



Polynia

China Miéville

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When the narrator was a boy, cold titanic masses appeared in the skies above London: Icebergs. As explorers both official and amateur try to climb the snowy peaks, packs of children follow in their frigid shadows.

Polynia Details

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From Reader Review Polynia for online ebook

Lyn says

"Sometimes the gusts of cold below the ice were particularly bad, became brutal mini-winters, freezing the air into little storms. It had been a while since London had experienced proper cold, even in December and January. The local fashion for berg-coats started then, a vogue for the lightweight, all-year warm clothes most of us still carry, which you can slip on and off if ice crosses your path above."

Icebergs.

Floating a mile over London.

China Mieville's 2014 Tor.com edition of his short story "Polynia" is about fantasy walking hand in hand, side by side, neighborly close with the real world. It is a Coneheads sensibility, there is a fantastic grotesque immediately before you, shaking your hand and making it cold – and with a Buster Keaton straight face, you calmly put on a jacket and go about your business.

This short story is a focused examination of Mieville's genius; he is the literary equivalent of Monty Python's Ministry of Silly Walks, a straight-faced walk through the bizarre. If H.P. Lovecraft had a sense of humor, and he was English, and he was born in 1972, he might be scaling sky high aerial icebergs with his twin China Mieville.

Monica says

This is one of my favorite of the short stories that are posted on Tor.com. Mieville is such an amazing author, and no matter what he is writing about, I want to read it. This is a story about giant icebergs that suddenly appear in the air above London, and an eleven year old boy who becomes fascinated by this strange phenomenon. At its heart, this is a story about childhood, and how even the mundane can become magical to children of a certain age.

Pixelina says

<http://www.tor.com/stories/2014/07/po...>

Short-story about floating ice-bergs in London.

Ree says

One day floating icebergs appear over London. And then nothing happens. By that I mean, that of course

there is much excitement and speculation, exploration and fear, even drama and death - but those are human things, they're triggered by these unusual occurrences, not actively done by them. You know, the icebergs are not masked hovering spaceships with an alien race on board ready to wipe out the entire human race. *They're just icebergs out of their natural habitat*, sailing the sky and bringing winter to the British capitol.

I **love** this kind of stuff. The unusual, the weird, the magical, merging with the ordinary. And China Miéville is so good at it, overflowing with creativity and original thought. You know those books that constantly make you go "Omg, this is so good! It's so friggin cool!"? China Miéville does that to me.

tomwrote says

Read as part of the short story collection. Thought provoking and dreamlike in that way that Mieville does so well. A coming of age story with icebergs floating in the sky, obviously.

Jacob says

Briefly breaking my Summer of Women reading marathon because China Miéville. It's only a short story, though, just published on Tor.com, and not a proper novel like we've been waiting for (seriously, China! We miss you!), but it'll have to do. And it does. Icebergs over London. Creepy and imaginative, just the way China always tells it. Good stuff, this. Only not a novel. Guess we'll have to keep wishing.

Althea Ann says

Browsing the tor.com website to find an Ann Leckie story, I noticed a new and free China Miéville piece! Exciting! And it met my expectations.

Two young boys in a near-future London are there when the city experiences a strange phenomenon. Icebergs, which at this point have pretty much melted away in the polar regions, appear in the sky above the city.

No one knows how or why the glacial ice is suspended. Will it come crashing down? Does it mean something? Fear and curiosity take hold. Military expeditions are sent out, and urban adventurers are challenged.

The story is an understated allegory of how the things we destroy may haunt us.

Arielle Walker says

I always find China Miéville a little hit-or-miss - in the best sense that that statement can be applied to any author. His best writing - or at least, what I find to be his best - is unsurpassable in its genre-bending, mind-altering, stunning uniqueness. His other writing... A little disappointing. Not bad, but the ideas don't feel

fully formed, or possibly a little derivative at times, and the writing can be less-than captivating to read. I found UnLunDun to fit the latter version of his writing, for example. Having not read any of his short stories before, I'd rather hoped for the stunningly un-putdownable writing I usually associate with Miéville (Embassytown, and Railsea still stick viscerally in my dreams). Unfortunately, Polynia was a little bit on the other side. I know, a short story doesn't have the time of a novel to share its ideas but it shouldn't *feel* that way, and somehow it did, for me. I'd love to see a full length story based around these mysterious, floating ice-bergs but in this instance I found it a little too ponderous with not enough payoff.

Eric says

Alright, let me preface this review by stating upfront that I have tried to read two of Mieville's novels -- Kraken and Railsea -- and wasn't able to finish either. I had pretty much given up on him when I came upon this free short story available on Tor's website. I figured at that price, and with such a short time commitment required, I may as well give him a third chance. And you know what? I kind of dug this story.

It has a good central idea -- natural resources that humankind is destroying, such as icebergs and coral reefs, find extraordinary ways to reform. And it is also a personal story of a boy growing up among this phenomena and how it affects his childhood friendships. However, it was light on rising action and felt rather hollow and unfinished at the end. It did accomplish something nothing of Mieville's ever has for me before though -- it made me want to read more of it. So now I am wondering if Tor has released this ahead of a potential full length book in this world? If that is the case, this story definitely has my interest peaked, and I would definitely give it a shot.

Nataliya says

"What's the first thing we learn about icebergs? That we only see the tip. Nine tenths of every one is out-of-sight."

I've only read a handful of China Mieville's short stories, but so far they all have been just like icebergs - **below the little bit on the surface hides the bulk of potentiality.** The stories are just like the teasing introductions, the glimpses into the potential vast world of a novel that has not yet been created but is almost discernible somewhere underneath, in the dizzying depths. They teasingly leave you longing to see that potentiality unfold into a fully fleshed novel, longing for the window into a larger world to become a door and let you through.

