

■ A Mosaic in Mutation: The Divergent and Transgressive Grotesquerie of China Miéville*

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Abstract

This paper seeks to explore China Miéville's use of the grotesque in his New Weird novum. Through Miéville's literature, we shall study the grotesque as a tool of affective mutability and difference. Without being subservient to fairy-quest logics, his work rejects the rigid structural compressions and challenges the traditional narratology of the fantastic. Miéville's materialist radicalization of the grotesque, present throughout his divergent worldbuilding, enables him to create a polymorphic teratology of molecular becoming. We intend to theorize the transmutability of heterotopic geographies as possibility spaces of co-existential indeterminacy; they produce

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events that agitate our onto-epistemological understanding of the monstrous. Miéville's fractalization of the monster proper is potentialized with a heterogeneous expressivity that refrains from constructing rigid and totalizing benchmarks, thereby posing a non-conformist challenge to genre-conforming models in fantasy. Estranging from his precursors, especially those who trailed the Lovecraftian vein, Miéville addresses the overuse of stock archetypes and the demarcation problem that made the monster unintelligible and immobile, and experiments with the shifting potential of genres and subgenres without getting subjected to classifiable categorizations. With a special focus on his *King Rat* (1998) and *Kraken* (2010), our objective is to address this elastic breathability in Miéville's transgressive and creative grotesquerie, to interpret the grotesque as a heuristic tool of extreme potentialities, and to conceptualize his abecanny as a revitalizing agency of dissension intrinsic to his literature with which he effectuates a teratocultural shift and confronts the stagnancy perpetuated by his ancestors of the fantastic.

Keywords: China Miéville, New Weird, H. P. Lovecraft, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, grotesque, polymorphic teratology

Since the excavation of the murals from the grottos beneath the Baths of Titus in Rome at the end of the fifteenth century, the grotesque has been hailed as a multifaceted tool. It has wriggled its way into art and literature as an agent of divergence and dissent. However, the grotesque as a literary device has become vulnerable to an assortment of stereotypical tropes. With the theoretical appeal of Russian Formalism, the Bakhtinian School, and Freud's *unheimlich* among others, fantastic literature has undergone a potent transition. Despite this, the convincing irruption of this new dynamism, especially of the Weird and its liminal status, has gradually dissipated into the mundane strain of familiarization. Fantasy fiction has slipped into homeostasis, an adaptive syncretism. However, from such a milieu of sterile standardization and from the protracted loop of adaptive familiarization, China Miéville stands out. The transition from Weird's pulp literature to the New Weird is marked by transgressional potentialities that effectuate a radical (un)becoming of form and content. Miéville's fiction hemorrhages out of the inherited stagnancy of closed traditional systems.

Miéville's grotesquerie accentuates an essential deviation, dissenting and detaching from conformist strains of in/non-humanity. It rejects the particularization of shapes and forms as it breaks away from the conventional onto-epistemology of monsters, especially from that which remains limited to the stereotyped cabinet of monstrosities. The grotesque thwarts concretization of subversive collectivities and enables polymorphic becoming—a collective of militant and minor literary outlawries. It is an indeterminate multiplicity of co-existing multiplicities; a liminal fusion-scape of fractalizing bodies, experiences, possibilities, percepts, affects, and “a myriad of unexpected assemblages” (Kingsmith). The grotesque cultivates an ab-logic of transgression. It is an extensive archipelago of mutable and interdependent forces and intensities that tends not to conform to the genre. It is non-essentially non-adaptive. It is a mosaic in mutation—an inexhaustible anti-system of subverting diversities overcoming epistemic representations. Even when it is incorporated in the affirmation of a positive negation that mandates the production of something new, the grotesque economy remains in a perpetual subversive flux—a subversion that effectuates transgressive transmutations by remaining in a constant mutation with life infinite.¹ Through these transmutating potentialities, Miéville's grotesque opposes alienation. Countering the traditional as well as intellectual reductionistic logic of the grotesque, he calls for a revitalization of the grotesque proper back (from

¹ The birth of something new is not always necessarily an altogether alternative ontological creation. We regard the grotesque as a tool that (re)imagines/(re)models possible and potential worlds from within our own.

the supernatural, psychological, etc.) into its materiality—a rehabilitation of matter and its polymorphic expressivity.

To begin with, we shall theorize on Miéville's readjustment of the grotesque which complements his polymorphous teratology, molecular horror, and his vermiformist thought which possess the potential to inspire a teracultural shift. Firstly, we shall explicate the Weird and its style, especially by referring to H. P. Lovecraft, and establish how Miéville, albeit affirming his predecessors yet suspending them in shadow zones, deviates. Secondly, to formulate Miéville's divergence, his creative break, and his inquiry into the meaning of the monster and the molecular, we shall use Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of becoming and substantiate Miéville's abcanny grotesque as a genesis of novelty, extremism, and proliferating change, not only in world-building, but also in narrative style. Thirdly, we intend to theorize on Miéville's vermiformist literature, its transgressional logic of becoming-imperceptible by becoming-pathogenic, and the radical virality of infectious thought which enable us to re-think at the edges of thinking—an anti-pejorative infection which, instead of being deleterious, inconspicuously forms chthonic transversalities and becomes maliciously creative. We shall discuss how Miéville's New Weird ushers in the possibility of an extreme teratology of experimentation, the novelty of which lies not in the envisioning of mutant characterization but in the foldability and the affective (ab-)somatechnical (un-/ab-)becoming of bodies, namely in their potential to politicize. Finally, our theorizations will be followed by our subsequent readings of Miéville's *King Rat* (1998) and *Kraken* (2010), through which we shall discuss Miéville's radical return to a molecular materiality from the overused abstractions of cosmicism without falling into the classification of body-horror genres, and explore how he is simultaneously inspired by his tradition yet triggered to enforce a breakage without slipping into syncretic tendencies. We aim to postulate and inquire into Miéville's vermiform bending of genres and his polymorphic teratology with which he recalibrates the fantastic. Whether it is the return to matter or the composite hybridizations or the non-conformist mixing of genres, Miéville detaches from the uncanny and transitions to a more radical abcanny apophenia motivated by a xenomorphic extreme within us that manipulates the affective (un-/ab-)becoming of bodies, identities, (im/com)possibilities and intensities. The question is: Could such an extremism be the genesis of change?

Miéville's Grotesque and the New Weird: Polymorphous Teratology, Molecular Horror and Vermiformalism

In a letter to Farnsworth Wright, Lovecraft critiques the familiarization and stereotypical imposition of anthropocentrism in fantasy (*Selected Letters* 149-51). He argues against the anthropomorphized ecosphere of extra-terrestrial tales. It is arguable that the excessive use of the stereotyped tropes amputates the alienage from the alien ecology; its overuse renders it banal. Lovecraft questions this banality and the stereotyped experience of the alien. To reinstate the experience of the alien, he poses a necessary counter-alienation, an estrangement from terrestrialism (150), which becomes extended into his evasive narratology.² The editorial essay for a 1924 issue of *Weird Tales* features Lovecraft's letter to Edwin Baird. Lovecraft writes:

One can't write a weird story of real power without perfect psychological detachment from the human scene, and a magic prism of imagination which suffuses theme and style alike with that grotesquerie and disquieting distortion characteristic of morbid vision. Only a cynic can create a horror—for behind every masterpiece of the sort must reside a driving, dæmonic force that despises the human race and illusions, and longs to pull them to pieces and mock them. (qtd. in "The Eyrie" 90)

Again, in 1925, in a letter to Frank Belknap Long, Lovecraft speaks about an "absolute detachment" (*Selected Letters* 19). It seems that his "detachment" is predominantly and cynically misanthropic. It must be, then, understood that his absolutist idea of anti-anthropocentric estrangement and cynicism fails to cultivate the vitality of life infinite even though he reaches for the outside—an outside that depends upon expressions derived from the inside and is therefore bound to exhaust its tropes and succumb to unchanging ennui. Due to his abandoning of all that is human, his estrangement falls short. He overlooks the outside inside us—the alien microbiome inside us. Instead, he creates an esoteric cult of his own that draws on his works and unvaryingly recycles it, eventually indulging in pretentiousness in the name of counter-intuitiveness. This Lovecraftian exceptionalism is myopic. The anti-human exceptionalism becomes limited, reduced to a quickly domesticated outside, invariably failing to suffuse diverse themes and styles as it relies on an intrinsic logic of exclusion. The overuse of Lovecraftian estrangement falls victim to absolutist polarizing restrictions, eventually making it impossible to inquire into an altered/anti-meaning of monstrousness.

