

## T.S. Eliot, Poetry, and Earth: The Name of the Lotos Rose (Ecocritical Theory and Practice)

By Etienne Terblanche




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T. S. Eliot enjoyed a profound relationship with Earth. Criticism of his work does not suggest that this exists in his poetic oeuvre. Writing into this gap, Etienne Terblanche demonstrates that Eliot presents Earth as a process in which humans immerse themselves. *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* in particular re-locate the modern reader towards mindfulness of Earth's continuation and one's radical becoming within that process. But what are the potential implications for ecocriticism? Based on its careful reading of the poems from a new material perspective, this book shows how vital it has become for ecocriticism to be skeptical about the extent of its skepticism, to follow instead the twentieth century's

most important poet who, at the end of searing skepticism, finds affirmation of Earth, art, and real presence.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

The Waste Land, and *Four Quartets* demonstrate Eliot's awareness of Becoming and his belief in keeping time with the changes of our lives. Building on the insights of 'new materialism,' he convincingly supports Eliot's belief in poetry as embodiment. In this fine study, Terblanche both extends and interrogates previous criticism on the twentieth-century's premier poet. (Jewel Spears Brooker, Professor Emerita, Eckerd College)

Etienne Terblanche shows us how Eliot's poetry, antennae-like, reaches ahead, already anticipating the fallout of the Anthropocene and the dry sterility and dislocation of infinite semiosis. The response? Poet and poet-scholar co-create a poetics of immersion. We follow algae, jellyfish, sea anemones, hippopotamuses, porpoises—even the failure of Prufrock's 'ragged claws'—into a streetless expanse of originary, vibrant, and agentic Earth. In short, the book *dares* to affirm. (Aaron M. Moe, author of *Zoopoetics: Animals and the Making of Poetry*)

This is a timely and ambitious exploration of the significance of nature to the life and work of T. S. Eliot. In its examination of the centrality of the Earth to the poet it makes an important contribution to the continuing extension of ecocriticism and suggests new ways of reading Eliot's work that recognize the breadth and complexity of modern relationships to place. (Elizabeth Harris, Manchester Metropolitan University)

#### About the Author

**Etienne Terblanche** teaches and researches poetry at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University in South Africa

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