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## RESISTING IN NEW CROBUZON: RECOLONIZING SPACES IN A FAILING EMPIRE

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**ABSTRACT:** The aim of this article is to analyze China Miéville's *Perdido Street Station* in a postcolonial approach. The article will focus on the city of New Crobuzon as the heart of an empire, analyzing how a decadent image of the city is conveyed through impressions given by various characters. The first section will be dedicated to a geographic analysis of New Crobuzon, in order to understand how the city's layout is significant in accentuating the difference between the colonizer and the colonized. The second section will consist of an analysis of the different species inhabiting the city. This will contribute to a deeper insight on the relation between Self and Other, and how it reveals traces of colonial ambivalence. This section will analyze the human species, which constitutes most of the population of New Crobuzon, as the Self, which goes against various Others, represented by the other species. This article aims at finding how space has a fundamental role in shaping certain places of resistance for the Other.

**Keywords:** China Miéville, New Crobuzon, postcolonialism, resistance, ambivalence, geography.

**RESUMO:** Este artigo pretende analisar o romance de China Miéville *Perdido Street Station* numa perspectiva pós-colonial. O artigo concentrar-se-á na cidade de New Crobuzon como coração de um império, examinando o modo como uma imagem decadente da cidade é construída por meio das impressões de uma variedade de personagens. A primeira secção será dedicada a uma análise geográfica de New Crobuzon, com vista a compreender o significado do desenho da cidade que acentua a diferença entre colonizador e colonizado. A segunda secção consiste numa análise das

diferentes espécies que habitam a cidade. Esta análise contribuirá para uma compreensão mais profunda da relação entre o Mesmo e o Outro, e do modo como ela revela traços de ambivalência colonial. A secção analisará a espécie humana, que constitui a maior parte da população de New Crobuzon, como o Mesmo, posicionado contra vários Outros, representados pelas restantes espécies. O artigo pretende descrever o modo como o espaço desempenha um papel fundamental na formação de lugares de resistência para o Outro.

**Palavras-chave:** China Miéville, New Crobuzon, pós-colonialismo, resistência, ambivalência, geografia.

## 1. Physical Aspects of a City in Decline

This article will follow the methodology for postcolonialism delineated by Elleke Boehmer in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*. According to Boehmer, postcolonialism “is deeply marked by experiences of cultural exclusion and division under empire” (3). This is predominant in *Perdido Street Station’s* New Crobuzon, a city divided into a series of quarters that serve as grounds for an inter-species conflict.

Even though *Perdido Street Station* will be the focus of this article, examples from the other Bas-Lag novels, *The Scar* and *Iron Council*, will be useful to understand the mindset of certain groups within New Crobuzon.

The world of Bas-Lag contains a varied number of city-states of which New Crobuzon is, in all probability, the most advanced in terms of military and economic power and of technology. Even though there is no physical empire associated with the power of New Crobuzon,<sup>1</sup> the corrupt political regime of the city has very clear imperialistic ambitions, and the city’s military reputation and its influence can be read as an empire in Bas-Lag. The city itself is more than a thousand years old and it rivals with other powerful city-states in Bas-Lag. However, history tells that what can be called the golden age of New Crobuzon, the Full Years, ended more than two hundred and fifty years before the events of *Perdido Street Station* and *The Scar*, and that the city has become decadent in many aspects ever since. Evidence of the city’s longevity is given in *Perdido Street Station*, where it can be seen that “[o]n either side, Derkhan could see nothing but the squat, rough-edged skyline of houses nearly a thousand years old, their intricate marble façades crumbled long ago” (Miéville, *Perdido* 382).

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<sup>1</sup> Nova Esperium is New Crobuzon’s only colony, founded very recently across one of Bas-Lag’s seas.