² Miéville argues about Lovecraft's baroque diction and evasive language ("Weird Fiction" 511-12; "On Monsters" 379).

However, unlike Lovecraft, “estrangement” (*ostranie*) is for Miéville a “political act” (qtd. in Jordan). Miéville’s work is predominantly based upon a grotesquerie which is fundamentally materialist and vital, without being lopsided. In an interview with Gavin. J. Grant, he remarks:

I certainly see myself as writing in a grotesque tradition. Of course, it’s nigh impossible to actually define, but my sense of it is a reconfiguration of the familiar into a kind of combatively alienating experience. . . . A lot of genre fantasy has recycled its own tropes so much that its stock characters and clichés are familiar . . . I like the grotesque because its [sic] ornery, and also because it tends to be more grittily corporeal—gross, physical, fantasy. Materialist, philosophically speaking. (“Future”)

The grotesque in Miéville is a thinking tool which provokes a re-envisioning of potentialities. However, Miéville affirms a return to materiality. Readjusted into the transgressional and tensional experience of trinary canniness (Miéville, “On Monsters” 381) and the polymorphic conflation of mind, matter, and energy, his grotesque explicitly rejects “the consolatory, escapist strain” of Tolkienesque fairy-quest logic (Jordan), as well as Lovecraftian absolutism. Miéville’s deviation from the conventional use and understanding of the grotesque enables him to potentialize it, especially its ability to trespass and invade within. Anna Journey, in her “Earn the Vomit”, elaborates:

[T]he grotesque is hybrid, transgressive, and perpetually in motion. . . . [The] borders between the normal and abnormal dissolve; the inside and outside scramble; the internal and external collide. . . . To transgress, then, is to infringe, or go beyond, the bounds of aesthetic, ethical, or established forms of behaviour. In the grotesque, transgression often takes the form of exaggeration, extravagance, or excess. In terms of motion, the structural dynamics of the grotesque involve the fluid movement between attraction and repulsion, compassion and disgust, humor and horror, materiality and mystery. Although the grotesque is by nature ambivalent, such slipperiness offers . . . a creative force to conceptualize the spaces of indeterminacy produced by distortion, and to explore the significance of these uncertainties. (15)

Miéville’s grotesquerie is an agent provocateur. It affirms violation without any indoctrination. It “violates proportion, scale and symmetry through cultivating distortion and bizarre, hybrid figures” (Journey 15). His transgressive grotesquerie becomes the apparatus for multi-variance which resists reductionism (Camara 10). It problematizes. It becomes a rebuke to the epistemology of monstrousness. Instead of gauging monsters according to their vectors of canniness, Miéville confronts the taxonomical and demarcation problem with the abcanny.³

³ The demarcation problem argues a map/territory misunderstanding (Kingsmith). The conceptual openness of the grotesque challenges the either/or mode of thinking and moves on to identify the monster beyond the normal/abnormal, the sane/insane, and the human/nonhuman normative. Miéville’s

The abcanny monsters “are teratological expressions of . . . unrepresentable and unknowable, the evasive of meaning” (Miéville, “On Monsters” 381). Due to its conceptual openness, the abcanny is heuristically indeterminate and nomadic. As opposed to the uncanny, the abcanny is “a first step toward a splintering of the monstrous or fantastic, a re-categorization of the uncanny into many kinds of dread (the subcanny, katabcanny, etc.), an unstable shifting among multiple heterogenous affects” (Kendrick).⁴ The “Weird Affect,” Miéville tells us, in the teratological expressions works “through radical otherness, a counterposing alterity” (“On Monsters” 380). This “radical otherness” cannot be categorically subjected as it remains in an altering flux. These are expressions that reject clarity and hence “[are] suffused with abness” that “evade[s] symbolic decoding” (381). It is neither the canny, nor the uncanny. This “abness” is the “assertion of that we did not know, never knew, could not know, that has always been and will always be unknowable” (380). The abcanny affect, then, works through a radical imperceptibility. Even though the Weird might be rendered with meanings, it “do[es] not obviate the abcanny’s beyond-meaning-ness.” Miéville presents us with an interesting impression: “These monsters mean, while they meta un-mean” (382). However, before we delve any deeper into the complexities of our subject, it is essential for us to explain the Weird and its style.

With the proto-Weird writers like Sheridan Le Fanu, Jules Verne, Victor Hugo, and even H. G. Wells, the old tradition of Weird writing dates back to around the 1880s. In March 1923, the term appeared in a pulp magazine known as *Weird Tales*. Even though Weird fiction achieves its popularity through Lovecraft’s oeuvre, Lovecraft himself traces the canon of the Weird in the works of Arthur Machen, Algernon Blackwood, and Lord Dunsany. Other than them, the canon of Haute Weird achieves a diversified distinctiveness through the works of Robert W. Chambers, Clark Ashton Smith, August Derleth, M. R. James, C. L. Moore, Frank Belknap, Robert Bloch, Bruno Schulz, Fritz Leiber, and quite a few others. The critical stance of the Weird is argued by S.T. Joshi. He elaborates that Weird fiction recalibrates and refashions the “reader’s view of the world” (118).

Although many have recognized the explosive status of this genre as

monsters are more-than-monsters.

⁴ We disapprove of Christopher Kendrick’s observations on the abcanny where he identifies it as an agent which re-categorizes the uncanny into other dreads. The abcanny, we believe, is militant in its deterritorializing. We, along with Miéville, oppose this blunt taxonomical re/categorization of varieties of cannies. The abcanny deterritorializes the idea of meaning and representation, refuting the will to categorize. It is non-essentially indeterminate. Neither is it adaptive, nor does it branch out to invent its potential counterparts, as doing so would mitigate the radicality of the abcanny flux.

having its own distinctive features and not those of a subliterate epiphenomenon, Miéville, in his essay “Weird Fiction,” is massively critical about the old tradition of the pulp Weird, especially the Lovecraftian phenomenon. Instead, he emphasizes the revolutionary aspect of the Lovecraftian teratology which radically departs from the definitiveness of the “traditional Western monstrous” in European bucolic tales, from folklore, from the return of the repressed in “the traditional Gothic,” and even from the “proto-Weird iterations.” The Weird refuses to be an heir of other genre traditions. The appearance of the tentacle, which, according to Miéville, is “a limb-type absent” from the Western monstrous, “viralled suddenly in Weird Fiction” and into the “post-Weird debris of fantastic horror” as “the default monstrous limb-type” (512). Furthermore, he distinguishes the Weird from Derrida’s hauntology, noting that the Weird “impregnates the present with a bleak, unthinkable novum,” having a sense of “defining *trauma*” at the heart of its literature—“a horror underlying the everyday, the global and absolute catastrophe implying poisonous totality” (513). For Miéville, that which is radically prominent in Weird literature—whether it is the crisis of war represented through the bad-numinous and post-apocalyptic desolation in William Hope Hodgson, or the notable unrepresentable in Arthur Machen, or the ghostly dread in Algernon Blackwood, or the Lovecraftian post-war angst of modernity—is “an awareness of total crisis” not only in content, but also in form. In a way, this crisis in form is seen in the Lovecraftian notion of the anti-narrative, which, according to Miéville, becomes “predictable” (512). However, although the Weird departs from most of the traditional genres and their aestheticism, it retains a subliminal interconnection with its ancestors. For instance, while speaking about the relation of the Weird to the sublime that evokes both pleasure and horror, Miéville tells us:

The Weird, though, 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. (511)

Weird estrangement not only unsettles that with which we have familiarized ourselves, but also agitates the vectors of our ontological and epistemological understanding of the world. The potential of the New Weird lies in its will to defy any absolute. It is important to note that the New Weird estrangement is not an absolute untethering, but rather a puncturing of the traditional epistemes to cause a spillage. It corrupts the “‘literary’ in ‘literary fiction’” (Noys and Murphy 129), erodes the boundaries of genres and subgenres, manipulates itself to the spillage, and by some strange osmosis transmutes, without necessarily initiating an “ontological creation of an alternate reality” (128). Weird fiction

stages a “haemorrhage” of modernist poetics without achieving the new forms of stabilization” (130).

