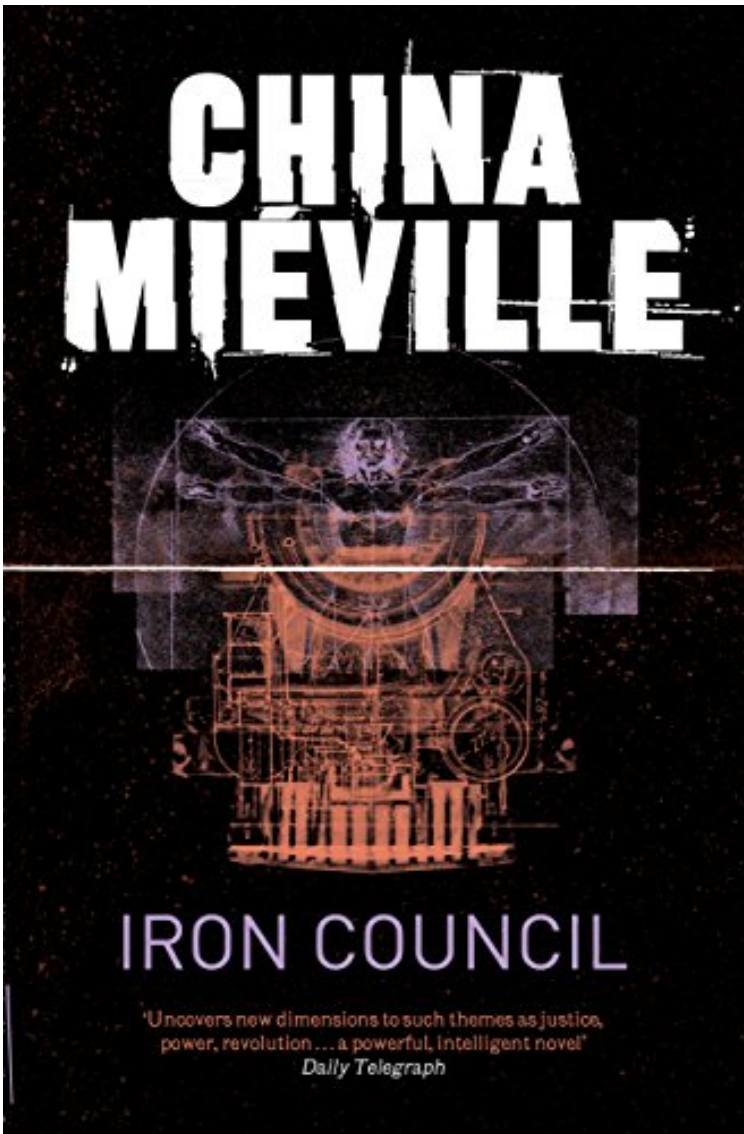


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Iron Council



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteur Rebellion and war race to take control of New Crobuzon in the award-winning Iron Council by China Miville. It is a time of revolts and revolutions, conflict and intrigue. New Crobuzon is being ripped apart from without and within. War with the shadowy city-state of Tesh and rioting on the streets at home are pushing the teeming metropolis to the brink. In the midst of this turmoil, a mysterious masked figure spurs strange rebellion, while treachery and violence incubate in unexpected places. In desperation, a small group of renegades escapes from the city and crosses strange and alien continents in the search for a lost hope, an undying legend. In the blood and violence of New Crobuzon's most dangerous hour, there are whispers. It is the time of the Iron Council..com China Miville's novel Iron Council is the tumultuous story of the "Perpetual Train." Born from monopolists' greed and dispatched to tame the western

lands beyond New Crobuzon, the train is itself the beginnings of an Iron Council formed in the fire of frontier revolt against the railroad's masters. From the wilderness, the legend of Iron Council becomes the spark uniting the oppressed and brings barricades to the streets of faraway New Crobuzon. The sprawling tale is told through the past-and-present eyes of three characters. The first is Cutter, a heartsick subversive who follows his lover, the messianic Judah Low, on a quest to return to the Iron Council hidden in the western wilds. The second is Judah himself, an erstwhile railroad scout who has become the iconic golem-wielding hero of Iron Council's uprising at the end of the tracks. And the third is Ori, a young revolutionary on the streets of New Crobuzon, whose anger leads him into a militant wing of the underground, plotting anarchy and mayhem. Miville (*The Scar, Perdido Street Station*) weaves his epic out of familiar and heavily political themes--imperialism, fascism, conquest, and Marxism--all seen through a darkly cast funhouse mirror wherein even language is distorted and made beautifully grotesque. Improbably evoking Jack London and Victor Hugo, *Iron Council* is a twisted frontier fable cleverly combined with a powerful parable of Marxist revolution that continues Miville's macabre remaking of the fantasy genre. --Jeremy Pugh

