

Uncertain Climes: Debating Climate Change in Gilded Age America

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understanding of the extent to which the East German case was similar or dissimilar to other countries in the Soviet bloc in terms of cult-building strategies. One might also wonder about the role of West Germany in shaping of Stalin's image in the East. The importance of the West is hinted at by the author several times; a more extensive discussion could have been potentially quite revealing. At the same time, a more extensive analysis of the role of Moscow in controlling the transnational (not merely the East German) project of constructing the Stalin-cult (on the basis of primary sources in Russian archives) would have resulted in an invaluable contribution to understanding the cross-border dynamics of the Stalinist leader cults.

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Giacomelli, Joseph. **Uncertain Climes: Debating Climate Change in Gilded Age America**. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 248 pp., \$40.00, ISBN 9780226824437.

The Gilded Age was a period defined by change. Americans living through the era witnessed the advent of transformative industrial technology, dramatic shifts in the economy, new labor regimes, and environmental change. In the American West—specifically the prairie and Great Plains states—the Gilded Age brought a wave of settlers who had been promised economic success from railroad companies, expansionists, and developers. In the midst of this change, however, new ideas about the relationship between humans and the climate began to emerge. Tracking down these divergent, conflicting, and swinging ideas is Joseph Giacomelli's central project in *Uncertain Climes: Debating Change in Gilded Age America*. Over the course of several chapters, Giacomelli demonstrates that climate theories varied during this period. He recovers a range of individuals who posited new ideas about the ways humans interacted and influenced their climates. There was no consensus. Boosters, technocrats, and laypersons created a stew of theories that often reflected the desires, positions, biases, and social status of the originators. Making meaning of the climate—Giacomelli demonstrates to readers—was a

central component to the broader anxieties regarding capitalist development, western expansion, and professional science in the Gilded Age.

American imperial excursions into the West allowed waves of Euro-American settlers to move into the drier prairie and Great Plains—regions whose aridity sparked new discussions about the relationship between humans and the climate. The uncertainty of this relationship caused several onlookers to making meaning of aridity, climate, and development in the expanding West. Take for instance the rhetoric the expansionists—a group of thinkers who looked for evidence to support American claims in the West. Looking to the two narrative arcs—the perceived aridity of the region in relation to Native American practices and the relative success of the Mormons to transform the Wasatch Valley in Utah—the expansionists argued that Euro-American settlers brought particular environmental practices that fundamentally improved the climate of the West. The underlying epistemological framing helped to justify and encourage the rhetoric of American empire. Giacomelli is quick to note that climate theories did not always map onto ideological priorities. In fact, debates about the nature of climate often revealed broader anxieties about the period. “Climate discourse alternated between faith in progress and anxieties about failure, between the hubris of conquest and a desire to atone for the ravages created by expansion, between visions of thriving agricultural utopias and warnings about devastated landscapes and communities left in the wake of economic booms and panics” (32). Giacomelli demonstrates that the discourse and uncertainty surrounding climate theorization reflected larger dynamics coursing through society.

Debates about climate knowledge also revealed tensions between formalized and local knowledge. Take for instance the history of Gustavus Hinrichs and his group of volunteer observers. As founder and head of the Iowa State Weather Service, Hinrichs established a vast network of weather collectors. Though Hinrichs believed that forestation and deforestation could affect local rainfall he remained committed to collected detailed knowledge from around the state. This local focus led to conflicts with national organizations whose leadership often had divergent views of Hinrichs' ideas and the significance he derived from his collected data. George E. Curtis, a national bureaucrat affiliated with the Smithsonian Institution, took direct aim at Hinrichs' *Rainfall Laws* (1893) by criticizing his theories, data, and writing style. The conflict was not simply a debate regarding climate-change theories. The Hinrichs story emphasizes the tension between vernacular, or everyday science, and the hierarchical divisions of science expertise that were coming into fruition in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Conflicts over

the climate were conflicts about who had the right to know nature.

