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978-1-107-09987-6 - Time, Tense, and American Literature: When is Now?

Cindy Weinstein

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TIME, TENSE, AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

In *Time, Tense, and American Literature*, Cindy Weinstein examines American authors who employ a range of tenses to tell a story that has already taken place. This book argues that key novels in the archive of American literature are inconsistent in their retrospective status, ricocheting between past, present, and future. Taking *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* as her point of departure, Weinstein shows how Edgar Allan Poe's way of representing time involves careening tenses, missing chronometers, and inoperable watches, thus establishing a vocabulary of time that is anticipated in Charles Brockden Brown and further articulated in Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Theodore Dreiser, and Edward P. Jones. Each chapter examines the often strange narrative fabric of these works and presents an opportunity to understand how especially complicated experiences of cultural upheaval, from the founding of the new nation to the psychic consequences of race relations and the Civil War to the rise of modernity and beyond, find contextual expression through a literary uncertainty about time.

CINDY WEINSTEIN is Professor of English and Vice Provost at the California Institute of Technology. She is the author of *The Literature of Labor and the Labors of Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 1995) and *Family, Kinship, and Sympathy in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2004). Weinstein also edited *The Cambridge Companion to Harriet Beecher Stowe* (Cambridge University Press, 2004) and co-edited, with Christopher Looby, *American Literature's Aesthetic Dimensions* (2012).

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32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

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Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107099876

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First published 2015

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc.

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Weinstein, Cindy.

Time, tense, and American literature : when is now? / Cindy Weinstein.
pages cm (Cambridge studies in American literature and culture)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-09987-6 (hardback)

1. American literature – History and criticism. 2. Time in literature.
3. Tense

PS169.T5W45 2015

810.9'384–dc23 2015014129

ISBN 978-1-107-09987-6 Hardback

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*To my parents, who gave me time, and to Jim, Sarah, and
Sam for giving it meaning*

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I have been working on this book for a long time, and my debts are considerable. Jim Astorga read more drafts of these chapters than a person has a right to ask of another. Always kind, even when critical, I could not have done this without him. I want next to thank Dori Hale, my dear friend and trusted reader for decades. The readers for Cambridge University Press, Geoffrey Sanborn and Thomas Allen, were an ideal combination of generosity and critique. Colleagues and friends at Caltech have been generous with their time and expertise. Thank you to Peggy Blue, John Brewer, Tracy Dennison, Sini Elvington, Dehn Gilmore, Chris Hunter, Cathy Jurca, and Mac Pigman. Many people have read these chapters or talked about them with me, and made them better. They include Jana Argersinger, Nancy Armstrong, Dale Bauer, Jonathan Freedman, Michelle Hawley, Bob Levine, Chris Looby, Marianne Noble, Sam Otter, Derrick Spires, Eric Sundquist, Ezra Tawil, Cecelia Tichi, Edlie Wong, and Arlene Zuckerberg. I was fortunate to be able to present this work in lectures, and I would like to thank Mark Amfreville, Peter Betjemann, William Decker, William Dow, Dori Hale (once again), Molly Hiro, Peter Riley, and David Schmidt for the invitations they extended.

A version of Chapter 2 first appeared in *Poe Studies: History, Theory, Interpretation*, Vol. 41, 2008, pp. 81–107 (copyright 2008, Blackwell Publishing and Washington State University). Chapter 3 is reprinted from “Heaven’s Tense: Narration in *The Gates Ajar*,” in *Novel*, Vol. 456, no. 1, pp. 56–70 (copyright 2012, *Novel*, Inc.) All rights reserved. Republished by permission of the copyright holder and the present publisher, Duke University Press (www.dukeupress.edu).

Many thanks to Ross Posnock and Ray Ryan of Cambridge University Press for their confidence in the project when it was in its early stages, and for helping me see it through to completion. Also, thank you to Caitlin Gallagher, Philip Alexander, and Elizabeth Shand, who ensured a smooth production process.

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Acknowledgments

My undergraduate work and years of friendship with Michael Gilmore, laid the foundation for this book. His absence is felt deeply, but I hope his presence in these pages is felt even more. Thanks to my brother, Lyle, for his support and lots of coffee-time at Peets. And for our shared past, present, and future, my most profound gratitude goes to Jim, Sarah, and Sam.