

Edited by Caterina Nirta, Andrea Pavoni

# Monstrous Ontologies

*Politics Ethics Materiality*

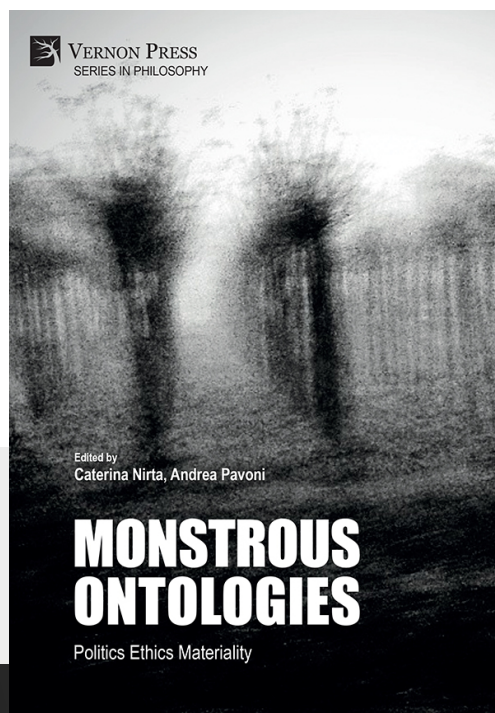
SERIES IN PHILOSOPHY

## Summary

While the presence of monsters in popular culture is ever-increasing, their use as an explicit or implicit category to frame, stigmatise, and demonise the other is seemingly on the rise. At the same time, academic interest for monsters is ever-growing. Usually, monstrosity is understood as a category that emerges to signal a transgression to a given order; this approach has led to the demystification of the insidious characterisations of the (racial, sexual, physical) other as monstrous. While this effort has been necessary, its collateral effects have reduced the monstrous to a mere (socio-cultural) construction of the other: a dialectical framing that de facto deprives monstrosity from any reality. 'Monstrous Ontologies: Politics, Ethics, Materiality' proffers the necessity of challenging these monstrous otherings and their perverse socio-political effects, whilst also asserting that the monstrous is not simply an epistemological construct, but that it has an ontological reality.

There is a profound difference between monsters and monstrosity. While the former is an often sterile political and social simplification, the end-product of rhetorical and biopolitical apparatuses; the latter may be understood as a dimension that nurtures the un-definable, that is, that shows the limits of these apparatuses by embodying their material excess: not a 'cultural frame', but the limit to the very mechanism of 'framing'. The monstrous expresses the combining, hybridising, becoming, and creative potential of socio-natural life, albeit colouring this powerful vitalism with the dark hue of a fearful, disgusting, and ultimately indigestible reality that cannot simply be embraced with multicultural naivety. As such, it forces us towards radically changing not the categories, but the very mechanisms of categorisation through which reality is framed and acted upon. Here lies the profound ethical dimension that monstrosity forces us to acknowledge; here lies its profoundly political potential, one that

cannot be unfolded by merely deconstructing monstrosity, and rather requires to engage with its uncomfortable, appalling, and revealing materiality. This book will appeal to postgraduate students, PostDocs, and academics alike in the fields of philosophy, critical theory, humanities, sociology and social theory, criminology, human geography, and critical legal theory.



## About the editors

**Dr Caterina Nirta** is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Social Sciences at the University of Roehampton, UK. She received her PhD in Philosophy from the University of Westminster in 2014 and an MA in Media Communication and Cultural Studies from Goldsmiths College, University of London in 2006. Dr Nirta is the author of the book 'Marginal Bodies, Trans Utopias' (Routledge, 2018) and has published articles in journals including, *Law and Critique*, *Lo Squaderno: Explorations in Space and Society*, and *Body and Society*.

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