

#### CLIMATE AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

Climate has infused the literary history of the United States, from the writings of explorers and conquerors, over early expressions of nation-hood, to the flowering of romantic nature writing and beyond. This volume explores how American literature from its inception up until the present has engaged with the climate, both real and perceived. Climate and American Literature thus attends to the central place that the climate has historically occupied in virtually all aspects of American life, from public health and medicine, over the organization of the political system and the public sphere, to the culture of sensibility, aesthetics, and literary culture. It details American inflections of climate thinking throughout the nation's history to offer revealing new perspectives on one of the most pressing issues of our time.

MICHAEL BOYDEN is an associate professor of American Literature at Uppsala University, Sweden. He is the author of *Predicting the Past: The Paradoxes of American Literary History* (2009). He has edited several journal issues, including an issue of *Early American Literature* on the "New Natural History" (2019). Boyden has also edited two collected volumes, *Tales of Transit Narrative Migrant Spaces in Transatlantic Perspective* (with Hans Krabbendam and Liselotte Vandenbussche, 2013) and *Reverberations of Revolution: Transnational Perspectives* 1770–1850 (with Elizabeth Amann, 2021). He is now working on a new monograph, provisionally entitled *Climate and Sensibility in the American Tropics*.



# CAMBRIDGE THEMES IN AMERICAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE

Twenty-first-century America puzzles many citizens and observers. A frequently cited phrase to describe current partisan divisions is Lincoln's "A house divided against itself cannot stand," a warning of the perils to the Union from divisions generated by slavery. America seems divided in almost every way, on almost every attitude. Civic dialogue on issues often seems extremely difficult. America is an experiment always in process, a remarkable union of 300 million diverse people covering all races and faiths. As a forum in which ideologies and interpretations abound, Literary Studies has a role to play in explanation and analysis. The series Cambridge Themes in American Literature and Culture addresses the key cultural themes that have brought America to its current moment. It offers a summation of critical knowledge on key cultural themes as well as an intervention in the present moment. This series provides a distinctive, authoritative treatment of the key literary and cultural strains in American life while also pointing in new critical directions.

Titles in the Series

War and American Literature
Edited by JENNIFER HAYTOCK, SUNY–Brockport

Gender in American Literature and Culture Edited by Jean Lutes, Villanova University, and Jennifer travis, St. John's University

Apocalypse and American Literature and Culture Edited by JOHN HAY, University of Nevada



# CLIMATE AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

EDITED BY
MICHAEL BOYDEN

Uppsala University





## **CAMBRIDGE**UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108484879 DOI: 10.1017/9781108669573

© Michael Boyden 2021

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2021

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ Books Limited

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

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data NAMES: Boyden, Michael, editor.

TITLE: Climate and American literature / edited by Michael Boyden.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2021. |
Series: Cambridge themes in American literature and culture | Includes bibliographical references.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2020041344 (print) | LCCN 2020041345 (ebook) | ISBN 9781108484879

(hardback) | ISBN 9781108705349 (paperback) | ISBN 9781108669573 (epub) SUBJECTS: LCSH: American literature—History and criticism. | Climatic changes in literature. | Literature and society—United States—History.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC PS169.C58 C58 2021 (print) | LCC PS169.C58 (ebook) | DDC 810.9/36–dc23 LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020041344 LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020041345

ISBN 978-1-108-48487-9 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.



#### Contents

List of Figures	<i>page</i> vii
List of Contributors	viii
Acknowledgments	xiii
Introduction Michael Boyden	I
PART I CLIMATE AND ITS DISCONTENTS	
The Climate History of North America     Dagomar Degroot	21
2 Climate Theories <i>Lauren LaFauci</i>	41
3 Climate and Civilization  David N. Livingstone	58
4 Climate and Race Susan Scott Parrish	75
PART II AMERICAN LITERARY CLIMATES	
5 Climate and American Indian Literature Amy T. Hamilton	93
6 Colonial Climates <i>Michael Boyden</i>	109
7 The Degeneration Thesis Timothy Sweet	126
8 The State of the Air in Post-Revolutionary America	142

V



vi	Contents	
	Julia Dauer	
9	The Higher Latitudes of the American Renaissance Andrew McMurry	159
10	Climate and the American West Sylvan Goldberg	176
11	Fictions of Health after Miasma  Don James McLaughlin	194
12	Naturalism, Regionalism, and Climate (In)determinism <i>Lynn Wardley</i>	210
13	American Modernisms and Climatology  Matthew Griffiths	226
14	Postmodern Climates David Watson	242
15	Frontiers of a Shrinking World: Recent American Climate Fiction Sarah Dimick	257
PAR	T III NEW LINES OF INQUIRY	
16	Climate and the Environmental Humanities  Michael Ziser	275
17	The Anthropocenic Sublime: A Critique Jean-Baptiste Fressoz	288
18	Climate and the New Materialisms  Hannes Bergthaller	300
19	A Match Made in Hell: Climate Change and Neoliberalism Christian Parenti	315
Bibi Inde	liography ex	333 367



