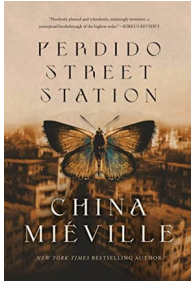




Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians



Perdido Street Station
By China Miéville
Discussed May 2004

Discussion Questions

1. In an opening volley of an internet debate China Miéville wrote "Two untrue things are commonly claimed about fantasy. The first is that fantasy and science fiction are fundamentally different genres. The second is that fantasy is crap."

Lets apply that idea to *Perdido Street Station* -

Can it be called Science Fiction or Fantasy?

To what extent does it have elements of both and what other Genres does it draw elements from?

Hint- think horror!

2. On his theory of fantasy Miéville in the same essay challenges Tolkien's concept of high fantasy. He colorfully notes that Tolkien is "...the wen on the arse of fantasy literature" - "you can't ignore it, so don't even try. The best you can do is consciously try to lance the boil" more concretely he notes the trouble with Tolkien is that "He wrote that the function of fantasy was 'consolation', thereby making it an article of policy that a fantasy writer should mollycoddle the reader." ... "That is a revolting idea, and one, thankfully, that plenty of fantasists have ignored."

His view requires that fantasy ultimately should not be "comfort food" but "challenge." The author should ... "Try to come up with some different themes, as well as unconventional monsters" ... He asks the reader "Why not use fantasy to challenge social and aesthetic lies?"

Again, let's apply this to *Perdido Street Station* -

Exactly what are the "different themes", and "social and aesthetic Lies" that the book challenges?

What did you find challenging in the book? Did anything give you comfort (or things you found conventional)?

3. In his spare time the author, who is English, has earned a Ph.D. (in social anthropology) at the London School of Economics and has run for parliament. What Social and Political philosophy can you gleam from *Perdido Street Station*?

4. While there are no openly gay or lesbian themes to this book - can some aspects of the gay or lesbian situation be seen in other relationships in the book?