



Monstrous Creatures: Explorations of Fantasy Through Essays, Articles and Reviews

Jeff VanderMeer

Download now

Read Online →

Monstrous Creatures: Explorations of Fantasy Through Essays, Articles and Reviews

Jeff VanderMeer

Monstrous Creatures: Explorations of Fantasy Through Essays, Articles and Reviews Jeff VanderMeer

An entertaining, eclectic chronicle of modern fantastical fiction, *Monstrous Creatures* delivers incisive commentary, reviews, and essays pertaining to permutations of the monstrous, whether it's other people's monsters, personal monsters, or monstrous thoughts. A two-time winner of the World Fantasy Award, Jeff VanderMeer is one of speculative fiction's foremost voices. For the past 20 years, he has not only written weird literary fiction translated into 20 languages, but written about it extensively, influencing the way people think about fantasy through reviews in major papers like *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, as well as through interviews, thoughtful essays, blog posts, teaching, and guest-speaking. *Monstrous Creatures*, a follow-up to his 2004 nonfiction collection *Why Should I Cut Your Throat?*, collects all of his major nonfiction from the past five years, including such controversial pieces as "The Romantic Underground," "The Triumph of the Good," and "The Language of Defeat." Interviews with writers like Margo Lanagan and China Mieville are an added bonus, creating a dialogue with VanderMeer's own interpretations of the monstrous in the fantastical.

Monstrous Creatures: Explorations of Fantasy Through Essays, Articles and Reviews Details

Date : Published March 11th 2011 by Guide Dog Books

ISBN : 9781935738039

Author : Jeff VanderMeer

Format : Paperback 252 pages

Genre : Nonfiction

 [Download Monstrous Creatures: Explorations of Fantasy Through Es ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Monstrous Creatures: Explorations of Fantasy Through ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Monstrous Creatures: Explorations of Fantasy Through Essays, Articles and Reviews Jeff VanderMeer

From Reader Review Monstrous Creatures: Explorations of Fantasy Through Essays, Articles and Reviews for online ebook

Melanie says

Since my interview with Jeff VanderMeer about my pet capybara Caplin Rous is in this book, I'm anxious to get started on it. Mine is interview #3. You'd think I wouldn't have to read that because I basically wrote it but it was the first thing I read anyway.

Emory says

I have been accused of being well-read. If you've seen the number of books on my Goodreads shelves you might even believe it. Allow me to be honest: I am NOT well-read. Jeff VanderMeer is well-read. His non-fiction collection "Monstrous Creatures" proves that with each item inside its covers.

"Monstrous Creatures" is a selection of Mr. VanderMeer's many essays, forewords, articles, and reviews. While it might seem strange or even a bit incredulous the book does follow the titular theme of the "monstrous" through several iterations and variations, though not always obviously.

The reason I dinged a star was only because Mr. VanderMeer's writing is dense, and sometimes slow going. Every piece is informative, eloquent, and masterfully written, but sometimes the eloquence overshadows meaning and requires a careful re-reading for the sake of comprehension.

Now with what may seem to be a major failing you may ask, "So why should I bother reading something that sounds dry and academic?" I never said it was dry and academic; I said it requires careful reading. There are many positives to be gained by making the effort with "Monstrous Creatures."

First, the many, many, MANY books and authors he mentions/reviews/deconstructs. Ninety-five percent of these I was unaware of, not to mention their historical significance in the evolution of literature. I only wish there was a comprehensive listing of everything quoted or criticized, as there are many works and writers I would like to try based solely on his descriptions and analysis. I have no doubt other readers would find this an invaluable resource for finding new things to seek out.

Second: Mr. VanderMeer does include some lighter material that illustrate even as a serious writer and editor, there are things in his life that tie back to his passion if only tangentially but provide incredible insight into his inspirations. With the aforementioned careful reading, one can glean a sort of biographical abstract from the works presented. It is fascinating and inspiring.

