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978-1-107-08450-6 - American Poetic Materialism from Whitman to Stevens

Mark Noble

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AMERICAN POETIC MATERIALISM FROM WHITMAN TO STEVENS

In *American Poetic Materialism from Whitman to Stevens*, Mark Noble examines writers who rethink the human in material terms. Does the intelligibility of human experience correlate to the intelligibility of its material elements? Do visions of a common physical ground imply a common purpose? Noble proposes new readings of Whitman, Emerson, Santayana, and Stevens that explore a literary history wrestling with the consequences of its own materialism. At a moment when several new models of the relationship between human experience and its physical ground circulate among critical theorists and philosophers of science, Noble turns to poets who have long asked what our shared materiality can tell us about our prospects for new models of our material selves.

Mark Noble is Assistant Professor of English at Georgia State University, where he teaches American literature and critical theory. He received his PhD from Johns Hopkins University in 2009. Noble's essays have been published in *American Literature* and *Nineteenth-Century Literature*.

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For my parents

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I looked with awe at the ground I trod on, to see what the Powers had made there, the form and fashion and material of their work. This was that Earth of which we have heard, made out of Chaos and Old Night. Here was no man's garden, but the unhandseled globe.

– Henry David Thoreau, “Mt. Ktaadn”

Here is something rather than nothing, here is existence, here are vortices, spirals, volutes, all models out of equilibrium. They are brought back to zero by deterioration, ruin and death. But, temporarily, they form.

– Michel Serres, *The Birth of Physics*

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I could not have completed this book without the daily support of Shannon Finck, whose candor and kindness have emboldened my writing and my view of just about everything else. Most of all, I thank my parents, Ed and Bonnie, for embodying the sorts of generosity and love that furnish the atoms of every opportunity.