

Between Earth and Empire: From the Necrocene to the Beloved Community

John P. Clark

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John P. Clark's *Between Earth and Empire* is an expansive work that considers the broad and chilling consequences of ecological disaster.

The Earth is in such dire straits that Clark labels the present "the Necrocene," or "the new era of death." In his view, ecological damage was inflicted by the "Empire," or human nations and societies. These dark concepts underpin his essays, which tackle topics including ecological crisis, the struggles of Indigenous peoples, the "commodity economy," and societal ills.

One of the book's more powerful examples is the lasting impact of Hurricane Katrina on New Orleans coupled with the city's fragility. In one essay, instead of recounting the immediate effects of the storm, Clark dissects the post-Katrina environment. He notes that the "official story" of the city's resilience, as told by politicians, masks realities around the difficulties of recovery. According to Clark, "Many have not come back to New Orleans because of lack of opportunities locally and because the dominant model of redevelopment has created obstacles to their return." In a subsequent essay, Clark writes that New Orleans represents "an apocalyptic city" because of its very impermanence. In fact, he believes "it is *inevitable*...that New Orleans will meet its final apocalyptic fate before long."

Clark's other essays, whether they concentrate on the plight of New Guinea natives or the communal legacy of Oakland's Black Panthers, are equally powerful, perceptive, and at times startling. The book is breathtaking in breadth, but there is a singular message: while humans brought the Earth to the brink, there remains hope that the planet and its creatures will be able to reassert themselves. May Clark's sobering assessment of the current state of humanity's relationship to the world be taken to heart.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (July/August 2019)

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