Chapter One
A man runs. Pushes through thin bark-and-leaf walls, through the purposeless rooms of Rudewood. The trees crowd him. This far in the forest there are aboriginal noises. The canopy rocks. The man is heavy-burdened, and sweated by the unseen sun. He is trying to follow a trail. Just before dark he found his place. Dim hotchi paths led him to a basin ringed by roots and stone-packed soil. Trees gave out. The earth was tramped down and stained with scorching and blood. The man spread out his pack and blanket, a few books and clothes. He laid down something well-wrapped and heavy among loam and centipedes. Rudewood was cold. The man built a fire, and with it so close the darkness shut him quite out, but he stared into it as if he might see something emergent. Things came close. There were constant bits of sound like the bronchial call of a nightbird or the breath and shucking of some unseen predator. The man was wary. He had pistol and rifle, and one at least was always in his hand. By flamelight he saw hours pass. Sleep took him and led him away again in little gusts. Each time he woke he breathed as if coming out of water. He was stricken. Sadness and anger went across his face. Ill come find you, he said. He did not notice the moment of dawn, only that time skidded again and he could see the edges of the clearing. He moved like he was made of twigs, as if he had stored up the nights damp cold. Chewing on dry meat, he listened to the forests shuffling and paced the dirt depression. When finally he heard voices he flattened against the bank and looked out between the trunks. Three people approached on the paths of leaf-mould and forest debris.

The man watched them, his rifle steadied. When they trudged into thicker shanks of light, he saw them clearly and let his rifle fall. Here, he shouted. They dropped foolishly and looked for him. He raised his hand above the earth rise. They were a woman and two men, dressed in clothes more ill-suited to Rudewood than his own. They stood before him in the arena and smiled. Cutter. They gripped arms and slapped his back. I heard you for yards. What if you was followed? Who else is coming? They did not know. We got your message, the smaller man said. He spoke fast and looked about him. I went and seen. We were arguing. The others were saying, you know, we should stay. You know what they said. Yeah, Drey. Said Im mad. Not you. They did not look at him. The woman sat, her skirt filling with air. She was breathing fast with anxiety. She bit her nails. Thank you. For coming. They nodded or shook Cutters gratitude off: it sounded strange to him, and he was sure to them too. He tried not to make it sound like his sardonic norm. It means a lot. * * *

They waited in the sunken ground, scratched motifs in the earth or carved figures from dead wood. There was too much to say. So they told you not to come? The woman, Elsie, told him no, not so much, not in those words, but the Caucus had been dismissive of Cutters call. She looked up at him and down quickly as she spoke. He nodded, and did not criticise. Are you sure about this? he said, and would not accept their desultory nods. Godsdammit are you sure? Turn your back on the Caucus? You ready to do that? For him? Its a long way weve got to go. We already come miles in Rudewood, said Pomeroy. Theres hundreds more.

Hundreds. Itll be bastard hard. A long time. I cant swear well come back. I cant swear well come back. Pomeroy said, Only tell me again your message was true. Tell me again hes gone, and where hes gone and what for. Tell me thats true. The big man glowered and waited, and at Cutters brief nod and closed eyes, he said, Well then. Others arrived then. First another woman, Ihona; and then as they welcomed her they heard stick-litter being destroyed in heavy leaps, and a vodyanoi came through the brush. He squatted in the froggish way of his race and raised webbed hands. When he jumped from the bank, his bodyhead and trunk all one fat sacripped with impact. Fejhechrillen was besmirched and tired, his motion ill-suited to woodland. They were anxious, not knowing how long they should wait, if any others would come. Cutter kept asking how they had heard his message. He made them unhappy. They did not want to consider their

decision to join him: they knew there were many who would think it a betrayal. Hell be grateful, Cutter said. Hes a funny bugger and might be hell not show it, but thisll mean a lot, to me and to him. After silence Elsie said: You dont know that. He didnt ask us, Cutter. He just got some message, you said. He might be angry that weve come. Cutter could not tell her she was wrong. Instead he said: I dont see you leaving, though.