The opening pages of *Perdido Street Station* illustrate a city very unlike the paradise many think it to be.<sup>2</sup> The reader sees New Crobuzon for the first time from the eyes of Yagharek, a new arrival to the city. It can be assumed that this graphic description of the city is unbiased:

Fat chimneys retch dirt into the sky even now in the deep night. It is not the current which pulls us but the city itself, its weight sucks us in. Faint shouts, here and there the calls of beasts, the obscene clash and pounding from the factories as huge machines rut. Railways trace urban anatomy like protruding veins. Red brick and dark walls, squat churches like troglodytic things, ragged awnings flickering, cobbled mazes in the old town, culs-de-sac, sewers riddling the earth like secular sepulchres, a new landscape of wasteground, crushed stone, libraries fat with forgotten volumes, old hospitals, towerblocks, ships and metal claws that lift cargoes from the water. (*idem* 1-2)

He goes on to call it a “sprawling monster” (*idem* 2). The city at its periphery, far from the center of political corruption, is already decadent: “The rotting buildings lean against each other, exhausted. The river smears slime on its brick banks, city walls risen from the depths to hold the water at bay. There is a vile stink here”. And he calls it a “slab of carrion thronging with maggots” (*ibidem*). However unbiased this opinion might seem, Yagharek is both horrified and fascinated with this scenario, which is entirely new to him.

The reaction towards New Crobuzon is justified by Yagharek’s origins. He comes from the desert of the Cymek, where the garuda<sup>3</sup> abound. The circumstances in which he enters the city and the method he uses both contribute to this appalling scenario. Yagharek used to be able to fly, and he would have entered the city from above, rather than by boat. But his inability to do so gives the reader a different sense of the city, and the very sudden way in which it appears to the narrator is overwhelming.

In *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (1995), Elleke Boehmer defines imperialism as “the authority assumed by a state over another territory – authority expressed in pageantry and symbolism, as well as in military and economic power” (2). The city of New Crobuzon, lacking other territories, becomes the setting for colonialism, here defined as “the consolidation of imperial power, [...] manifested in the settlement of territory, the exploitation or development of resources, and the attempt to govern the indigenous inhabitants of occupied lands, often by force” (*ibidem*).

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<sup>2</sup> Bellis Coldwine, in *The Scar*, refers to New Crobuzon as “the greatest city in Bas-Lag” (130).

<sup>3</sup> The garuda are a sentient species in Bas-Lag that have bodies like humans, but with bird-like heads, wings and clawed feet.

It is the geography and diversity of New Crobuzon that contribute to the phenomenon of colonization and the subjugation of several Others. The population of the city is subject to the tyrannical rule of its government and the oppression of the militia. While the colonial discourse of the European powers was based on subtle messages, the discourse of New Crobuzon is direct and forceful. However, the objective of both discourses is the same, to rule over the colonized. And Boehmer refers to this reality by stating the following:

But if the ambition of the colonizer was to know, to appropriate, and to rule, the reality for colonized, enslaved, and indentured peoples, even where they were consulted about the colonial process, was very different – very far removed from the colonizers’ lawcourts, city halls, and libraries. As historians and sociologists tell us, for many peoples imperialism represented, if not the destruction of their communities and populations, then a harsh existence of dispossession and privation. (*idem* 20)

This summarizes the form of government found in New Crobuzon. It is also interesting to analyze the geography of the city to understand how this form of colonization is conveyed. At the very center of the city, in The Crow, are the Spike, the headquarters of the militia, Perdido Street Station, the heart of the city’s transportation, and the embassy building. Other centers of importance include Strack Island, where Parliament is located, and the New Crobuzon University. In fact, these centers form a triangular perimeter in the city, establishing a border that distinguishes the heart of the empire from its periphery.

