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Future-Founding Poetry (European Studies in North American Literature and Culture)

Sascha Pöhlmann

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No scholarly work has yet addressed the topic of beginnings in American poetry in sufficient scope or detail or adequate theoretical background. Although issues of futurity have become more and more central to literary and cultural studies in recent years, especially in environmental criticism, the study of poetry has been regrettably absent. This book is a study of how beginnings are made in American poetry. It borrows Walt Whitman's term ""future-founding"" to establish a theory of poetic beginnings that asks how poetry relates to notions of the future and how it imagines, constructs, and influences this future in the present. Furthermore, it seeks to change the way literary scholars think about futurity with regard to American poetry: they most often conceive of it in terms of newness alone, yet a deeper theorization of beginnings must open up our way of understanding the complexities of this relation. With chapters on Whitman, William Carlos Williams, Langston Hughes, Muriel Rukeyser, Allen Ginsberg, and future-founding poetry after 9/11, this book explains how American poetry makes its beginnings, with what means and to which political and aesthetic ends, and how it addresses fundamental questions about the nature of futurity itself.

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