Though the uncertainty associated with understanding how humans and climate worked together, technocrats often found ways to introduce the language of uncertainty into their studies and proposals in order to achieve political gains. Advocates of forest development readily acknowledged their inability to fully know the causal components of climate change when advocating for tree-planting policies. Rather than making declarative statements on the question of forestation/deforestation and its influence on rainfall, the technocrats instead acknowledged and embraced the unknown. “Though Gilded Age forestry advocates did not develop a single cohesive environmental theory, they shared a belief in an uncertain ecology,” Giacomelli writes. “They understood forests, society, and weather patterns as a complex interconnected network whose inner workings remained mysterious” (98). The blend of uncertainty and advocacy both entrenched their expertise while remaining open to the unknowns of scientific inquiry. Technocrats who understood how to navigate this intellectual landscape found political success as the Gilded Age passed into the Progressive Era. Those most comfortable with the mystery of ecological knowledge helped create a political climate suitable to the creation of the Forest Service and the passage of the Weeks Act.

Giacomelli sees potential in uncertainty. As the climate crisis continues to unravel, it remains clear that merely positivist, data-driven arguments lack the power to encourage sufficient political action. By embracing uncertainty, Giacomelli proposes, modern policy makers and scientists might find a language to discuss climate science in a way that does not inspire an instant polemic. Though translating the uncertainties of the Gilded Age Americans to the present day might not satisfy the current political and environmental moment, this book offer much to the readers. First, *Uncertain Climes* demonstrates that modern climate debates are part of a longer history of competing and conflicting claims over the relationship between humans, climate, and the broader natural world. Underlying those debates, Giacomelli notes, are a series of cultural, social, and environmental anxieties. As a blend of a history of science, intellectual history, and environmental history, Giacomelli provides historians with a text to explore the many angles of climate history. As such, this is an important text to consider the long history of climate-theory and its place in American society. In doing so, the author offers readers a better grasp on the present and maybe, some paths for the future.

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Matchinske, Megan, ed. **The Carleton Bigamy Trial**. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 394 pp., \$60.95, ISBN: 9781649590756. Publication Date: April 2023.

In 1663, Mary Carleton beguiled London society when she dared to pretend to be a German Roman Catholic princess while she likely was the twice-married daughter of a Canterbury musician. Carleton nearly accomplished her charade by speaking with a foreign tongue and relying upon her wit and nerve, two assets which she possessed in abundance. Timing also played a crucial role, contends Megan Matchinske, in her introduction to this edited collection of primary sources. Carleton appeared around the same time as an influx of English aristocrats, including King Charles II who arrived to restore the monarchy and reestablish social hierarchy. Over the previous twenty years, the English experienced three Civil Wars, killed their king, adopted puritanical rule, rejected the same, and embraced a Stuart king who kept an adulterous court. In Restoration England, the theaters opened, and female actors were allowed to take the stage for the first time. When Carleton enacted her subterfuge, Londoners were ready to be amused, and the arrival of an alleged runaway foreign noblewoman seemed but one act in a real-life, fast-moving drama.

The Carleton Bigamy Trial is the ninety-seventh volume in the Toronto Series of *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*. The series provides readers with primary texts which challenge conventional history and celebrate women’s contributions in a society dominated by men. Carleton’s voice is an excellent addition to the series because she audaciously forged her own path. As she announced in her autobiographical pamphlet, “I trust in my own power” and act as “my own free agent” (109–10). Moreover, Carleton’s cheeky wit makes for delightful reading. Defending herself once revealed as an imposter, Carleton quipped, “I think I do rather deserve commendation than reproach” (110). During her bigamy trial, she faced hanging if convicted. Undaunted, when she spied John Carleton, the husband who charged her, she laughed at him “to the great observation of the court” (321). Humiliated, he retreated to a separate house for the duration of the trial.

In sharing Mary’s story, Matchinske made several astute editorial choices. First, she selected seven pamphlets from 25 different works published in the seventeenth century. This was a popular tale which attracted the attention of persons of quality, including Aphra Behn and Samuel Pepys. The latter praised Mary’s “wit and spirit” (5). Also, Matchinske opted to concentrate on