### Figures

I.I	Present-day (black) and maximum (grey)	
	glaciation of the northern hemisphere during	
	the Quaternary climatic cycles	page 25
1.2	Change in average air temperatures in °F and °C, and	
	average precipitation across the United States, from	
	1901 to 2020	33
4.I	Spike Lee, Do the Right Thing (1989)	76
17.1	Gustave Doré. The New Zealander (1872)	2.93



#### Contributors

HANNES BERGTHALLER is a professor at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at National Chung-Hsing University, Taiwan. He is a founding member and past president of the European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture, and the Environment (EASLCE). His research interests are focused on ecocritical theory, environmental philosophy, and the literature and cultural history of environmentalism. Together with Eva Horn (University of Vienna, Austria), he co-authored The Anthropocene: Key Issues for the Humanities (2020). Other recent publications are the edited volume Framing the Environmental Humanities (with Peter Mortensen, 2018), special issues on petrofiction (Green Letters, 2019) and the representation of climate change (Metaphora, 2017), and a guest-edited cluster on ecocriticism and environmental history in Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment (2015).

MICHAEL BOYDEN is an associate professor of American Literature at Uppsala University, Sweden. He is the author of *Predicting the Past: The Paradoxes of American Literary History* (2009). He has edited several journal issues, most recently an issue of *Early American Literature* on the "New Natural History" (2019). Boyden has also edited two collected volumes, *Tales of Transit: Narrative Migrant Spaces in Transatlantic Perspective* (with Hans Krabbendam and Liselotte Vandenbussche, 2013) and *Reverberations of Revolution: Transnational Perspectives*, 1770–1850 (with Elizabeth Amann, 2021). He is now working on a new monograph, provisionally entitled *Climate and Sensibility in the American Tropics*.

JULIA DAUER is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Saint Mary's College, where their research and teaching focus on early and nineteenth-century American literature. Julia's writing also appears

viii



#### List of Contributors

ix

in Early American Literature, Legacy: A Journal for the Study of American Women Writers, Edge Effects, and Avidly.

- DAGOMAR DEGROOT is an associate professor of Environmental History at Georgetown University, where he writes and teaches about the history of climate change, the oceans, the Arctic, and outer space. His first book, *The Frigid Golden Age: Climate Change, the Little Ice Age, and the Dutch Republic, 1560–1720*, was named one of the top ten history books of 2018 by the *Financial Times*. His second book, tentatively entitled *Civilization and the Cosmos: An Environmental History of the Solar System*, is under contract with Harvard University Press and Viking. He is the co-founder and co-director of the Climate History Network, the director of the popular website HistoricalClimatology.com, and the founder and co-host of the podcast Climate History.
- SARAH DIMICK is an assistant professor of English at Harvard University. She received her PhD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and spent two years as the Andrew Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in Environmental Humanities at Northwestern University. Her research focuses on environmental writing of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, concentrating on literary representations of climate change and fossil fuel consumption.
- JEAN-BAPTISTE FRESSOZ is a historian of Science, Technology, and Environment at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (Paris) and a member of the Centre national de la Recherche Scientifique. He has published extensively on the history of environmental reflexivity and the history of the Anthropocene. He is the author of *L'Apocalypse joyeuse. Une histoire du risque technologique* (2012), *The Shock of the Anthropocene* (with Christophe Bonneuil, 2016), and *Les Révoltes du ciel. Une autre histoire du changement climatique* (with Fabien Locher, 2020).
- SYLVAN GOLDBERG is an assistant professor in the English department at Colorado College, where he teaches classes on pre-1900 American literature and the environmental humanities. He writes on temporality and environmental representation, and is completing a book manuscript on biology, sentimental culture, and time in the long nineteenth century.
- MATTHEW GRIFFITHS holds a PhD in English Studies from Durham University, and is the author of *The New Poetics of Climate Change: Modernist Aesthetics for a Warming World* (2017) as well as the poetry



#### List of Contributors

collection *Natural Economy* (2016). Recent published research has included work on the poetry of bee colony collapse disorder and on environmentalism in Ian Fleming's James Bond fiction. He is currently working on pastoral dynamics in modernist and Georgian writing.

AMY T. HAMILTON is a professor of English at Northern Michigan University where she teaches classes on Indigenous American literature, ecocriticism and environmental justice, early American literature, and western American literature. She is the author of *Peregrinations: Walking in American Literature* (2018) and a co-editor with Tom J. Hillard of *Before the West Was West: Critical Essays on Pre-1800 Literature of the American Frontiers* (2014).

LAUREN LAFAUCI is assistant professor of Environmental Humanities at Linköping University in Sweden. She is currently completing a book manuscript on the related histories of racial formation and environment in the pre-Civil War United States, and she is part of the interdisciplinary team behind the citizen humanities project *Herbaria 3.0* (www .herbaria3.org), which shares stories about the intertwined relationships between plants and people. Lauren's work has been supported by fellowships from the Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development, the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, the American Philosophical Society, and the Harrison Institute for American History, Literature, and Culture, among others. She holds a PhD in English from the University of Michigan and serves as an international liaison for ASLE, the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment.

