



Opening Acts: Narrative Beginnings in Twentieth-Century Feminist Fiction (Frontiers of Narrative)

Catherine Romagnolo

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In the beginning there was . . . the beginning. And with the beginning came the power to tell a story. Few book-length studies of narrative beginnings exist, and not one takes a feminist perspective. *Opening Acts* reveals the important role of beginnings as moments of discursive authority with power and agency that have been appropriated by writers from historically marginalized groups. Catherine Romagnolo argues for a critical awareness of how social identity plays a role in the strategic use and critical interpretation of narrative beginnings.

The twentieth-century U.S. women writers whom Romagnolo studies—Edith Wharton, H.D., Toni Morrison, Julia Alvarez, and Amy Tan—have seized the power to disrupt conventional structures of authority and undermine historical master narratives of marriage, motherhood, U.S. nationhood, race, and citizenship. Using six of their novels as points of entry, Romagnolo illuminates the ways in which beginnings are potentially subversive, thereby disrupting the reinscription of hierarchically gendered and racialized conceptions of authorship and agency.

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