The New Weird, a term coined in 2003 by M. John Harrison, unsettles conventions and attempts to overcome the demarcation of genres. Its nature is like an assemblage that can accommodate all its other counterparts, despite their differences. The constructive potential enables it to experiment with a composite teratology. This is achieved through the multi-variance of the grotesque. The New Weird grotesquerie stands out from the traditional teratological expressions and offers itself with a diversification of the fantastic through a deliberate incursion of abnornity experience into the normal. Freed from the traditional archetypes, the grotesque engages in creating a shifting multi-fusional teratology which, reluctant to downright dismissals, potentializes a universal experience in the Weird. The grotesque in the New Weird functions, as Miéville says, to “metabolize” (qtd. in Briefel). The creative potential of the New Weird grotesquerie is aided by an immersion into the abness. Separating and rehabilitating itself from the limits of body-centrism, the grotesque contaminates and spreads within the density of characters, architectures, and most importantly, mingles with a wider ecology of co-existing multiplicities. It becomes a non-essentialist’s methodology which is integral to the essence of the New Weird. The fusion of divergent canninesses becomes more than affects as it renders dynamicity to the genre. The grotesque, once enabled into a divergence, disperses itself into a flux.

As much as it owes its teratology to the Old Weird, especially to the Lovecraftian agglomerations, the New Weird destabilizes the default tentacular limb-type and the “*implacably alien*” supernatural cosmicism (Miéville, “Weird Fiction” 513). The New Weird cartography is composed of monstrous landscapes, all in creation through a radical crossbreeding.⁵ These landscapes of monstrosities are not only restricted to the creation of composite creatures in Miéville’s fiction, but also extended into the spaces, identities, intensities, subjectivities, systems, cultures, and languages. In Miéville’s worldbuilding, they are intimately entangled and contribute to the compositeness of his New Weird teratology. This coalescing potential extends into Miéville’s methodology of mutation of genres by splicing and mixing divergent forms, styles, and other genres. However, unlike the Weird, the “purpose [of the New Weird] is not to create a new specific genre” (O’Connor 104). The tendency of the

⁵ We use the word “cartography” in the context of Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of the body on the plane of consistency: as they state, “A body is not defined by the form that determines it nor as a determinate substance or subject nor by the organs it possesses or the functions it fulfills” (260).

New Weird is to become-imperceptible. Its fantastic literature, as Miéville asserts, refuses to “fit neatly into slots” (qtd. in O’Connor 104). The infiltration and subsequent deterritorialization of genres, with the emphasis on becoming-slotless, makes the New Weird nomadic. However, such violent deterritorialization is compensated by an active creativeness. The birth of the unclassifiable novelty is not necessarily an alternate ontological creation but a new non-grammatization—noesis re-thought at the noetic limits of the monstrous in its peripheral phase of disruption and discordance. The New Weird’s radical attempt at a xenomorphic and transversal extremism could be convincingly argued as a transgressive and heuristic methodology which aims to maximize literature by re-thinking it at its extremes. Its abcanny cartography is a fibroproliferative unground which is characterized by “conceptual openness to plurality and difference that eschews stable identities, essences and conceptual unities that form fixed assemblages” (Kingsmith). Miéville’s grotesque is an assemblage in constant mutation. The radical production of *différance* and flux facilitates the dynamics of proliferation and change through difference, provoking a radical imperceptibility which consolidates the experience of the Weird. This radical genre-splicing and intermixing reinforces the contingent nature of the New Weird as it remains in a constant mutation by which it engages with multiple narratives and even non-narratives. Miéville’s grotesquerie undergoes this radical miscegenation (with the knowns, the unknown knowns, the known unknowns and the unknown unknowns) which encourages the author to create a heterotopic Weird-scape with a multiplicity of potentialities. His grotesque thus always remains in a subverting flux in that it is contingent and, in its contingency, always seeks to radicalize, and incontrovertibly otherize. Not only is Miéville’s grotesquerie potent with the ability to subvert and defamiliarize, it is also a politicized more-than-aesthetic tool which addresses the precariousness of the human condition. It could function as a tool for socio-political critique, yet not necessarily so. The incomprehensible experience of the Weird resists our recognition, and neither does it crave for any complacency, nor does it will to extract any sense of respect.

Miéville’s grotesque is not confined by an adjectivalism to the weird experiences of formlessness, strangeness, and menace, but dispensed into ab-materialization of monsters, the locale, architecture, and the fantastic cartography. Miéville reconfigures and moves beyond the Lovecraftian mode into a visceral heterogeneity and aligns it with the experience of the monster. With his “surrender to the *ineluctability of the Weird*” (Miéville, “Weird Fiction” 512), Lovecraft emphasizes the experience of the Weird through a cerebral detachment of the earthly. Terrestrialism is supplanted by his cosmic dread, where

teratological expressions rely on his “purple poetry,” his baroque “philosophy of militant adjectivalism” in his “aesthetic deferral” of the noun, to instigate an experience of unrepresentable formlessness, “as if that were the end of matter” (511-12). Unlike Lovecraft’s, Miéville’s fiction is brimming with an abundance of experiences. The constitution of such heterogeneous abundance is precisely why Darja Malcolm-Clarke observes the New Weird grotesque as “grotesquerie of exaggeration” (qtd. in O’Connor 94). In his “The Call of Cthulhu,” Lovecraft’s expressions of non-Euclidean geometry in his description of the sunken city of R’lyeh, and the angular monstrosity which devours the characters, are not only unnatural but defy the laws of traditional physics (94-96). To complement his cosmic alterity, he presents the horror and the grotesque aesthetic through a phantom geometry. Through his twisted geometric models, Lovecraft invokes the experience of the supernatural, while the grotesque proper of Miéville destabilizes the supernatural by a radical reconfiguration of the earthly as well as the numinous into the urban.

Miéville’s New Weird recalibrates the framework of the fantastic by materializing the numinous—not only retaining its arcaneness, but also reinforcing it by a “reconfiguration of the familiar into a kind of combatively alienating experience” (Miéville, “Future”). The weird and unearthly Lovecraftian supernaturalism has been gradually internalized. While Lovecraftian fiction thrives upon the inexpressibility of the supernatural to explore the cosmic horror, Miéville’s New Weird grotesquerie moves beyond the Lovecraftian model to engage with the “monster motif” (O’Connor 103)—a monster that is neither solely restricted to bodily irregularities, nor solely confined within subjectivities, but rather seen as a field of potentialities and intensities which can be materialized and still resist systemic cataloguing. Whereas the Lovecraftian monstrosity remains obscure, Miéville moves beyond this deliberate obfuscation into the motif of visceral horror and yet retains the experience of the unknown. His experience of the earthly is unsettling, with equally absurd and disturbing entities co-existing in a casual apocalypse. He deviates from and moves beyond the teratology as projected by his forerunners. Miéville perforates the membrane of his tradition and initiates a radical transfiguration to overcome the familiarized strain of the tentacular revulsion. In doing so, he disengages and transforms the visionary horror into a visceral unease—a molecular horror.

Miéville’s grotesque teratology is an ecology where “everything ties together in an asymmetrical block of becoming” (Deleuze and Guattari 278). According to Deleuze and Guattari, “all becomings are already molecular” (272). Similar to what they elucidate in their “becoming-animal,” becoming-monster is “one becoming among others,” and such becoming is not imitating (272-73).

Becomings-monster “plunge into becomings-molecular” (272). The teratology is therefore a molecular collective of co-existing collectivities and haecceities. Such a monstrousness is associated with becomings of numerous kinds, cannies, and more. It is “a project of strategic affirmation of any becoming whatsoever” (Kingsmith). It is a scramble of monstrous becomings. Thus, the molecular actions undermine, and politically do so, the expressions of totalities and molar conceptualizations of the dynamics of conformity and uniformity. This molecular is fundamentally vital as it “thwart[s] and break[s] through the great worldwide organization” (Deleuze and Guattari 216). The unruliness consolidates the dynamic instabilities, making the grotesque ecology in Miéville a heuristic field of constant movement and flux—a Bergsonian “perpetual flowing” (Bergson 300) and “perpetual becoming” (272).

The potentialities of the grotesque imagination are emphasized through the abcanny. However, it is important for us to understand that the grotesque ecology which we are discussing, with all its deviations, intensities, and forces, is devoid of a logic of contradiction. The grotesque defies categorization, even though variegated intensities operate simultaneously and even though they transversally intersect or collide with each other. Rather they act as a “mobile mass” of “abstract” nomads, “dehistoricized and undifferentiated” (Cresswell 377). Every collision becomes an interaction—a communicative exchange of materialities, forces, intensities, fixities, movements, subjectivities, actions, and collectivities. It does not dismiss all that it has inherited and all that it confronts; rather it becomes a heuristic exercise of collective thinking and becoming. While discussing the molecular logic of sense, Derek P. McCormack explains that the “materiality of the molecular” is neither “a stable ground within which to anchor representations,” “nor . . . a quality of objectness” (369). Rather, “this materiality is a moving matter of relations, speeds, and slowness—a question of consistency, not concreteness,” and the “effort to think through molecular affects,” which is “closely aligned with the wider attempt to overhaul conceptions of materiality with human geography,” is an attempt that arrives at “an understanding of affective materiality” and enters into an assemblage of manifold interactions and “confront[s] the perceptual limits of thinking” (369).