The colonized parts of New Crobuzon, farther from the center, are often inhabited by the lowest branches of society, the subjugated, like the khepri<sup>4</sup> from Creekside. Again, Boehmer’s idea that the colonized live under harsh conditions, oppressed and deprived of rights, is confirmed in *Perdido Street Station* with the khepri:

In some lands the refugees were butchered in terrible pogroms. In others, like New Crobuzon, they were welcomed with unease, but not with official violence. They had settled, become workers and tax-payers and criminals, and found themselves, by an organic pressure just too gentle to be obvious, living in ghettos; preyed on, sometimes, by bigots and thugs. (Miéville, *Perdido* 258)<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Khepri are one of the species living in New Crobuzon. Females have the body of human women except for the head, which resembles scarab beetles. Male khepri are non-sentient and do not have human-like bodies.

<sup>5</sup> The khepri were refugees from a catastrophe they called the Ravening and migrated to various places in Bas-Lag, including New Crobuzon.

On the one hand, this shows the colonizer, represented by the government of New Crobuzon, exercising their power over the colonized. It should be noted that the government is constituted exclusively of humans. The khepri are accepted as members of the empire, but do not share the same rights as other citizens, having to resort to criminal life to survive. Before coming to New Crobuzon, khepri had been trading with the city for hundreds of years, and can, therefore, be seen as part of the empire. New Crobuzon tried to assimilate the khepri just as many European empires tried to assimilate or alienate the Other (cf. Boehmer 140).

The khepri from Creekside renounced the religion from Bered Kai Nev, their place of origin, but it was taken up again generations later. However, other religions were pursued, and other gods worshipped. Creekside became a hybrid center, where the culture of Bered Kai Nev coexisted with the culture of New Crobuzon.

When Lin, one of the protagonists, transitions from Creekside to Kinken, another khepri dwelling, it is demonstrated how unassimilated Creekside was within New Crobuzon. In Kinken, Lin experienced the sexual liberation associated with the human-like part of her body, distinct from the exclusively reproductive sexual activity from her scarab part, upheld in Creekside (cf. Miéville, *Perdido* 262). Even so, Lin left Kinken and immersed herself in the culture of New Crobuzon, where she experienced near-complete freedom, as she explains:

On and on about community and the great khepri hive while the “sisters” over in Creekside scabble about for potatoes. You have nothing, surrounded by people that mock you as bugs, buy your art cheap and sell you food dear, but because there are others with even less you style yourselves the protectors of the khepri way. I’m out. I dress how I like. My art is mine. (*idem* 26-27)

However free Lin might think she is, the city of New Crobuzon is not very accepting of khepri. And because Lin is khepri, she can never be fully considered part of the empire. Boehmer mentions the failed attempts of the colonized to mimic the colonizer:

Allegedly civilized through the beneficence of colonial rule or by virtue of cultural inheritance, they were not deemed civilized at source. Even in their efforts to be the same they were marked as different. They mimicked Europeans and were ridiculed for their mimicry. (111)

Lin is ridiculed for mimicking the human citizens of New Crobuzon by her former companions from Kinken and Creekside, who feel affronted by Lin’s choices. But, in the eyes of the colonizer, Lin can never be civilized because

she is khepri and, therefore, incapable of human speech. The relation of the khepri with the rest of New Crobuzon will be developed in the following section.

Kinken is more civilized and advanced than Creekside, which is only a slum. And a close inspection of the city's geography shows that Kinken is closer to the heart of the empire, the triangular center mentioned above, than Creekside, which is near the northwestern edge of the city. Moreover, Creekside is described as a "poorer khepri ghetto [...], a grubby stain in the northwest of the city" (Miéville, *Perdido* 258). Kinken is described by Lin as a similarly decadent place, although it is prosperous. However, Lin's relationship with the khepri community of Kinken is unpleasant, and she admits that "her feelings for Kinken were more ambivalent than she had so far allowed" (*idem* 257).

A thorough analysis of the map of New Crobuzon and of the districts in the city reveals a clear geographic border between the slums and the richer parts. The poorest parts of the city are Badside, Dog Fenn and Spatters. All three are very far removed from the heart of New Crobuzon. Badside and Dog Fenn are spread along the margins of the Gross Tar, in the eastern borders of the city, and Spatters is located on the southwest border of the city and is considered a suburb.