DAVID N. LIVINGSTONE is professor of Geography and Intellectual History at Queen's University Belfast, a Fellow of the British Academy, and a Member of the Royal Irish Academy. He is the author of several books, including Nathaniel Southgate Shaler and the Culture of American Science (1987), Darwin's Forgotten Defenders (1987), The Geographical Tradition (1992), Putting Science in Its Place (2003), Adam's Ancestors (2008), and Dealing with Darwin (2014). He is currently working on the nature of conjunctive explanations in science and religion, and on a history of climate reductionism, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, entitled The Empire of Climate. He was awarded an OBE in 2002 and a CBE in 2019, and has received the Gold Medal of the Royal Irish Academy and the Founder's Medal of the Royal Geographical Society.



#### List of Contributors

хi

DON JAMES MCLAUGHLIN is an assistant professor of Nineteenth-Century and Early American Literature at the University of Tulsa. His research focuses on literary movements in the Americas, the history of medicine and psychiatry, queer historiography, disability studies, and the history of emotions. His work has been published in *American Literature*, *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists*, *Literature and Medicine*, *Commonplace: The Journal of Early American Life*, and the *New Republic*.

ANDREW MCMURRY (PhD Indiana) is professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Waterloo. He has published widely on ecocriticism, American literature, and environmental discourse. His books are *Environmental Renaissance: Emerson, Thoreau and the Systems of Nature* (2003) and *Entertaining Futility: Despair and Hope in the Time of Climate Change* (2018)).

CHRISTIAN PARENTI is an associate professor of Economics at John Jay College, City University of New York. His books include Tropic of Chaos: Climate Change and the New Geography of Violence (2011); The Freedom: Shadows and Hallucinations in Occupied Iraq (2004); The Soft Cage: Surveillance in America from Slavery to the War on Terror (2002); and Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis (2000) second edition 2008). He has reported extensively from Afghanistan, Iraq, and various parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America for The Nation, Fortune, The London Review of Books, The New York Times, and other publications. Parenti's forthcoming book is Radical Hamilton: Economic Lessons from a Misunderstood Founder (2020).

SUSAN SCOTT PARRISH is Arthur F. Thurnau Professor in the English Department and the Program in the Environment at the University of Michigan. Her research addresses the interrelated issues of race, the environment, media and knowledge-making in the Atlantic world from the seventeenth century up through the present, with a particular emphasis on southern and Caribbean plantation zones. She has written two award-winning books, The Flood Year 1927: A Cultural History (Princeton 2017) and American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World (UNC 2006), and is currently editing the Norton Critical Edition of Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!

TIMOTHY SWEET is Eberly Family Distinguished Professor of American Literature at West Virginia University. His publications include *Traces of War: Poetry, Photography, and the Crisis of the Union* (1990), *American Georgics: Economy and Environment in Early American Literature* (2002),



xii

#### List of Contributors

and an edited collection, *Literary Cultures of the Civil* War (2016), as well as numerous essays in American Literature and Environmental Humanities. His current book project, *Extinction and the Human*, reflects on the problem of human exceptionalism through an examination of extinction narratives.

LYNN WARDLEY is an independent scholar living in San Francisco and New York City. Formerly, she taught American literature at Yale, Harvard, and San Francisco State University. She has finished a monograph of American literary criticism centered on feminist uses of Lamarckian science and is newly at work on design and landscape in American fiction.

DAVID WATSON is an associate professor in the Department of English at Uppsala University, where he specializes in American literature and culture. He has published on nineteenth-century and modernist American poets, nineteenth-century and contemporary novelists, and issues in transnational and translation studies. Currently, he is completing a monograph on *The Security Imaginary: Contingency and Vulnerability in Twenty-First Century US Fiction*. His most recent publications are on failed states and the world novel, and the role of contingency within neoliberal narratives.

MICHAEL ZISER is an associate professor of English and co-director of the Environments and Societies Research Initiative at the University of California, Davis, where he mentors environmental humanities graduate students from departments including English, Comparative Literature, Cultural Studies, and Geography. The author of *Environmental Practice in Early American Literature* (2013), he is currently working on a booklength study of the cultural significance of "organic industrialization" before the rise of fossil fuels in Germany, England, Scotland, and the early United States.



### Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Ray Ryan at Cambridge University Press for helping to establish the idea for this collected volume and the production team for its help in seeing it into print. I am grateful to the faculty of languages at Uppsala University for granting me a sabbatical in fall 2019 that allowed me to finalize the manuscript. I spent part of my leave at the Rachel Carson Center in Munich, where I benefited from the stimulating discussions and encouragement of fellows and visiting scholars. I did most of the groundwork for the volume while a visiting fellow at Brigham Young University's Charles Redd Center for Western Studies in spring 2019. Leonard Driscoll helped me with the index and bibliography for this volume.