Within the indeterminate multiplicity of the grotesque abcanny, elements fractalize. They link, detach, die, reconfigure, connect, and combine. Consequently, “the outside of one,” as Nikolas Rose observes, becomes “simultaneously the inside of another” (qtd. in McCormack 369). These agglomerations are not demarcated merely by the surface strata of the grotesque and the skin of the monster, but are extended, as Rose tells us, into “visions, sounds, aromas, touches, collections together with other elements, machinating desires,

affections, sadness, terror, even death” (qtd. in McCormack 369), and for that matter, they are also extended into other kinds of dread. But it should be noted that the New Weird agglomerations do not necessarily offer a *nouveau* ontology to understand fantastic and novel experiences. The “conceptual thresholds” of horror in Miéville’s fiction “open up the moving materiality” (McCormack 370) to radically encounter the environ and produce events. This makes the grotesque a critical aperture of “speculative [ab-]somaticism to provide for a kind of molecularization of perception,” to articulate new affects of materiality and new apprehensions of (ab-)somatic ontology and rituals between the mind, body, and matter through a “nonrepresentational style of thinking” (370) extended to re-think the status of the monster in the monstrous ecology and subsequently, into the more-than-monster—arguably a first step towards the post-monster. The economy of the grotesque is fundamentally sensible, materialist, and molecular. It is a movement towards the fringe of the monster where it re-thinks monstrous thought at the edge of monstrous becomings, where it becomes possible to be “witness to ‘*an inhumanity immediately experienced*’” (Deleuze and Guattari 273) in and outside the post-/monstrous BwO—a body without organs.

The grotesque renegotiates the monstrous, its faculties, intensities, and epiphenomenal limitations. The point of such radical renegotiation of the monstrous is to bring it out from the inevitable singularity of (neo)reactionary capitalism and to release the grotesque from intellectual entrapments and effectuate, yet not necessarily so, an emancipatory as well as an interventional model of the monster that rips apart the traditional ambits of the normalizing archetypes, mobilizing the monster as a political figure that resists the disenchantment produced by late capitalism and literary theory. Though unsuccessfully, Miéville’s monsters resist being literary specimens. For him, it is crucially important that monsters, despite their occasional conceptual provocations, “entertain” (“On Monsters” 391). The literary body’s pathological will to theorize invariably extracts the cool-ness of the monsters and delimits them within theoretical isms with which they are dissected, decoded, repeated, and operated upon. These literary confinements constrain the potentiality of the monster, limit its “full set of capacities” and impose homeostatic structures upon it (Smith 106-07). These structures, though they may be permutational, as Jeff VanderMeer writes in regard of Miéville’s composite creatures (48), propose nothing but a logic of captivity and conservatism. Being permutational has combinational limitations which always get withdrawn “towards the statistically normal[izing]” tendencies (Smith 107). The grotesque abcanly defies configurational designations of the monster. This enables the monster into a field of experimentation “whose

ultimate goal is the event” (108). These monsters become more-than-monsters once they transform themselves into a BwO, into a “non-mechanical mechanism” which “highlights not the form or structure that bodies *actually have*, but rather the virtual capacities that bodies have to do something different,” especially retaining the ability “to ‘disarticulate’” and “cease to be” (109) a monster. The more-than-monsters escape the regularization of the bodies within which they are held captive. Throughout his urban settings, Miéville blurs the boundaries between the organic and the inorganic. He combines the biological with the technological to broaden the parameters of the grotesque. Here, not only is the physical perimeter broken, but the breakage transforms the very function of his composite teratology. Miéville understands that the horror and shock featured in the organic monsters of the Lovecraftian mode have been familiarized by the readers and no longer produce the desired effect as they once did. He thus supplants and puts together other ways of disarticulation which results in an altogether different democratic flexibility in which nothing is incompatible with the Other; everything co-exists, collides, and coincides. This becomes one of his heuristically vital and experimental ways of probing into a co-existential and indeterminate possibility space of grotesque potentialities.

According to Miéville, the teratology of the Weirid defined the genre as it severed itself from its traditional roots:

Its break with previous fantastic is vividly clear in its teratology, which renounces all folkloric or traditional antecedents. The monsters of high Weirid are indescribable and formless . . . with an excess of specificity, an accursed share of impossible somatic precision; and their constituent bodyparts are disproportionately insectile/cephalopodic, without mythic resonance. (“M.R. James” 105)

Miéville argues that the tentacular provoked a teratocultural shift which declared the genre. However, as the Lovecraftian mode gained its popularity, it centralized the experience of the unknowable numinous, eventually familiarizing and neutralizing its affective becoming.⁶ This is where Miéville’s New Weirid, by engaging in a destabilization, estranges from the accustomed, and where the grotesque-abcanny becomes a tool of estrangement. Not only does he destabilize the supernatural, Miéville also estranges his fiction by destabilizing the Lovecraftian tentacular. The incomprehensible cosmic dread is decentralized in his teratology. The grotesque-abcanny provokes him to experiment with a heterotopic teratology. The conceptualization of chimerical bodies becomes the junction where he synthesizes the material and the immaterial, the familiar

⁶ Miéville advises us against excessive familiarity that “defangs” the monster and takes away its ability to agitate (“China Miéville”).

and the unfamiliar, the soma and the *téchne*, the organism and the machine. Unlike Lovecraft, Miéville never fully dismisses terrestrialism. The return to matter consolidates the motif of the grotesque as it enables the author to splice and create a transgressive horror. His fiction probes into the horror motif at a molecular level. The horror of the monstrous, reveling in the transmutation of the human anatomy spliced with organic substance and corporeal entities (Camara 8), has sustained the experimental nature of the genre. The visceral horror of organic transplantation with the extra-terrestrial numinous is centralized in the Lovecraftian mythos. However, Miéville's anomalous teratology admits the heterogeneous multiplicity of life where the grafted compositions are not restricted to the mutation of organic and corporeal substances but are extended into the inorganic and the incorporeal and consequently into an atypical fusion of matter, mind, and energy. The exploration of a polymorphic teratology advances by way of philosophical speculations. The grafted horrors investigate the ontology of monstrous divergence through the new tensions of the more-than-monstrous BwO, problematizing our epistemological limitations of in/non-human reality.

The complicitous interaction between the entangled grotesque and horror is critical in Miéville's work. Although the dynamicity of shocking molecular mappings of a body, especially in body-horror fictions, is not new, Miéville's engagement with horror as a distinctive affective state of his grotesque geography presents the molecular economy of horror, and the material elements which are bound to reinforce it when anatomized, vivisected, and probed into, as a corporeal substratum of affective experiences incited by the grotesque. Lovecraft, in his *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (1927), ambitiously remarks that the "true" nature of Weird fiction is characterized by "unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces," rather than the horror portrayed through the violent depiction of "bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains" (qtd. in Miéville, "Weird Fiction" 512-13). Contrary to the Lovecraftian cosmic horror, Miéville presents a discernible horrification, free from the Lovecraftian disenchantment and the traditional awe and horror. His is an idea of revulsive and revolting horror—a horror that revolts. The graphic descriptions in *King Rat*, for example, engage in a menacing horror accompanied with offending disgust when probing into the wounds and cracks of the (city)body. These lacerations and wound-spaces are marked with smoothness and striations. The horror unties the carefully drawn sutures and exposes the laceration, the lesion, and the scar. It traverses upon them, mobilizing them as political wounds, escape-holes, infiltration tunnels in abcanny lands with an imperceptible geography that is alien yet not remote. It is the deliberately kitsch affective substrate underlying the skin of the grotesque.