The decadence and danger found in Spatters is so accentuated that it's even beyond the reach of the militia and the government. The members of the worst slums of New Crobuzon regard Spatters as not a "part of the city, nothing but a strange little town that had grafted itself onto New Crobuzon without a by-your-leave. There was no money to entice industry, legal or illicit. The crimes in Spatters were nothing but small-scale acts of desperation and survival" (*idem* 175-176). The slums and most of the poorest parts of New Crobuzon are spread along the rivers Tar and Gross Tar, which split the city into its northern and southern parts. These include, for example, Flyside, Murkside, Griss Fell, Griss Twist, Creekside, Chimer and Saint Jabber's Mound. The richest parts of the city are almost all located along the margins of the Canker and in the northeast section of the city. Among these districts are Flag Hill, Ludmead, Dryside, The Crow and Nigh Sump.

The names of some of the quarters of New Crobuzon are indicators of prosperity or poverty. Districts like Badside, Murkside, Bonetown or Skulkford clearly symbolize corrupt places, and this is evidenced throughout the novel. According to Raphael Zähringer, the names "seem to contribute to the map's implicit narrativity" and they designate the characteristics of such places (70). Bonetown, for instance, is the Thieves' Quarter, the headquarters of one New Crobuzon's crime lord, Mr Motley. It is also interesting to see that Bonetown is located very near Strack Island and the Parliament, for Mr Motley is often in league with the corrupt government of the city.



The colonial discourse of New Crobuzon is flawed. On the outside, New Crobuzon maintains a very good reputation as an imperial power. And it is New Crobuzon's intention to spread the belief throughout the city that it is one of the major powers of Bas-Lag. However, from what could be determined so far, the heart of the empire is completely corrupt, undermining that discourse itself.

As for its physical aspects, and from the interludes given from Yagharek's perspective, the city is decadent and clearly far from its imperial height, the Full Years. The geographic distribution of wealth also demonstrates a social and economic imbalance in the city. Most districts are slums, with the majority located south of the Tar and Gross Tar and west of the Canker. Very few districts are prosperous and wealthy, and these are mostly located north of the Gross Tar and east of the Canker. This distribution seems to give the center of the city, the area enclosed by the Crow, Strack Island and Ludmead, the role of frontier between wealthy and poor, human and non-human, Self and Other, and colonizer and colonized. The political center of New Crobuzon is not geographically out of bounds, but there is a border that asserts itself through politics, economy or social status. Therefore, there is a different reality for the colonized, which is "very different - very far removed from the colonizers' lawcourts, city halls, and libraries" (Boehmer 20).

It should also be noted that some of the slums are home to the various non-human species living in New Crobuzon. The next section of this article aims at understanding the relationship between the colonizer, represented by the human government and its militia, and the colonized, the non-human sentient species that inhabit New Crobuzon.

## **2. The Species of New Crobuzon: Voices of Resistance**

The multitude of species living in New Crobuzon and their interaction with the government and the militia illustrate a relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The layout of the city is representative of Boehmer's claim that postcolonial writing "is deeply marked by experiences of cultural exclusion and division under empire" (3). In *Perdido Street Station*, this division is not only cultural, but economic and geographical. However, the novel gives voice to the colonized, which undermine the empire of New Crobuzon. The objective in this section is to demonstrate how the various species of New Crobuzon resist the colonial power. It will also be important to explain how space plays a fundamental part in that resistance, and how the inhabitants of the city have made some spaces their own. This analysis will take into consideration some of the aspects of the ambivalence of colonial discourse developed by Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*.

Boehmer states that

we should remain aware that the elusive presence of the Other does make itself felt in imperial writings. What has been called “the space of the adversarial” – the power of extreme difference to disturb, distort or overwhelm dominant representations – is expressed even within the most conventional of colonialist texts. (20)

*Perdido Street Station* reads perfectly as imperial writing. There are six different species living in New Crobuzon. They are: cactacae, khepri, humans, vodyanoi, garuda and the wyrmen.<sup>6</sup> Humans constitute the majority of the population of New Crobuzon. Each of these species will be analyzed individually in their relation to the humans.

