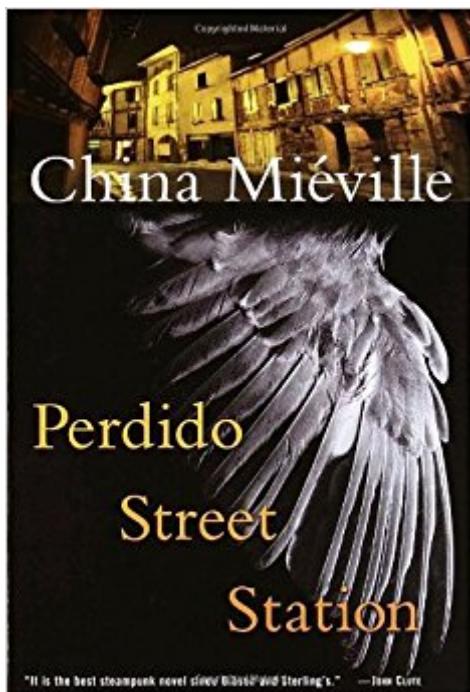


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Perdido Street Station (Bas-Lag)



Synopsis

Beneath the towering bleached ribs of a dead, ancient beast lies New Crobuzon, a squalid city where humans, Re-mades, and arcane races live in perpetual fear of Parliament and its brutal militia. The air and rivers are thick with factory pollutants and the strange effluents of alchemy, and the ghettos contain a vast mix of workers, artists, spies, junkies, and whores. In New Crobuzon, the unsavory deal is stranger to noneâ "not even to Isaac, a brilliant scientist with a penchant for Crisis Theory. Isaac has spent a lifetime quietly carrying out his unique research. But when a half-bird, half-human creature known as the Garuda comes to him from afar, Isaac is faced with challenges he has never before fathomed. Though the Garuda's request is scientifically daunting, Isaac is sparked by his own curiosity and an uncanny reverence for this curious stranger. While Isaac's experiments for the Garuda turn into an obsession, one of his lab specimens demands attention: a brilliantly colored caterpillar that feeds on nothing but a hallucinatory drug and grows largerâ "and more consumingâ "by the day. What finally emerges from the silken cocoon will permeate every fiber of New Crobuzonâ "and not even the Ambassador of Hell will challenge the malignant terror it invokes . . . A magnificent fantasy rife with scientific splendor, magical intrigue, and wonderfully realized characters, told in a storytelling style in which Charles Dickens meets Neal Stephenson, Perdido Street Station offers an eerie, voluptuously crafted world that will plumb the depths of every reader's imagination.

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Customer Reviews

When Mae West said, "Too much of a good thing can be wonderful," she could have been talking about China MiÃ©ville's *Perdido Street Station*. The novel's publication met with a burst of extravagant praise from Big Name Authors and was almost instantly a multiaward finalist. You expect hyperbole in blurbs; and sometimes unworthy books win awards, so nominations don't necessarily mean much. But *Perdido Street Station* deserves the acclaim. It's ambitious and brilliant and--rarity of rarities--sui generis. Its clearest influences are Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast* trilogy and M. John Harrison's *Viriconium* books, but it isn't much like them. It's Dickensian in scope, but fast-paced and modern. It's a love song for cities, and it packs a world into its strange, sprawling, steam-punky city of New Crobuzon. It can be read with equal validity as fantasy, science fiction, horror, or slipstream. It's got love, loss, crime, sex, riots, mad scientists, drugs, art, corruption, demons, dreams, obsession, magic, aliens, subversion, torture, dirigibles, romantic outlaws, artificial intelligence, and dangerous cults. Generous, gaudy, grand, grotesque, gigantic, grim, grimy, and glorious, *Perdido Street Station* is a bloody fascinating book. It's also so massive that you may begin to feel you're getting too much of a good thing; just slow down and enjoy. Yes, but what is *Perdido Street Station* about? To oversimplify: the eccentric scientist Isaac Dan der Grimnebulin is hired to restore the power of flight to a cruelly de-winged birdman. Isaac's secret lover is Lin, an artist of the khepri, a humano-insectoid race; theirs is a forbidden relationship. Lin is hired (rather against her will) by a mysterious crime boss to capture his horrifying likeness in the unique khepri art form. Isaac's quest for flying things to study leads to verification of his controversial unified theory of the strange sciences of his world. It also brings him an odd, unknown grub stolen from a secret government experiment so perilous it is sold to a ruthless drug lord--the same crime boss who hired Lin. The grub emerges from its cocoon, becomes an extraordinarily dangerous monster, and escapes Isaac's lab to ravage New Crobuzon, even as his discovery becomes known to a hidden, powerful, and sinister intelligence. Lin disappears and Isaac finds himself pursued by the monster, the drug lord, the government and armies of New Crobuzon, and other, more bizarre factions, not all confined to his world. --Cynthia Ward

King Rat (1999), MiÃ©ville's much-praised first novel of urban fantasy/horror, was just a palate-teaser for this appetizing, if extravagant, stew of genre themes. Its setting, New Crobuzon, is an audaciously imagined milieu: a city with the dimensions of a world, home to a polyglot civilization of wildly varied species and overlapping and interpenetrating cultures. Seeking to prove his unified energy theory as it relates to organic and mechanical forms, rogue scientist Isaac Dan der