These horrific wounds in Miéville struggle against the pre-emptive design of the skin. The wounds fold, unfold and refold the surface until the surface is creased, cracked and chipped, tearing holes and burrows that weave themselves into a labyrinth through which the grotesque moves virally, through the historicity of the sensory narrative of skin. The molecular horror in the tissue of the speculative narrative enforces a radical compulsion—the becoming-worm of the reader. The infectious recruitment of the reader corruptively proliferates. The Weird uses the mobility of infections, infecting “healthy fictions,” making “each reader a Typhoid Mary” reading texts with unpredictable mobilizations and imperceptible becomings that will “infect or eat” the path traversed by the reader-worm, creating alterations as they wyrm their ways (Miéville, “Afterweird” 1115-16). The Weird is an “affect” nurturing vermiformalist “usurpation[s]” (1115), even if it means usurping itself—the becoming Wyrms of the Weird. Miéville writes:

Weird is anti-Wyrd. A subtraction of the D (always a weak letter, prone to replacement), and its usurpation by M. Weird ≠ Wyrd. Weird = Wyrms. This is the vermiformalist fact of the matter. (1115)

The molecular horror potentializes the genre by converting it into a site of open philosophical discourse, where the techniques of the grotesque dramatize the ontological and metaphysical question of segregation and compatibility. From the material to the immaterial, all manners of horror are extended from the body motif which is delimited by the boundaries of prohibition, to the ambiguous geometries and amorphous spaces of what Reza Negarestani calls the “(hole complex)” (qtd. in Camara 18). This enables the author to overstep the limits of compatibility and achieve new ontological, semiotic, and metaphysical collectivities that constitute differential variables, moving from the conceivable and the inconceivable to the non-conceivable and even towards the supra-conceivable.

Thus, Miéville’s teratological expressions remain in a perpetual kinesis, always changing their position, undergoing a continual metamorphosis to avoid detectability by the agency of the familiar. In the shifting flux (a flux in semio-narratological praxis), the fluctuating locus results in chronic delocalization. It should be noted that Miéville’s fiction, as he says, is a “conduit” (qtd. in Jordan), a concatenation of events and “a worm farm” (Miéville, “Afterweird” 1115). His grotesque, like the Weird, “travels.” The grotesque devises and traverses the interstices of the text. It is vermiformalist—a mobile affect, an affectation of usurping mobility. According to Miéville, the “Weird is neither holy nor whole-y” but “hole-y” and it “is not the un-but the abcanny.” It is a “virus of holes, a burrowing infestation, an infestation of burrowingness itself, that births its own pestilential hole-dweller.” The holes become the space of philosophical operation which problematizes the aesthetics of appearance

whose “edges” have turned “protean,” “permeable and oozing.” The “ground below” our “meaning-factories” is “hole-y” and “there are cracks and chaos, meaningquakes.” The vermiform complex predominates the fictional landscape by ungrounding the perceptible and by means of heuristic corruption. It is persistently contingent as its canon keeps on changing (1115). The holes, cracks, and scree become the site of open incursive subversion—a channel (of rhizomatic transversalities) through which the forces of the other invade the innards and consequently mutate (Camara 18). It provides the text with the dynamics of change. The Wyrms dictate Miéville’s fiction through which he rhetorically asks: “What can be the vector of the hole-y unholy post-life life but the worm?” (“Afterweird” 1116). There are of course others before him, but this is Miéville’s initiative towards a fertile post-genre BwO literature of abcanny transversalities.

With the intent of this creative becoming, Miéville’s grotesque radicalizes the parameterized field of Weird aesthetics into a manifold ab-anti-configuration of the genre as a conceptual space of affective openness, where the grotesque becomes a conceptual tool that explores potential topological de/re-formations of the teratological landscape. This is where Miéville’s idea of horror fundamentally differs from Lovecraft’s. While Lovecraft sought for a real externality, Miéville aims to unlock the shifting potential of the abcanny so as to destabilize familiarity yet achieve it without any absolute untethering.⁷ However, unlike the Freudian uncanny’s adherence to recurrence, the abcanny is “without mythic resonance” (Miéville, “M.R. James” 105).⁸ It is devoid of a past and “fundamentally *it* does not ‘mean’ at all” (112). Due to its lack of a past, the abcanny, unlike the uncanny, fends off habitual formations of insular recurrence. For the Weird’s “chaotic” and “amoral” “anthropoperipheral universe” overflowing with “unprecedented forms,” the abcanny creates new lines of flight through which monsters slip away into the wild freedom of “implacable alterity” (112). With this plurality in formlessness, the grotesque becomes divergent as it folds, unfolds, and refolds the structural arrangements of traditional teratology (without

⁷ Miéville explicitly refuses to derive the “ab-” from Kristeva’s abjection. “[T]he ‘ab-’ in ‘abcanny’ is as in abnormal,” writes Miéville (“On Monsters” 381). However, due to the New Weird’s resistance against any absolutist detachment, its accommodating potential gets maximized. Without completely rejecting the supernaturalism or terrestrialism, the abcanny is potentialized with the ability to combat regularization and normalization, and simultaneously open new multiplicities which do not exclude its previous ones. Rather, it metabolizes. The abcanny, by its own volition, cannot rely on a logic of exclusion. Not only does the abcanny abnormalize and aberrate, it also ab-articulates and ab-merges.

⁸ The abcanny is also fearless as it defies the logic of repression. It neither assumes fear nor does it hope. This effective schizoid eschews bifurcations, addressing the resentment arising from the neurotic logic of repression. The abcanny anti-apparatus is non-essentially schizoanalytic in that it activates a rhizomatic becoming of the monster.

actually escaping it) and by infinite permutations (which precisely make it anti-permutational in relation to its imperceptibility and indeterminacy) achieves a multi-variance. By this radical unfolding, the grotesque transgresses intrinsic boundaries of the monster proper, enabling it to become a vital multiplicity of complex revisions. The abcanmy pertains to the aesthetics of radical metamorphosis with which the monster is fractalized. The divergent morphogenesis of the chimera is potentialized to re-investigate the ontology of the monstrous, the body politic of the monstrous and its dialectics of resistance, by means of bending and problematization, instead of arriving at consolatory outcomes. The unfolding of the monstrous BwO in Miéville's fiction takes place not only at a conceptual and thematic level, but also in form. Through deformative divergence and deterritorialization of traditional aesthetics, the semio-narratological hierarchies are broken down, as the form registers a topological unfolding. Miéville wrestles with the logic of diegesis which forces us to return to the traditional narratological structures ("Truly Monstrous Thing"). He thereby potentializes the Weird bricolage as a generator of events and confronts the tradition of the fantastic.

Readjusting the Reject: The Grotesque in *King Rat* (1998)

King Rat takes us on a skewed fairy-tale journey through sewers, ducts, and cracks, in a city which is drawn into an ancient conflict. Inverting fairy tales to evoke our repressed terror, Miéville creates his alter-London as an amalgamation of angles, gaps, and urban refuse, an entropic city seduced by sound, space, and shadows. This is a heterogeneous London set within the amorphous geometry of a subterranean city which unfolds the parameters of the actual London which the readers are familiar with. The narrative landscape is multifaceted and always changing. He engages with a spatially warped London beneath the surface strata of appearance. The boundary between the surface and the interior is volatile and illusive—shifting, slipping, and disintegrating simultaneously. Miéville's novel is confidentially intimate with an urban London. As the fantastic rat-being is introduced in the poetic prologue with a sense of moving menace, this unease is presented through movements, sounds, shadows, and diction. The movement of the arcane shadow-being forbears any definiteness of expression, yet when King Rat materializes himself before us, the numinosity is mitigated by a shift in language—perhaps an appreciative nod to Lovecraftian esotericism.

Right from the beginning, Miéville concretizes a grotesquerie through an emphasis on sensory perceptions, rather than a reliance on abstract experience. For instance, the vivid stench of the urban refuse achieves a visual perceptibility.