According to Bhabha, “the construction of the colonial subject in discourse, and the exercise of colonial power through discourse, demands an articulation of forms of difference – racial and sexual” (67). This is evident in New Crobuzon in the way the city’s population is structured in a very strict hierarchy, where the human population stands at the top.

The wyrmen are small flying beings which, according to humans, “were more intelligent than dogs or apes, but decidedly less than humans” (Miéville, *Perdido* 66). There is very little information to be gleaned from the wyrmen, who are often grouped with other birds, and they don’t seem to be under the law of New Crobuzon. However, they may run errands for people from time to time. Wyrmen do not offer much in the way of resistance, on the one hand, because they seem to be neglected by the other species, and on the other hand, because they live free from the shackles of the city’s government. By this description, there is a clear subjugation of the wyrmen by the humans.

The khepri, however, are much different than any of the other species. One of the protagonists in *Perdido Street Station*, Lin, is a khepri. Here, Miéville gives voice to one of the colonized, and Lin shares her “own marginalized views of the world” (Boehmer 163). Her voice is even more complete because she experienced life in Creekside, Kinken and, later, throughout New Crobuzon. By leaving Creekside and Kinken, Lin is showing resistance to the conformity of khepri life in the slums, where preservation of culture and religion are the ruling philosophies.

Lin is, nonetheless, an ambivalent character. First and foremost, she is seen as an Other among the humans. The episode in which she takes a cab for a tour of the city puts that in evidence: “She knew that some of the drivers (usually the Remade) were liberal or desperate enough to take khepri custom” (Miéville, *Perdido* 19). By living among humans, she mimics them and appropriates their customs. This mimicry is, as Bhabha explains:

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<sup>6</sup> Male khepri will not be considered for this analysis due to their non-sentient nature.

a desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. (86)

One of Lin's "slippages" is the fact that khepri are incapable of producing human speech. Other than that, Lin lives as a human, even going so far as having a relationship with one, Isaac. Lin forms a new identity, which is neither khepri from Kinken or Creekside nor human from New Crobuzon, but Lin, one Self that lives marginalized by two different communities but is, nonetheless, able to move among the two, a hybrid.

Her clothes produce another difference: "Her skirt was long and bright in the fashion of Salacus Fields: human fashion, not the traditional ballooning pantaloons of these ghetto-dwellers" (Miéville, *Perdido* 26). She is considered to be an outsider in Kinken, but she is still cordially received. It is in Salacus Fields that Lin is integrated, a place where marginalized identities are welcome.

Isaac's relationship with Lin bears the marks of the fascination and the revulsion towards the Other that is so frequent in the writings of empire. A relationship between a human and a khepri is seen in New Crobuzon as a serious transgression. Isaac's impression after their first sexual encounter is representative of that revulsion:

They could not kiss as a first step: Lin's mouthparts would tear Isaac's jaw from his face. For just a moment after coming, Isaac had been overcome with revulsion, and had almost vomited at the sight of those bristling headlegs and waving antennae. Lin had been nervous of his body, and had stiffened suddenly and unpredictably. When he had woken he had felt fearful and horrified, but at the fact of having transgressed rather than at the transgression itself. (*idem* 533)

Guilt and revulsion are replaced by love and fascination. In Salacus Fields, their relationship is not a secret, but in Brock Marsh, Isaac's workplace, it is clandestine. Bhabha states that "mimicry is at once resemblance and menace" (86), which may justify the illegitimacy of Isaac's relationship with Lin in his workspace. Her hybrid existence is both a mockery and a threat.

Lin represents a mark of racial and sexual differentiation that Bhabha mentions in *The Location of Culture*. Being female and khepri, she is more susceptible to the discourse of colonial power. She is placed very low on the New Crobuzon cultural and racial hierarchy for being an exile within her own community and for being in a relationship with a human.

