissures, breaks, contradictions, and indeed unexpected continuities in the received meaning of the monstrous are not then problems to be resolved, but opportunities to reconfigure first impressions' (Shildrick, 2002: 27).

The monster's habitation of the blurred boundaries between the supernatural and the real, mythology and biology, means that the commentary they create begins to impinge upon this primary function that is to scare. When scrutinised, the reason we fear monsters is because their unsettling characteristics reflect a deep-rooted issue we witness in our contemporary society. Monsters reflect at us our deepest flaws and fears, their dual liminal and interstitial status allowing the monster to externalise and comment on social concerns and issues which remain hidden under the unreal, simulated landscape of capitalism.

Given this revolutionary potential, it is interesting that Miéville is cautious in recognising the metaphorical power of the monster. He acknowledges their potential to represent all sorts of things but insists that this can be a dangerous act, saying that:

> People often read monsters as a challenge to dominant culture's enforced normative categories that mark variation as deviant. But I think we inflate the potential radicalism of monsters at our peril. The moment one hears the word "transgress," or "subvert," one gets all kinds of left-theory excited, thinking about these things as pulling against the grain of dominant culture. I don't think so; the culture industry sadly has no difficulty commodifying the most transgressive monster. (Brown, 2012)

Miéville is correct to indicate the commodification of the monster by the culture industry which is rife with modern iterations of the monstrous whose sole responsibility is to act of obstacles for protagonists to overcome, or as tools to scare and shock the audience. However, when portrayed effectively, the hybridity of the monster invites creative interpretation; still able to provide reactions of shock but also deeper in terms of social commentary.

Therefore, Miéville's earlier acknowledgement regarding enjoying 'their monstrousness'[76] becomes slightly flawed: yes, we should celebrate their ability to scare us, but monsters are only monstrous because they reflect our fears and trepidations. Even if a monster appears to have no social commentary attached to it, present only as a device to scare and unsettle the audience, then its ability to do so is measured by our personal interpretation of what constitutes being *unnatural*: in other words, the monster's difference from the world around us. Also, in a world where global politics is unstable under the unsustainable effects of capitalism and industrialisation, then celebrating the 'deviant' – as Miéville suggests here – becomes a useful tool of revolutionary action which presents alternative realities.

Miéville does openly embrace the use of monsters to explore the invasion of capitalism on urban landscapes. *Looking for Jake* and *Kraken* both depict London as a space ravaged by capitalist influence, inhabited by monstrous creations. Miéville uses the motif of the monster successfully as a tool to demonstrate how our urban landscapes

[76] See page 297 for this reference.

are scarred and haunted by capitalism. In fact, as Martyn Colebrook suggests, the presence of monsters in Miéville's work is what creates this sinister presence:

> The past that is present in Miéville's fiction is not so much a haunting as the sinister presence of creatures and scenarios that are at once alien and otherworldly but remain chillingly familiar, a radical *unheimlich* wherein the generic tags of Horror, Fantasy, and Gothic chafe awkwardly against the sprawling nature of Miéville's formidable body of work. (Colebrook, 2013: 212)

The uncanniness (and abcanniness) of Miéville's monsters allude to a presence, or haunting, which, in turn, also alludes to the generic characteristics of horror, fantasy and Gothic fiction. His monsters become metaphors for the past as well as the present. Once again, interstitial spaces become important as these are the features where this hauntological affect can be most effectively portrayed. It is these spaces that monsters conceptually inhabit, especially when these spaces are imbedded with Gothic aesthetics, providing these landscapes with mood and atmosphere. One of Miéville's greatest successes as a writer is the combining of monsters and Gothic aesthetics onto a canvass which he can then use to creatively explore contemporary issues.

The bestiary is the ideal methodology with which to analyse a writer's body of work, particularly one that utilises genre fiction as their principal form of creative expression. The bestiary as a form encourages close analysis of fictional bodies, to evaluate their multiplicity of meaning and provide cultural context for their presence and actions. The history of the bestiary – as a text of allegorical expression – emphasises its potential in the twenty-first century as a means of critiquing modern, capitalist society, albeit with the power of metaphor, rather than allegory. As Donna Haraway discusses in *Staying with the Trouble*, considering the importance of multispecies narratives – a methodology central to the construction of the bestiary – also allows us to imagine something different to the endgame inevitability that is interwoven with commentary

regarding the Anthropocene. Contemporary critics and theorists would benefit from utilising the bestiary's creativity as a tool for cultural criticism.

By analysing Miéville's work through the lens of real and conceptual landscapes, highlighting the use of monsters as metaphors to reflect those landscapes, this thesis has shown the importance of Miéville as a commentator on the social and political landscape of twenty-first century global capitalism. Everything that Miéville explores and presents to the reader contains opportunity for commentary on social landscapes, regardless of whether this is Miéville's intention. Monsters are ideal vessels for social commentary because they are physical manifestations of fears and desires, liminal and interstitial hybrid bodies onto which we can project our greatest nightmares or simply mirror our world back to ourselves. As Gilmore states: 'The mind needs monsters. Monsters embody all that is dangerous and horrible in the human imagination. Since earliest times, people have invented fantasy creatures on which their fears could safely settle...the imaginary evil creature as a cultural metaphor and literary device' (Gilmore, 2003: 1).

Miéville's monsters are vessels for such social and political commentary, whether this is the highly charged examination of revolution and justice through the bodies of the Remade, the role of Slake Moths in projecting views regarding commodity abuse in a capitalist society, or King Rat representing forgotten communities living in the liminal spaces and fringes of urban landscapes. These are examples of how effective a monster can be at mirroring every aspect of our own social and political landscape back at us. Monsters are fun and creative – and Miéville would agree – but they also reflect social and political concerns. As he humorously says here, paying homage to Marx and Engels:

> The history of all hitherto-existing societies is the history of monsters. Homo Sapiens is a bringer-forth of monsters as reason's dream. They are not pathologies but symptoms, diagnoses, glories, games, and terrors. (Miéville, 2012d)[77]

[77] See page 174 for original quotation from Marx and Engels.

Monsters are symptoms of our society: they are a result of the landscapes in which we live. They inhabit every corner of our lives, constantly looking out at us from the shadows. They remain powerless without the conceptual landscapes in which to exist. It is only when we view them through the lens of these landscapes that they begin to roar and emerge from the darkness.

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