Were here for us, maybe, as well as for him. He began to tell them what might be ahead, emphasising dangers. It seemed as if he wanted to dissuade them though they knew he did not. Drey argued with him in a rapid and nervy voice. He assured Cutter they understood. Cutter saw him persuading himself, and was silent. Drey said repeatedly that his mind was made up. We best move, said Elsie, when noon went. We cant wait forever. Anyone else is coming, theyve obviously got lost. Theyll have to go back to the Caucus, do whats needed in the city. Someone gave a little cry and the company turned. At the hollows edge a hotchi rider was watching them, astride his gallus. The big war-cockerel plumped its breastfeathers and raised one spurred claw-foot in curious pose. The hotchi, squat and tough hedgehog man, stroked his mounts red comb. Militia coming. His accent was strong and snarling. Two men militia coming, a minute, two. He sat forward in the ornate saddle and turned his bird around. With very little sound, with no metal to jangle on wood-and-leather straps and stirrups, it picked away high-clawed and belligerent, and was hidden by the forest. Was that? What? Did you fucking? But Cutter and his companions were shushed by the sound of approach. They looked in unsaid panic, too late to hide. Two men came stepping over fungused stumps into view. They were masked and uniformed in the militias dark grey. Each had a mirrored shield and ungainly pepperpot revolver slack at his side. As they came into the clearing they faltered and were still, taking in the men and women waiting for them. There was a dragged-out second when no one moved, when befuddled and silent conference was held are you, are they, what, should we, should we? till someone shot. Then there were a spate of sounds, screams and the percussion of shots. People fell. Cutter could not follow who was where and was gut-terrified that he had been hit and not yet felt it. When the guns heinous syncopation stopped, he unclenched his jaw. Someone was calling Oh gods oh fucking gods. It was a militiaman, sitting bleeding from a belly-wound beside his dead friend and trying to hold his heavy pistol up. Cutter heard the curt torn-cloth sound of archery and the militia man lay back with an arrow in him and stopped his noise. Again a beat of silence then Jabber Are you, is everyone? Drey? Pomeroy? First Cutter thought none of his own were hit.

Then he saw how Drey was white and held his shoulder, and that blood dyed his palsyng hands. Sweet Jabber, man. Cutter made Drey sit (Is it all right? the little man kept saying.) Bullet had taken muscle. Cutter tore strips from Dreys shirt, and wound those cleanest around the hole. The pain made Drey fight, and Pomeroy and Fejh had to hold him. They gave him a thumb-thick branch to bite while they bandaged him. They mustve fucking followed you, you halfwit bastards. Cutter was raging while he worked. I told you to be fucking careful. We were, Pomeroy shouted, jabbing his finger at Cutter. Didnt follow them. The hotchi reappeared, its rooster picking. Them patrol the pits. You been here long time, a day nearly. It dismounted and walked the rim of the arena. You been too long. It showed the teeth in its snout in some opaque expression. Lower than Cutters chest but rotundly muscular, it strutted like a bigger man. By the militia it stopped and sniffed. It sat up the one killed by its arrow and began to push the missile through the body. When them dont come back, them send more, it said. Them come after you. Maybe now. It steered the arrow past bones through the dead chest. It gripped the shaft when it came out the corpses back, and pulled the fletch through with a wet sound. The hotchi tucked it bloody into his belt, picked the revolving pistol from the militiamans stiffening fingers and fired it against the hole. Birds rose up again at the shot. The hotchi snarled with the unfamiliar recoil and shook its hand. The arrows fingerthick burrow had become a cavity. Pomeroy said: Godspit . . . who in hell are you? Hotchi man. Cock-fighting man. Alectryomach. Help you. Your tribe . . . said Cutter. Theyre with us? On our side? Some of the hotchi are with the Caucus, he said to the others. Thats why this places all right. Or was supposed to be. This lads clan got no time for the militia. Give us passage. But . . . cant risk a real fight with the city, so theyve to make it look like it was us killed the officers, not their arrows. He understood as he said it. Pomeroy and the hotchi rifled the killed men together. Pomeroy threw one of the pepperpot revolvers to Elsie, one to Cutter. It was modernistic and expensive and Cutter had never held one before. It was heavy, with its six barrels arranged in a fat rotating cylinder. They aint reliable, said Pomeroy, harvesting bullets. Fast, though. Jabber . . . we better fucking go.

Dreys voice went up and down with pain. Fucking guns going off going to call them for miles . . . Not so many nearby, said the hotchi. Maybe none to hear. But you should gone, yes. What you for? Why leave city? You looking for him come by on the clay man? Cutter looked to the others and they watched him carefully,

letting him speak.He said: You seen him? He stepped toward the busy hotchi. You seen him?