However, Lin's resistance to the imperial conventions of New Crobuzon symbolizes the voices of the khepri throughout the city, even if she is an outcast among her species. Nevertheless, she falls victim to the slake-moths,

an invading species that feed on dreams and who partially consume Lin's soul. These slake-moths are the result of the government's dealings with Mr Motley and represent, therefore, the corruption of the empire of New Crobuzon. Lin's fall is a symbol of the empire's failure to protect its members. Even if Lin had been a colonial Other, she had still been a member of the empire and assimilated by New Crobuzon. Still, the fact that she is not completely incapacitated represents a kind of resistance, unlike the human Lublamai, Isaac's friend and coworker who was left brain-dead by the slake-moths.

The vodyanoi are water beings who work in the New Crobuzon docks and, through their watercraft, can manipulate the shape of the water and its malleability. The vodyanoi work for the city, but the cuts in their wages motivate a strike. Throughout *Perdido Street Station*, the threat of the strike is present, generating a conflict between vodyanoi and humans: "From the river and the great docks, striking vodyanoi stevedores yelled insults at the human crews on the jetties" (Miéville, *Perdido* 311).

When the strike became a reality, humans assembled against the vodyanoi, insulting them. However, they also insulted other humans who supported the vodyanoi and risked the reduction of wages for the human dockworkers (cf. *idem* 361). The fact that the vodyanoi have both allies and enemies among the humans demonstrates acceptance and hatred, and it shows traces of hybridity. This strike represents another form of resistance from the nonhuman species of New Crobuzon, who feel wronged by the humans. But the strike is rapidly dealt with by the militia, who had no problems in resorting to violence to see that the flow of the river and the work in the docks was normalized.

According to Bhabha:

Postcoloniality, for its part, is a salutary reminder of the persistent "neo-colonial" relations within the "new" world order and the multinational division of labour. Such a perspective enables the authentication of histories of exploitation and the evolution of strategies of resistance. (6)

*Perdido Street Station* describes how the dockworkers are dominated by the government and forced to work with minimal wages. The vodyanoi strike is a form of resistance against their subjugators. It is with the vodyanoi that the reader observes how the colonized lives under the harsh conditions imposed by the colonizer. Not only were their wages reduced, but they were also violently silenced. Many of the vodyanoi lived in Lichford and Gross Coil, two very poor slums in the city, where "pitch-coated buildings of palpably human design had simply been built in the river itself, decades ago, to crumble in unsanitary fashion into the water" (Miéville, *Perdido* 741).

The vodyanoi and khepri are, most likely, the two species with the least authority and acceptance in New Crobuzon. The cactacae, on the other hand, are very independent. Because of their physique, they have jobs as laborers

or security guards. The cactacae have been most successful in resisting the colonizer in the sense that they have managed to carve an independent empire within New Crobuzon, the Glasshouse. According to Isaac, the cactacae

got special dispensation in law when the Glasshouse was put up – gods only know what deals they had to cut to get that. Technically it's an independent country. No entry for anyone without permission, including the militia. They've got their own laws in there, their own everything. (*idem* 586)

Isaac goes on to share his own opinion on the situation, saying that the militia and the government would enter the Glasshouse with no difficulty. Again, the government seems to be in league with the cactacae, some of whom are deep in the crime life of New Crobuzon. For example, Mr Motley's bodyguards are cactacae.

Still, the fact that there is an area of the city closed to the government and the militia shows, on the one hand, the cactacae's ability to resist the empire, and, on the other, the empire's weakness in being able to consolidate their territory inside New Crobuzon itself. Unlike some who take to the ways of humans, like Lin, the cactacae do not show the same traces of ambivalence. However, the cactacae from the Glasshouse are more detached from New Crobuzon life than those living outside.<sup>7</sup>

The cactus people are as divided as the khepri population. Those who live in districts like Abrogate Green or in the slums of Riverskin regard the ones from the Glasshouse with contempt, but they still mingle, except for a very small minority. The Glasshouse forms a barrier in New Crobuzon and is, therefore, an island inside the empire, a pocket of resistance against the corruption of the government.