"We all knew that what hung above London were icebergs."

Polynia is a story just like that - a window into a potential larger creation, an intro to a not-(hopefully yet)-written book. Without explanation - but with enough of a suggestion of 'ghostberg-ness' - enormous ice masses one day out of nowhere float over London, and just stay there, slowly moving across the sky. A few young children, fascinated by them, are going through the pains of growing up. A band of 'unauthorized explorers' scales one of the floating ice mountains, with a hint of discovery that there may be more beneath the surface, and you just need to find a way to climb up and then up again. The seeds of the story are sown,

the threads of storylines started, and the sudden ending is suitable only for a "Prologue" bit of any novel, and **all together it gives me that amazing mixture of satisfaction and anticipation and enjoyment that is the trademark feature of Mieville's books.**

"On the cover were photographs from an arctic mission which took place years before I was born, icebergs rising from the water. Next to each of those images was one of a mass over London. The frozen slopes and slices and cracks were the same. The crags overhead were close to identical to those that had once floated in the Antarctic.

"Look, they melt!" he said. "First they melt and now look they come back."

On a side note, just for once I felt bravely smug in the face of His Chinaness' smart vocabulary choices - but only because my native Russian is where the word 'polynia' (meaning the hole in the ice) was borrowed from. A small feeling of satisfaction of not frantically searching for a definition - but that felt nice nevertheless. Take that, CM!

This is the story that my imagination will continue working on endlessly, just like it did on The Rope is the World, creating from it dozens of possible storylines, each and every one of them, of course, paling compared to what China Mieville could have done on his weakest day.

And, once again, I will be fervently hoping that one day, while looking for an idea for a novel, he will remember one of his potential-filled stories and choose to expand it into something much larger. And I will be there to greedily read it.

Until the, you can read this short story for free on Tor.com: <http://www.tor.com/stories/2014/07/po...>

Alex Sarll says

An unexpected and sudden appearance, much like its aerial icebergs; allegorical in that not quite graspable Gawain sense, and similarly eerie.

Tanabrus says

Polynia è un racconto pubblicato sul sito di Tor (l'editore di Mieville), disponibile gratuitamente a questa pagina (anche se al momento la pagina pare non raggiungibile, ma questo pomeriggio era visitabile...)

E' un racconto diverso dalle storie che ho letto di questo autore. Non siamo in un'ambientazione prettamente weird come suo solito, bensì a Londra, nel mondo reale.

Solo che, come ci racconta la voce narrante, una quindicina di anni addietro è successo qualcosa di anomalo.

Dal suo punto di vista, l'anomalia è stata che in cielo sono comparsi, aggregandosi poco a poco, degli icebergs. Fluttuanti, enormi masse di ghiaccio che volano in cielo seguendo rotte incomprensibili. Enigmi cui il governo non è riuscito a dare una spiegazione, almeno in pubblico (che è il livello di conoscenza del narratore).

Tramite gli occhi dell'allora bambino-narratore vediamo la loro comparsa, le ipotesi e il clamore che questi oggetti suscitano, le paure.

L'attrazione che suscitano verso i bambini come lui e i suoi amici, che li inseguono da terra e li ammirano e li controllano, e giocano a fare gli esploratori.

Come i gruppi di esploratori inviati dal governo, che non hanno cavato un ragno dal buco.

Come il gruppo di esploratori non autorizzati, che invece sembra abbiano scoperto qualcosa. Un modo per arrampicarsi oltre, salire ancora più in alto. Lasciandosi dietro l'enigmatico messaggio che si vede solo un decimo del verso iceberg, e che trovando il modo di salire di più si può vedere tutto.

Messaggi lasciati in contenitori metallici lanciati dall'iceberg, avvolti in neve. Di cui non si sa la veridicità, ovviamente.

Perché poi il ragazzo-narratore, che all'epoca era anche alle prese con i problemi relativi alla crescita (e a una natura un po' da bullo, diciamocelo pure) abbandona la sua passione per gli iceberg, costruendosi una vita comune.

In un mondo ormai dominato da stranezze naturali: a Londra abbiamo gli iceberg volanti, a Bruxelles barriere coralline che si formano sugli edifici, in Giappone intere fabbriche invase da sottobosco tropicale.

Non ci sono risposte, ci viene solo fornito uno scorcio di questo mondo alterato, dove sembra che la natura che stiamo distruggendo trovi altri modi per riformarsi: iceberg, corallo, flora... le immagini di un iceberg identico a uno di quelli fluttuanti, e che si era sciolto nell'oceano anni addietro. Per riformarsi in cielo?

Una storia piacevole che si limita a mostrarcì un mondo lievemente modificato, senza spiegazioni ma stuzzicando la nostra immaginazione e la nostra curiosità.

A questo punto la speranza è che l'autore prima o poi riprenda e ampli questo racconto, magari portandoci al fianco della squadra speciale iceberg con il povero Ian.

Mia-Sadê Finlay says

Polynia is an interesting short story that is left with implausible ambiguity and leaves a gateway in theoretical alleys as to just what the 'bergs' are, how they came and if they will vanish.

An intriguing read especially with a Post-Humanist lens and (in the case of my assignment) Queer Theory.

Bettie? says

[Bettie's Books (hide spoiler)]

Laura says

You may read online at Tor.com.

Opening lines:

When cold masses first started to congeal above London, they did not show up on radar. By the time they started to, perhaps two hours later, hundreds of thousands of people were already out in the streets and gaping skyward. They shielded their eyes—it was cloudy but very bright. They looked up at glowing things the size of cathedrals, looming above the skyline.