The stand-outs for me are three "B's": Bears, Beer, and Bear. Namely "The Third Bear," "Authors in Praise of Beer," and "The Hannukah Bear." In the first is an examination of three different interpretations of a folkloric bear, each more monstrous than the last. The "Beer" article/interview was just brilliant because it introduced me to a number of unfamiliar authors and an equal number of unknown bottles of fermented goodness. I will endeavor to try all of them (the books and their paired beverages.) Lastly, "The Hannukah Bear" explores a personal revelation about imagination through an anecdote concerning his stepdaughter. It is both sweet and thought-provoking, and followed immediately by an article that features, in my opinion, the best quotable statement of the entire book:

"The imagination is a form of love: playful, generous, and transformative."

Yes, this book took me a while to digest, but I am richer for it. I can say with no doubt in my mind "Monstrous Creatures" will do the same for you.

John says

A great book, very literate and enjoyable to read. My full review is here:
<http://www.sfsignal.com/archives/2011...>

Jennifer says

This book was really refreshing because it reminded me of why I enjoy reading. But since I worked on it it seems more appropriate to quote another review:

"A selection of reflections, interrogations, and dialogues about the state and nature of fantastic literature from the perspective of one of fantastika's most discerning writer/editors. The collection puts forth not just VanderMeer's thoughts on making art, genre, and literature, but elaborates his idea of "the monstrous" and how it informs a variety of works and trends."—SF Signal

John Kenny says

Monstrous Creatures is a collection of essays, articles and reviews Jeff VanderMeer has written over the last few years and published in various venues. Books of this nature can often be hit and miss affairs; one wonders sometimes at the reasoning in collecting disparate pieces of non-fiction by a particular writer. Very often there can be a real lack of focus in such collections. Not so with Monstrous Creatures. VanderMeer zeros in on aspects of modern fantasy with unerring sharpness and a real eye for how and why a specific piece of work works. The pieces here may have been gathered from numerous publications and online journals, but they have been carefully assembled to form a cogent argument for the joys to be found in much of modern fantasy today. They may be varied, but they are most certainly not disparate.

There are several articles that investigate aspects of writing generally and genre writing in particular, such as the brilliant 'Language of Defeat', which discusses the cons of accepting the prevalent 'us and them' mentality when it comes to comparing genre work with mainstream literature. Another essay, 'The Romantic Underground', is a very funny mock exploration of a non-existent literary movement. There are many reviews of books by authors who are new to me, as well as by names I'm very much aware of. There are also three interviews: with China Miéville, Margo Lanagan and Melanie Typaldos.

As with Booklife, VanderMeer demonstrates an unrestrained enthusiasm for his chosen subject, which lends this collection vibrancy and a certain immediacy. There are several books and authors I will be checking out as a direct result of reading this excellent collection: Alasdair Gray, Alfred Kubin, Rhys Hughes and John Calvin Batchelor for starters. And I'm enthused to pick up more by Jeffrey Ford, H.P. Lovecraft and Clarke Aston Smith. Monstrous Creatures is a wonderful overview of some of what's out there to be experienced in the fantasy genre and is highly recommended.

Chad Brock says

3.5

Jeffrey says

I received this book for free in a Goodreads First Reads giveaway.

Collecting an array of Jeff VanderMeer's non-fiction writing, *Monstrous Creatures* gathers essays on issues in modern fantasy, reviews of authors' and/or their individual works, and tops it off with a few interviews and personal memories.

The book is dominated by its middle sections concerning authors and their works. These reviews provide exciting glimpses of worlds for the reader to explore further and that's where the primary value lies. Particular regard should be given to VanderMeer's coverage of works not originally in English, which is an area that gets short shrift in contemporary circles (aside from those from Japan).

It will serve readers who have begun exploring modern fantasy, but haven't gotten too far, well. Those deeply involved in the convention circuit/blog community will probably have had most of VanderMeer's thoughts in the early sections and will have read the majority of the works in the reviews.

Still VanderMeer's style is light and entertaining and, even if you have read a particular work, his review will refresh a pleasant memory.
