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John William Nelson

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Clint Jones. *Stranger, Creature, Thing, Other: Monstruous Reflections on Our Ecostential Crisis*. Stevens Point, Wisconsin: Cornerstone Press, 2019.

Reviewed by John William Nelson

You and I are monsters. So too is Clint Jones, and in his book, born out of a lecture series on the Environmental Humanities, he makes it clear that all of us had better get in touch with our own monstrosity before it is too late. Part jeremiad, part pop-culture reference work, this book offers a philosophical compilation of Jones's environmentally conscious musings about humanity's future in an age of inevitable global climate shift. Taking the monster as an avenue through which to discuss humanity's relationship to a dying world, Jones proposes it is time to upscale our own knowledge of the self "to keep pace with the upscaling of our social understandings" (p. 3). In other words, as we grow increasingly aware of the scale of a global calamity that threatens the entire earth, and accept our devastating role in that crisis, we must rethink our own positionality within nature and embrace our strangeness as a monstrous species apart.

Jones approaches the question of our place within global climate shift from the perspective of philosophy. In Jones's interpretation, philosophers dedicated most of the twentieth century to the questions of existentialism. This existential preoccupation was a reaction to a series of human-induced wars and catastrophes in the twentieth century, but Jones proposes we move beyond such queries to a new mode of thinking that he terms "ecostentialism." In this new ecostentialism, we move beyond asking questions of *being* to questions of our *belonging* within the natural world. The trope of the

monster offers an accessible way into these questions for even those without a philosophical background.

In Jones's chapters, various monsters from lore and pop culture offer valuable lessons for humans within a failing world. For instance, vampires, werewolves, and zombies serve as destructive consumers of one stripe or another. Humans have fallen prey to their consumer appetites, in the process ruining not just their own prospects but the environment around them. To amend these disastrous habits, we must begin to think as creatures with a relationality to the world beyond us. As Jones puts it, we need to shift from "an anthropocentric relationship to creation bolstered primarily by hubris, luster, and a stubborn unwillingness to see ourselves enmeshed in the world" to something more collaborative, and more sustainable (p. 79).

Jones effectively weaves his themes of the monster with useful critiques and accessible distillations of a range of thinkers. His thoughts on Karl Marx are worth noting, as he shows that the ghostly inheritance of Marxist critiques, while useful against capitalism, are not capacious enough to correct all that is wrong with our world amid global climate shift. But for all of Jones's calls for global thinking and capaciousness, a few elements of the book read as oddly provincial. Rather than outlining the threats of climate change in global terms, for instance, Jones discusses such threats in the language of Americentric regions: Northeast, Midwest, Southwest, etc.

Such a limited scope reads jarringly when matched with the bulk of Jones's arguments, but hints at a larger tension in the work—the balance between localism and universalism. Writing from the intellectual ecosystem of Wisconsin–Stevens Point, this book is a product of both a local academic community and a manifestation of our global concerns as survivors in the Anthropocene. This observation is less a critique of Jones's work, however, and more a reflection on the larger challenge that continues to face us as intellectuals within the humanities: how to expand our interpretations to answer a climate dilemma of global proportions while staying grounded and accessible to our

geographic and academic locales. Jones's use of the monstrous offers us one medium through which to brave such a daunting task. His take serves as a suggestive, if not definitive, interpretation of how we might think of ourselves as both a species apart while also intimately responsible for the survival of our wider world.

John William Nelson is an assistant professor of history at Texas Tech University, where he teaches courses on early American, environmental, and Indigenous history.