Isaac, Derkhan and Yagharek infiltrate the Glasshouse to destroy the slake-moths and their eggs. It is in this episode that the cactacae show their strength in resisting the entrance of humans in their sanctuary. Inside the Glasshouse, there is no hybridity, but something resembling the whiteness of the European, which rules over the colonial Other. The cactus people of the Glasshouse can be seen as colonizers themselves. Inside the building, their colonial discourse towards the Others (humans and garuda) is one of violence. Isaac's group is received with gunfire and they barely manage to escape.

The Glasshouse is a type of independent nation within the city. According to Boehmer, "[e]very new instance of independence [...] – and some might say each new stage in the process of winning independence – required that the nation be reconstructed in the collective imagination; or that identity be

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<sup>7</sup> Only one third of the cactacae population lives in the Glasshouse.

symbolized anew" (185). The cactacae from the Glasshouse represent a single identity that is apart from any other in New Crobuzon.

Aside from those in the Glasshouse, the cactacae lead lives similar to the khepri and the vodyanoi, living in slums and having to work for humans. This shows that the cactacae resistance is not total and that many of them are still subjugated by the government.

Isaac, Derkhan and Yagharek are outlaws themselves, chased by the government for their involvement in the slake-moths' invasion. Unaware and indirectly, Isaac liberated the slake-moths in New Crobuzon, undermining the empire. The government's inability to deal with the situation demonstrates the empire's decadence and the weakness of its discourse. They are not able to protect their subjects from the slake-moths.

The last species living in New Crobuzon, the garuda, are also as varied as the khepri and the cactacae, living in different parts of the city and sharing different lifestyles. A large community of garuda lives in Spatters, one of the poorest districts of the city. The humans of Dog Fenn and Badside, two slums, look on Spatters as being beneath them. In fact, Spatters is at the very edge of New Crobuzon, almost apart from it, and it is as lawless as any other slum. A cab driver refuses to drop Isaac in Spatters, stating that "down Spatters way, they'll have the wheels off [his] cab while [he's] still driving" (Miéville, *Perdido* 173).

Lin and Isaac's reception in Spatters is unfriendly. From the remarks made by the garuda, it is possible to glean that humans see them as Others, for they are afraid Isaac has come up with a scheme to attract garuda and kill them or that he is simply a member of the militia (Isaac in fact intended to hire a garuda to study the nature of flying). This dialogue also shows that the garuda are marginalized by the empire and that they prefer to live like that. They live on top of towers, away from humans, who live below in poorer conditions. This is a subversion of the role of the colonized, who lives in a position above the colonizer. For the garuda, Spatters is, like the Glasshouse, a place of resistance. Their position in the layout of Spatters demonstrates superiority. The garuda are voicing their resistance towards the colonizer.

Furthermore, the garuda are usually seen by humans as savages. Isaac reprimands himself for thinking of Yagharek as a savage (cf. *idem* 56). The garuda of the Cymek have a very extensive library, but they lead tribal lives under the harsh conditions of the desert.

When Yagharek reaches New Crobuzon, he not only becomes colonized for being a garuda, but doubly colonized for having no wings, which were cut off as decreed by the law of the garuda. He uses false wooden wings, which represents the ambivalence of mimicry. There is an appropriation of the garuda lifestyle that he can no longer have. That "almost the same, but not quite" referred by Bhabha becomes true for Yagharek (Bhabha 86). His life becomes a mockery of his former self.