This visionary grotesque encourages a visual unease, triggering a gag reflex. Miéville's London is a synesthetic event of grotesquerie. The ontological demarcations of the perceptible and the imperceptible are purposefully problematized as Miéville materializes a neural horror which is manifested in the city-life perception of senses channeled through the motif of the body, its mobility and intensity. The description of the splicing and DJ-mixing of sounds (Miéville, *King Rat* 68) resembles the surgical amputation and transplantation of organs, provoking affective transmutations of mind, matter, and energy. Music here is filled with amorphous worms travelling through ether, wavelengths and frequencies with an intention to contaminate. These are worms escaping the constraints of sonic rigidity and late capitalism through the city-holes, through hemorrhages, fissures, and density-perforations—militant tunnels leading to unsafe passages of a chthonic insurgency. Worm-like, the music simultaneously bleeds out of the city's skin yet draws from the body, using it as a system of conveyance and communication—a “strange sonic vampirism” (27). These worms are “vibrations in the desiccated air” (28). With sounds, stench, murder, and defilement, a sub-culture of grotesque occultism is created. Here, magic is not justified by the practice of silly incantations and charms but brought about as a material event. In *King Rat*, magic is swollen with the urban stench of urine and decay. Such decay is displayed in the urban refuse, which exhibits a territorial difference. The refuse provides the sustenance of the rat-beings. There is nothing they “can't stomach” (57). The cul-de-sacs, filled with the stench of rotten foodstuffs, breed a culture of defilement. The culture of overabundance is incorporated in the surplus that is thrown away. While the littered refuse does not transform into postcanny rubbish-monsters, the resonance of insurgency radiates in its ability to provide sustenance while simultaneously agitating the senses. The corner streets are heaped with rejected excess, swollen in the stench of pollution. It carries “strange energ[ies] from the ruins of other people's suppers and breakfasts” and city-detritus (60-61), provisioning the liminal. This pollutant subversion corrupts the boundaries of the systemic hierarchy, while the stench infiltrates the boundaries of redolence, “changing from the inside out” (61); it typifies an affective (un-/ab-)becoming.

The display of the consumer's rejeamenta ab-articulates the territorial borders of the liminal body. Miéville juxtaposes the socio-political with the metabolic to bring out the squandering wastefulness of cosmopolitanism. The difference in Miéville's presentation is better understood if we compare his writing with a few other authors of fantasy—for instance, with the grand feast at Hogwarts (Rowling 131-32, 218). Unlike in the banquet buffets and majestic pleasure-cornucopia in high fantasies, Miéville deliberately subverts the hygienic

and the healthy. Food becomes a fact which is liable to defile. There are neither any Tolkienesque refreshments nor any well-stocked banquets (Tolkien 154). The hole-y rubbish heaps carry the cross of social stigma. They are judged as impure and sick. The repulsion is not unfamiliar in its graphic descriptions, but it is the overruling of the limits of prohibition that moves toward a transgressional politics of the hole-y body. These holes emanate a stale miasma on the face of the city. The same unpleasant stench (unpleasant to the sophisticated city-life, where sophistication is a normative of the civilized) invites the rat-beings. The stench is a rebuke to poise and sophistication. It radically assaults and alters suave gestures and postures that cannot tolerate this stink. Miéville's transgressional grotesquerie agitates the intolerance by uncensoring the stink (both in content and diction). The rat-beings thrive upon the rubbish, defying the normative of the civilized. The sub-socius of the polluted is located in the apertures of defilement. Defilement itself becomes a vermiformal complex, a rebuking fractal space for affective speculations and creative (un-/ab-)becoming. It breeds by means of latent infestation and is the becoming-BwO of the city.

The microscopic perspective probes into the intricacies of the body. The movements of and in the mouth, with its secretional potential, all add to the grotesquerie. Chewing, smelling, and salivating not just remain restricted to its apparent semiotics but blend into a subversive synthesis of the sensory, subversive even when the food is broken down into digestive particulates—a vital gustatory and metabolic subversion. Miéville presents a radically subversive degustation drawn carefully almost to the point of a revoltingly appreciative tasting. He radically juxtaposes tasting with the filth, although tasting is usually experienced with the voluptuous and gastronomic display in a feast. The defiling potential of the refused victuals is always-already contained within the rich delicacies that are served gently in food parlors. These dormant agencies of defilement are always-already inverting the exquisite arts of high culinary practice—a spatio-temporal molecular desecration which is already present even before the food is prepared and served. There is no chef's signature; the heaps of refuse are signed with saliva and phlegm. The luxurious banquet halls in high/epic fantasies and the salivation which they cause are radically contrasted by the defilement, yet the secretion of saliva remains the common primordial ooze. Defilement is potentialized as an event as it begins to contaminate the flourish of the luxurious as Miéville shifts from the world of patisseries to the periphery of the wastage that surrounds it. However, the grotesque is not only limited to the defilement of the social periphery but extended to the marginal matter of the body. The organismic-body becomes a teratological field of expressions. The bodily margins are not estranged but are drawn back from the estrangement, neither as a

regression nor as a vengeful return of the body, to locate in them the stigma of abhorrence and potentialize it. The grotesquerie explores the potential of this marginal matter and the danger it poses to the structural integrity of the civilized society that imposes the prohibition overridden by the rat-beings.

Spit, the marginalized body matter, traverses the margins of the body and is expelled, always becoming the Other. This adds to the slippery aesthetic of Miéville's grotesque. While the grotesque is usually shown in bloody macabre details of beheadings and dismemberment, the author shifts from this repetition and extends his grotesquerie into the visceral motif of body matter. Spit is associated not only with the graphic display of expelled fluid but also with the multiple effects. The hawking sound, the stink, the visuality in the viscosity of that which is gastrointestinal, the ooze of the slobber, and the reflex itself aid Miéville in obtaining a multi-variant abdominal grotesquerie which is subjected to conventional loathing. The organic that was limited to blood and skin is recalibrated by the radical inclusion of the metabolic mucus. The spit defines the boundaries of territorial difference. The subverting matter is perpetually becoming, perpetually fighting to expel itself out of the margins of the body. Saul's dryness of mouth calls for the moist regulation of saliva as a relief. Hence, he fights for spit (*King Rat* 31). King Rat, as a casual gesture, hawks and spits (52).

Miéville's London is an entropic generator of events. For instance, murder as a monstrous expression encroaches upon everything. The portrayal of the dead bodies does not merely signify grotesque-death. The posthumously discovered crime scene (275) looks like a macabre painting depicting ritualistic murders.⁹ The bodily convulsions and contortions (240), and the trauma-bonded victims are all assembled together as an event. It is the oblique fractures of under-London that are manifested up above in the bodily distortions of the murdered individuals. The corpses seem to pronounce a corporeality after they have turned into corpses. The prominence of the features of the dead enhances the motif of the body. When the body has stopped all its movement, the gaze of the reader moves into the forensic grotesque of the cadaver.

⁹ The expression of *la danse macabre* designates the universality of death. However, "macabre" in contemporary fiction is used as an aesthetic tool to depict the grimness of death. The macabre aesthetic carries a potential to shock. There is an academic confusion in differentiating between the macabre and the grotesque. It is usually seen that the grotesque effect could be unintentional but possesses a definite function for the development of the central aspects of the work (Haar 49-50). However, as we are speaking of a grotesque which is heterogenous and polymorphic, our theory identifies the macabre as an epiphenomenon of the grotesque. As it is characteristic of the grotesque to deviate and transgress the order of things, identifying grim death only as macabre reduces the potential of the depiction, whether literary or artistic. An argument regarding the entelechy of the grotesque and its hylomorphic relation with the macabre could be a potential subject for another study.

The grotesquerie is not limited to the horror of mutilation and murder. It is extended even into the menacing speed of an incoming train. The speeding train with its sinister appearance enlarges like a monster before it collides (180). The blinding light of the train, the black slit of the glass front like a monstrous face, and the continuous malevolence of the Piper's flute builds up the momentum of the train (as if the Piper's music summons the speeding train and assumes a control over the train as it metamorphoses into something monstrous) and with it, the imminence of menace. Miéville juxtaposes unlikely variables to demonstrate the murderous events. The gruesomeness is not just confined to the fright of murder and the splattered aftermath. The shock is ironically present in the Vitruvian arrangement of the body—an arrangement of logical geometry, rationality, and reason. It is an irony that very subtly instigates us to remind ourselves of the historical precedent of imperial violence as a grotesque derivative of the Enlightenment.

It is the objective of the grotesque to upset the order of orthogonal apparatuses upon which our civilizations have learnt to rely. Not only does it confront the effects of late capitalism, but it also acts as an open space for philosophical speculations. The grotesque in *King Rat* is a weaponized tool that traverses the vermiform complex of the text. It corrupts the surface strata of aestheticism and becomes the overexposure of the text. In this, it is not a stereotypical device for the marginalized and the uprooted. It steps beyond the traditional reactionary hierarchies as well as the subaltern patronization and becomes an altogether different poly-form of potential anomaly. Without resisting the traditional limits, Miéville's grotesque warps and recalibrates its extremities for the purpose of a new expressivity and a new flexibility for transgression and divergence.