Grimnebulin tries to restore the power of flight to Yagharek, a member of the garuda race cruelly shorn of its wings. Isaac's lover, Lin, unconsciously mimics his scientific pursuits when she takes on the seemingly impossible commission of sculpting a patron whose body is a riot of grotesquely mutated and spliced appendages. Their social life is one huge, postgraduate bull session with friends and associates--until a nightmare-inducing grub escapes from Isaac's lab and transforms into a flying monster that imperils the city. This accident precipitates a political crisis, initiates an action-packed manhunt for Isaac and introduces hordes of vividly imagined beings who inhabit the twilight zone between science and sorcery. Mieville's canvas is so breathtakingly broad that the details of individual subplots and characters sometime lose their definition. But it is also generous enough to accommodate large dollops of aesthetics, scientific discussion and quest fantasy in an impressive and ultimately pleasing epic. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Perdido Street Station is, perhaps, the quintessential example of The New Weird, or Steampunk, or whatever strange brew of fiction it is Mieville produces. The novel is set in the strange and teeming New Crobugzon, a city of mixed races and species loosely modeled after an alternate universe London. Within this swarming nightmare of a city, one finds an odd combination of futuristic biologic mish-mashes (the authorities ReMake prisoners, sometimes cruelly, as punishment for their crimes--e.g., a woman who kills her infant has its arms implanted forever on her cheeks) and steam-age technology (blunderbusses, muskets, etc. are the weapons of choice). The story begins with our hero, one Isaac Dan der Grimnebulin, embarking on a strange quest. Taking a break from his insect-headed, svelte, human-bodied 'khepri' lover, the artist Lin, he tries to help a bird-man 'garuda' with a sack of gold regain his wings. To study flight, Isaac sends a seedy criminal friend to bring him all manner of small birds and insects, including a peculiar caterpillar, to his warehouse laboratory. The vividly colored creature, he discovers, can only grow on a strange new drug called Dreamshit. And grow the caterpillar does--to preposterous size. It forms a chrysalis and metamorphosizes into one of the scariest monsters in all literature: the mind-sucking, brain devouring, slake moth. Mieville's gift, though, is not only to spin this wondrous, convoluted, and bizarre story, but to wield florid and heated language that propels and projects a reader headlong through that tale. There are subtle but plentiful political insights to recall Orwell's 1984, insights that made this reader sense deep allegorical layers lying beneath the work, palimpsest-like. This seems to be a Mieville trademark. Unlike The City and The City, though, the finale is appropriately climactic, cinematic, and satisfying. Not everyone gets what they want or deserve: there are

immense tragedies. When the wild ride comes to a halt, though, one can only stagger away, shaking one's head, looking for more.

This book is incredibly dense, packed full of elaborate prose and heady ideas. A very inventive fantasy world with an unpredictable plot, intriguing characters ...Mieville explores a lot of ideas and creates a whole host of strange and intriguing creatures. This is definitely not your average fantasy book - no knights in shining armor, no powerful wizards saving the day. Instead, you have cactus people, strange spider gods, winged bird people from the desert who have a very non-human set of morals and cultural norms. The setting is almost a character in itself. The prose does get too dense at points, and it feels like Mieville's very, very fond of his thesaurus. Still, his word choices are solid, if obscure, and all around I really enjoyed this book, miserable as the setting and characters often are. It's worth a try. (If you don't like the prologue, feel free to skip ahead - it's pretty different from the rest of the book. But if you're still not into it after a few chapters, it might not really be for you.)

Someone who likes steampunk would probably give this 5 stars. I found the pseudo-science a bit annoying and the build-up to the peak of the narrative rather slow, probably because he is pretty carefully concealing what is going to happen next. But once it gets there, it's a thriller - he sustains it for hundreds of pages and you won't want to stop for that entire period. The danger that catalyses the action is not 100% original - Robin Hobb has imagined a similar concept with dragons - but the critters used here are actually more interesting than dragons. The execution of his world-setting - imagine a cross between Ankh-Morpork and New York with overtones of Mexico City - is admirable, including the politics, which you'd expect from this author, although he doesn't let them become too obtrusive. If I could criticise the writing it would be that unlike some authors, mainly of a bygone era, who revelled in extended descriptions of pastoral beauty, Mieville evidently loves words that evoke filth, squalor and decay, and I thought he wallowed in them a bit at times. Also he couldn't make the cross-species sex sound anything but a bit off-putting to me, but maybe he wasn't trying.

I first read this as part of my creative writing course at UTD with Dr. Starnaman and I was so impressed with Mieville's stylized writing and his unique perspectives that I went out and purchased Kraken and then Scar. Needless to say, I was not disappointed. His nonfiction is next on my list. The largest part of why I love his pieces is how he can animate the inanimate and build worlds that have this Lovecraftian, yet modern horror feel. It's a slow sense of dread, that builds up to terror real

people would feel at these abominations/monsters. I haven't read anything this intriguing since my childhood memories of Broken Sky by Chris Wooding. Love it and will continue to read his works.

I finished PSS at ~2am, and I was up until ~5am, partially due to usual insomnia, partially due to how absolutely blown away I was. This book, I think, will go down as one of my top 5 books of all time. I'd been meaning to read it for years, but was always terrified by Mieville's reputation for dense, verbose prose. And yeah, the prose was dense, but the ability to highlight words and look them up instantly on the Kindle is wonderful. PSS does it all, but I think the things it does so well are explore the themes of power, loss, and redemption. Morally gray characters are everywhere, and even ones you root for will probably do some pretty s***ty things. Such is real life, and such is PSS. I absolutely cannot wait to read The Scar and Iron Council now. Consider me a Mieville convert.

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