In addition to these small societies that inhabit New Crobuzon, there are other entities that dwell in the city and which can be analyzed in a postcolonial perspective. One example is the Weaver. Very little is known about it, except that it can inhabit multiple realities and that it is extremely unpredictable and dangerous. The government of New Crobuzon has to resort to the Weaver to deal with the slake-moth problem. Because it is so strange and its powers unknown, the government knows it cannot manipulate it: "The Weaver was utterly alien. There could be no bargaining and no games. It had been tried" (Miéville, *Perdido* 402). The members of the government show some fascination towards the Weaver, with its huge spider-like body, but they fear it utterly and can't find any way to subdue it without tremendous consequences. They can't control it in any way, only convince it to help them, and even its help is uncertain. The Weaver's independence reveals both its resistance to the tyrannical government of New Crobuzon and the inability of the administration to control all groups within the city, as is the case of the cactacae from the Glasshouse, for example.

In the *Iron Council*, the Weaver is worshipped: "Weaver. The spiders that are not gods but are nearly, that are something so other, so much farther than men or xenian, than dæmon, than archon, that they are unthinkable, their power, their motives, their meanings as opaque as iron" (Miéville, *Iron* 251-252). It is unknown whether it's the same Weaver from *Perdido Street Station*, but even so, no one understands its powers and intentions. It is also possible that its ability to move between dimensions, not inhabiting a specific space, is what makes it immune to New Crobuzon's colonial aspirations.

The Weaver is the subject of fascination in *Iron Council*, but of revulsion in *Perdido Street Station*. It symbolizes what Bhabha describes as "the ambivalence of your desire for the Other" (50). This ambivalence is not exclusively sexual; any perception of the Other may generate this contradictory feeling. The Weaver, being a creature of unknown powers, causes feelings of fear and hate, but also of mysticism and worship.

New Crobuzon shows how space, especially closed spaces (Creekside, Spatters and the Glasshouse), represent preservation of identity, in contrast to the open spaces (Salacus Fields) where different species become cultural hybrids, whether by mingling with humans or with other species. Miéville's *Perdido Street Station* also demonstrates how the frontier between colonizer (the government, humans) and colonized (khepri, garuda, cactacae, vodyanoi) is much accentuated, with the militia, acting on the mayor's orders, spreading terror among the Others, but how the Others resist and voice their own perspectives, undermining the empire in the process. The novel gives insight into the failure of the empire to contain the fight for independence of the multiple species inhabiting the city of New Crobuzon.

The analysis of *Perdido Street Station* has demonstrated that New Crobuzon, as an empire, is not at the height of its colonial power. The city itself is decadent

and has lost control over many of the colonized. These colonized, represented by the different species in the city, subvert the empire's message by resisting it and making their own voice heard.

The situation in New Crobuzon expresses precisely what Bhabha describes as the heterogeneous space:

We are confronted with the nation split within itself, articulating the heterogeneity of its population. The barred Nation It/Self, alienated from its eternal self-generation, becomes a liminal signifying space that is internally marked by the discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense locations of cultural difference. (148)

The variety of different cultures within such a small space as New Crobuzon imposes an inevitable hybridization of certain locations and characters. Furthermore, it makes it a space of resistance against a power that is essentially corrupt and discriminatory.

The weakness of the empire can be ascribed to the social, economic and political divergences within the city. The corruption of the government and its willingness to work with criminals send a message of violence and danger, which Isaac's group, as outlaws, experienced when they were being searched by the militia and Motley's associates.

The novel also shows the harsh conditions in which many of the citizens live. But the fact that it focuses more on the poorest areas of the city than on the richer districts serves to express the decadence of the empire and to show where voices of resistance can be found. Lin's and Derkhan's excursions in the city, for example, corroborate the idea that the colonized are resisting the empire, aware that they are risking the violence of the militia.

*Perdido Street Station* proposes a postcolonial environment that is accentuated by the geography of New Crobuzon. The city is the stage for the conflict between colonized and colonizer, and, throughout the novel, there is evidence of a recolonization of certain spaces, like the Glasshouse or Spatters. This demonstrates that physical space is fundamental in shaping the identity of the colonized, whose role is gradually reversing as their voice is heard and as they undermine the empire further, by taking control of places they know better than the colonizers themselves.

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