Hybridizations and Monster-Making: The Transgressive Grotesque in *Kraken* (2010)

Kraken transgresses the genre limits of the grotesque aesthetic as it follows the protagonist in a comic pursuit through a multi-apocalyptic city of urban-matter. A ridiculous theft of a giant squid gives impetus to a set of absurd exchanges and an atmosphere gone berserk. Miéville's presentation of a Weird grotesquerie complements the frenzy, both in action and language. A grimly comical theft leads to an even more comical pursuit where strange cults are involved. The unnatural oddity in the frenzy of the hunt is amplified by the accompaniment of violence. *Kraken's* grotesquerie travels "beyond the incitement of horror" (Wight and Gadd 307) toward a multiplicity of abness.

The Darwin Centre exhibits an array of grotesquely dis/colored specimens; the displayed dead and preserved have a vague resemblance to trophies. They are (a)trophied with an atomic pause. The grotesque is displayed in the material phenomena of the museum itself. It is a mosaic of heterogenous grotesqueness. Its already-dead specimens are submerged and preserved in formaldehyde. The rapidity of rot and decay is manipulated and imposed with an almost perpetual pause, a special vestigial insolubility, which the dead specimens are made to adapt to in formaldehyde. The pause becomes an interstitial speculative space. Interrupting the process of decomposition at a molecular level, the specimens are introduced in a discontinuous slow decay; even after they are dead, they are continuously dying. At the cost of their death, they obtain a functional change as they remain in a continuous processual atrophy where the rot is preserved and exhibited. Resisting a complete acceptance of the objectification as historic curiosity, the rot-atrophied exhibits expel themselves into the gaze of the visitors, exploiting their grotesque interest. These specimens are the elements of a transgressive grotesque becoming, in that they are always becoming the biological Other, becoming the preserved monster—decaying contour-formations uncatalogued by science. This makes the museum a rotting collective of the monstrous—an event and an organism simultaneously, a heterotopic morgue of historic interest grafted with alien myths. The molecular grotesque is shown by this exhibition of dead specimens which stimulates the grotesque curiosity of ordinary and genteel folks. As the idea of the museum thrives in the culture of death, degradation, and decay, its economy of museological necro-culture thrives in the capitalization of events of trauma and decay. The museum is the grotesque collective that attracts the equally grotesque gaze of the spectator. However, the objective of such a radical grotesquerie is not only to perform as a deviant, but also to generate a collective of deviants, converting the social machine into a grotesque machine. Within the surface strata of civilization, the preserved specimens in the museum room manage to infiltrate the structural membrane, yet do so successfully in the guise of scientific progression. The museum room becomes a hole where the grotesque breeds and infests. It is the bastard hole of life and death. Unlike the methods of radical insurgence, the museum-grotesque is intrinsic; it gradually seeps within the social strata, infects, and mimics its way to acceptance. Miéville aligns the scientific inquisitiveness with the polymorphous perverse which our necro-culture exploits. The transgressional grotesque activates subtle lacerations through which worlds communicate, copulate, and combine. The museum is warped into becoming something more than a curatorial space displaying historic and scientific glory. It becomes a site of geo-sexual intercourse, where the specimen

room becomes a spatio-temporal portal-bed upon which the dead and the alive, the animate and the inanimate, the organism and the machine encounter and engage in a coitus. But it differs from the infantilism of necrophilia as it rejects a symbolic identification with models of desire. Such grotesque penetration is not subjected to pleasure principles. It is the abcanmy space of necrophilia devoid of an *objet petit a*.

The entering of the squid room has been paralleled with the breaching of a Schwarzschild radius “of something not canny” (Miéville, *Kraken* 10). The weird entanglement between scientific inquisition and the quantum mechanisms of a gravitational pull into a singularity initiates the reader into a world of grotesque-abcanmy. Identifying the New Weird in Miéville’s *Kraken* and his shift from the model of the tentacular is integral in understanding Miéville’s deviation. The post-life life of a cephalopod specimen is not restricted to mere tentacles but is extended into the multiplicity of the ink and subsequently into history. It serves as a border between the alien myth and the Other (O’Connor 260). It acts as an interstitial Other. Its imprecise physiology recognized as the “‘other’ biological entity” (78) complements the abcanmy of the oceanic. The squid specimen functions in a familiar manner yet remains “biologically alien” to us (255). It is a bastardization of myth and science (Miéville, *Kraken* 425). The gelatinous biomass is not confined to its indescribable anatomy but potently serves a “mythical past” (O’Connor 256) of consciousness. Lovecraft’s Cthulhu and Tolkien’s Watcher in the Water (307-09) resemble the Architeuthis Dux—not completely stripped of its magical monstrosity—but only as tentacular entities. But shifting from the Cthulhu mythos and Tolkien’s mysterious tentacular creature, Miéville’s squid is displayed in a nine-meter tank, as a specimen among other specimens of mythical monstrosity immersed in formalin. The squid becomes something more than a curated specimen as soon as it is stolen away from its territorial thresholds. The absurd nature of the theft fractalizes the demarcating markers—and the markers of the act itself—that seek to contain the squid.

The cephalopodic grotesquerie is expanded into the power of language and writing for a re-evaluation of the physical and an ontological re-assessment of the body (O’Connor 261). It invites us into a multibody narrative. The squid is not just a biological creature but also a tool that bears a mythic history of writing and imagination. It is what Abi Curtis calls “an ink-machine” that echoes creative potential (qtd. in O’Connor 258). The multiplicity of the ink is presented through a variety of characters and functions. While the supervillain Grisamentum weaponizes the ink to transgress mortality and rewrite history, the Tattoo, stripped of all his physicality, is composed of ink.

Another instance could be seen when Grisamentum, after burning himself alive in memory fire, asks Byrne to extract the ink out of his ashes (Miéville, *Kraken* 420). Grisamentum obtains the plasticity of the ink, to fold and unfold his ink-physique into new shapes. The vitalism of life is cultishly tossed into a post-life multiplicity of matter combined with ab-magic, where the more-than-monster is free to traverse beyond the expressions dumped upon it. The grotesque is given an altogether different dimension when both the inks (the ink extracted out of the ashes of Grisamentum and the ink obtained from the undead kraken) are combined into a weird concoction of outrageous power (485-89). Although it retains its amorphous morphology, the ink disarticulates its functional restriction. It is a generator of abness—Miéville's tongue-in-cheek winking at human history and at literature.

The ink is amorphous, yet not inchoate. The amorphous monster has the potential to shift its shape into whatever it wills. It has no need for any ontogenetic analysis as it is not bound to any evolutionary growth. Miéville's ink-monster harbors a dynamic multiplicity. It refuses to be allotted under a hierarchical status quo. The grotesquerie of the ink acts combatively like an anti-coagulant. It withstands the reduction into clot. Bypassing the pulp blood and gore, the idea of fluid as a monster relieved of a structural physiology (yet retaining material expressions) is consequently released from any objectification. The ink is faceless and it is precisely this facelessness that gives it the potential to draw many faces. It is an ab-*cogito* actant emerging out in a disguise, in a multi-faceted facade of facelessness—*larvatus prodeo*. Its liquid plasticity resists molecular fixity and the recognition into meaning. Unlike the Vitruvian man, the fluid monster denies geometrical drafts. It rejects the graphing of diagrammatic representations.

The organic and the inorganic with the technological are combined into the teratological landscape. The alter-London transgresses the boundaries of the human, the non-human, and the machine and stretches “the parameters of the grotesque” (Wight and Gadd 317), warping the limits of its form and functionality. This in-between and composite functionality serves to breach conventional monster-making. We see this demonstrated in the character of the radio-man. Not only is the physiology of the radio-man breached, but the functionality is also reformed when he transmits signals and static instead of speaking in a human voice (Miéville, *Kraken* 73-74). The multi-functional grotesque enhances the attributes of the body by demolishing the preordained traits or by radically augmenting them. We encounter another instance in the compositeness of London's antibodies, which are a heterogeneous assemblage of urban matter and sensory perceptions acting as leucocytes (409). However, the breach is not

repeated throughout the novel to avoid making a stereotype out of it.

The brutal and the organic are revisited in the sinister methods of Goss and Subby, which defy the laws of natural physics. Through the sadistic yet comical ultraviolence of the dynamic duo, we locate the abcanny horror. Unlike stereotypical methods of bloody torture, Goss and Subby rely on a combination of ab-maths and magic. We see this in the murderous enfolding of extreme origami; Goss folds his victims into a geometrical intricacy, into geometrical death (125). In this intense horror, the victimization of the body becomes secondary to the terrifying ornamentation of the murder. The body is paralleled with origami sheets, torture with folding, with murder as the final modular design. The body is neither malleable nor ductile. Goss administers an imposed plasticity on the body, knowing that the skeletal folds would resist. The horror lies in this non-foldability of the body which is radically folded to death. Here, the grotesque is ab-mathematical. It gets amplified through the language of cruel and crazy humor. Transgressing the traditional horror of brutality and macabre, Miéville deals with a multi-conceptual grotesquerie, where instead of focusing upon the body as a victimized object, he dislocates the gaze of the reader and shifts to the violent operation of folding itself. The folding, although devoid of any blood-gore revulsion, is purposed with an abcanny shock.

Hybrids of urbanity, the Chaos Nazis appear to be a cult of neo-fascist mutant mercenaries who believe in “artistic cruelty” (297). Their flamboyant appearances are a bricolage faithful to “the decadent baroque” (296). Ranging from their costumes and wigs to their chaotic gestures and hisses (277), there is no chronology in their constitution. Their non-linear political disposition differs radically from the orthogonal mindset of their predecessors (296-97). Their mutant and diversified bearings are like a patchwork assemblage, where no one cult member is a complete whole, yet every incomplete whole makes them a collective of chaos. Cut-pasted with a multifariousness, the mutant beings are, in their inconsistent and asymmetric patchiness, an assimilation of heterogeneous fashion and style. Their emblem is a many-armed mutant-swastika (277). But the swastika is not only restricted to its emblematic function; it is also shown as an apparatus of torture, an alternative cruciform (296). The features of these mutant Nazis and their cruel mechanisms (296-97) are magnified in their intimate adherence to our actual historical past. Miéville borrows his characters from our history and metabolizes them into a patchwork of ab-humans. The horror lies in the mythologization of the Chaos Nazis, who bear a violent past but are unsatisfied by the degree of cruelty displayed by their actual historical predecessors who failed to attain an artistic genocide (297). The grotesque expands this violence into an ultraviolent extreme, which is

simultaneously comic and cruel. It assembles history and myth and sews them together into a patchwork-hybrid that reflects upon our mythic past. This patchwork tapestry is a potential site for political discourse. It ignores the stigmatization of an inhuman past and enlarges upon the horrors of compression by warping them inside out. Instead of abhorring the stigma, the grotesque mobilizes it as a tool to problematize. Instead of an outright abortion, it translates the stigma into an aberration. The grotesque in *Kraken* is a heterogeneous field of metabolized aberrational characters, alternative and entropic. The polymorphic teratological transgression is endowed with limitless potential. Not only the monster-making is drawn from unbelievable hybridizations and extreme frenzies of violence, but it is also furthered with the creation of exceptionally eccentric entities—the mnemophylax and the ghost-functions. With them, Miéville puts together a “complex asomat[echn]ic” teratology (200).

The ghost-functions conjured ritualistically are complicated bodiless residues of human soul (201-02). They are spirits summoned across aether and time. Comical yet crazy, a team of complicated police-functions are conjured for an ectoplasmic intervention to compensate for the FSRC’s (Fundamentalist and Sect-Related Crime Unit) ineffective investigation. The grotesque of the mainstream supernatural magic is converted into urban magic. The ritualistic conjuring of the spectral-functions is done by burning police procedurals, tapes, and DVDs (202). Their language, with their para-whispers, is staccato, warped, and distorted. Although the concept of the ghost-functions might be hauntological, they differ from their human trace. This is where we think the author breaks off from the stereotypes of the haunt and hints at readjusting a differential ontology of ghosts who shift “between unity and plurality” (203).

But unlike the ghost-functions, the mnemophylaxes are a derived function “that thought themselves beings” (189). They are the genius loci of the memory places. They are the defenses of memory—pugnacious sentinels conjured by the museums out of the museums’ own material potency to thwart any plundering (189). Miéville deviates from the supernatural alienage of the benthic tentacular to the specimen magic of a corporeally cabalistic world of specimen squids and skeletons (343). An aggressive chimera of a formalin jar conjoined with a human skull on top, sharp phalanges, and flesh and skeletal remains taken from museum preservations (278), the mnemophylax is an epitome of grotesque transgression. This composite function is comprised of material phenomena. With its extreme organic aggression and humorous rolling movements, Miéville’s composite memory angel is organically as well as magically outrageous. More than a pseudoscientific or a cryptozoological creature, the mnemophylax is a bio-magical anomaly, a hybrid whose structures surprisingly

remain within the perceptible bounds of science yet whose exposure and characterization are too imperceptibly frantic and disordered to the point it becomes cartoonish. The mnemophylax is a curatorial aberration acting as a hyperphysical angel.

So where do all these (fragmented and fractalized) ab-magical events take us? Are these death metal-esque, cartoonishly wicked composite creations really so potent with a destabilizing counter-intuitiveness as to confront the stagnancy of the fantastic? It must be understood that Miéville's New Weird teratology is alive. The compositeness of the teratological expressions assumes a heuristic abness by problematizing and ab-articulating demarcations. Miéville's polymorphic teratology is unusually familiar with his urban London and therefore is equally unusually tensile to relentless fractalizations. His disobedient grotesquerie produces, according to Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, a "certain ecstasy of liberation" (qtd. in Wight and Gadd 318-19) from the despotism of cosmic authority and the fossilization of the fantastic. Its unruly contrariness deflects onto-epistemological imposition. It traverses beyond the genre limits toward a polymorphic ab-becoming devoid of any referential folds. It is equally important to note that Miéville is dismissive of any arborescence or categorization of teratological expressions. His love for monsters is primarily due to the fact that they entertain and this is why his monstrous embodiments are not restricted to expressions of an adjectivalism that articulates some experience of alien strangeness. His monsters are neither metaphorical nor psychological manifestations of some crisis. Well, yes, they are to some extent, but then again, they have materialized themselves out of this world and its conditions, and they have materialized themselves with a transgressional radicality that heuristically counters their own materializations only to become something more. Thus, Miéville's grotesquerie is not only based on an idea of a return to matter to compose composite material expressions of the monstrous; it also unlocks a heterogeneous receptivity of the monstrous, beyond its organismic limits into a vital multiplicity of becoming. This radical return to materiality is not regressive. We explore the return as a revitalizing reactivation into corporeality that confronts the traditional fantastic by introducing a creative teratology which is polymorphic and abcanny, and establishes a new anti-meaning of the monster. The confrontation is not only in its deviation, but also in the re-localization and re-materialization of the monstrous, affirming its diverse tinkering potentialities to compose dynamic possibilities capable of producing new events, its nomadic mobility, and the multifarious expressions of fractalized cannies which it accommodates into a patternless heterogeneous mosaic—of mutating differences enabled into a multiplicity of fractalized multiplicities.

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變種的鑲嵌工藝： 柴納·米耶維的歧異與越界怪誕風格

摘要

我們的論文探討了柴納·米耶維在他的新怪異小說中對怪誕的運用，以及作者如何試圖通過對身體性的徹底再啓動來重塑奇幻的怪誕風格。通過研究米耶維的文學作品，我們將探討怪誕作為一種情感變異和差異的工具。他的作品摒棄了對童話探索邏輯的依附，拒絕了僵硬的結構壓縮，並挑戰傳統的奇幻敘事學。我們認為，米耶維對怪誕的唯物主義激進化貫穿於他構建的歧異世界，使他能夠創造出一種分子流變的多態畸形學。我們將異質地理的可轉換性理論化，視其為共存不定性的可能性空間，從而激發我們對怪物本體認識論的理解。米耶維對怪物本身的分形化是以一種異質性的表達方式來實現的，它避免了構建僵硬的和總體化的基準，是一種對奇幻類型模式的非從屬挑戰。與他的前輩，尤其是那些追隨洛夫克拉夫特脈絡的作家不同，米耶維試圖擺脫典型形象的濫用以及導致怪物難以理解和固化的界限問題。因此，他試驗了類型和子類型的變化潛力，使其不受可分類的歸類限制。我們的目標是著重研究他的《鼠王》（1998）和《克拉肯》（2010），以探討米耶維的創造性怪誕風格當中的彈性，將怪誕視為一種具有極端潛力的啓發式工具，並概念化「異樣」作為一種振興歧異的能動性。通過這種內在於他的文學中的能動性，他實行了一場怪物文化的轉變，並直面作家前輩的裹足不前。

關鍵字：柴納·米耶維、新怪異、洛夫克拉夫特、德勒茲與瓜塔里、怪誕、多態畸形學

