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## Joshua P. Howe (Editor). Making Climate Change History. Documents from Global Warming's Past.

--Manuscript Draft--

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**Joshua P. Howe** (Editor). *Making Climate Change History. Documents from Global Warming's Past*. Foreword by Paul S. Sutter. (Weyerhaeuser Environmental Classics.) xvi +340 pp., notes, index. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017. \$24.00 (paper), ISBN 9780295741390.

*Making Climate Change History* is a compilation of historical documents tracing the accumulation of scientific evidence regarding anthropogenic global warming and its consequences, as well as political controversy and (in)action based on the warnings of climate scientists. The bulk of the sources originate in American settings and perspectives. Ample historical scholarship tells this story; editor Joshua Howe mentions Spencer Weart's *The Discovery of Global Warming* (Harvard, rev. ed. 2008), Naomi Oreskes and Eric Conway's *Merchants of Doubt* (Bloomsbury, 2010), Jacob Hamblin's *Arming Mother Nature* (Oxford, 2013), and Howe's own *Behind the Curve* (University of Washington, 2014), among others. Howe presents the collection as the sources behind such stories and raw material for readers to fashion their own interpretive histories of climate change.

The book is in six parts, each introduced by a short essay providing historical context and a series of questions to guide readers' historical engagement with the sources. Part 1, "The Scientific 'Prehistory' of Global Warming," runs from Joseph Fourier's 1824 paper on the temperature of the earth through Guy Stewart Callendar's 1938 article correlating the emission of carbon dioxide from fuel combustion with a long-term increase in atmospheric temperature. Part 2, "The Cold War Roots of Global Warming," turns to US Congressional testimony by scientists such as Roger Revelle during the late 1950s. Part 3, "Making Global Warming Green," addresses discussions of global warming among

environmental organizations and environmentalist politicians. Howe's inclusion of unpublished material from the archives of the Sierra Club and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) are a nice surprise amidst the march through the climate history canon.

Part 4, "Climate Change as Controversy," considers traffic between scientific arguments over future prospects for global warming or cooling and American high politics during the 1970s and 1980s. Part 5, "Climate Change Governance," comprises milestone documents produced by intergovernmental organizations such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Part 6, "The Past, the Present, and The Future," includes culturally influential documents reckoning with climate change at the turn of the twenty-first century, from Bill McKibben's *The End of Nature* (1989) to Pope Francis's "Laudato Si" (2015). A separate section, "Historicizing Data," is a version of a previously published essay by Howe on visualization of climate data, accompanied by color plates of the iconic images he discusses: the Keeling curve, "hockey-stick" graphs, and projections of future warming under alternative emissions scenarios.

With one exception, each document is pared down to selections comprising fewer than ten pages—helpful for instructors looking for easily digestible readings for undergraduate syllabi. (The one longer document, the opinion and dissent in the 2007 US Supreme Court ruling obliging EPA to regulate CO<sub>2</sub> emissions under the Clean Air Act, marks the climax of the book's implicit narrative.) Selections tend to be stitched together from several parts of each document; for instructors and students interested in putting

these passages in context, Howe points out that nearly all the documents in the book are in the public domain and easily accessible online.

The introduction presents a thoughtful and clear overview of the hazards of teleology, particularly in histories addressing subjects of substantial present-day concern. Howe glosses this as the “presentist paradox” (8); to avoid it, he advocates contextualism in the historical study of climate change. Instructors teaching undergraduates new to History may find this a helpful framework for reinforcing habits of historicism over the course of a semester.

Yet the selection of sources, no less than their interpretation, may be vulnerable to the “presentist paradox.” The contents of the reader constitute an argument: climate change history began with research by European physical scientists, developed within the institutions of American Cold War science and environmental politics, and went global and neoliberal at the millenium, though prominent cross-currents supporting state intervention and non-economic values point toward a range of possible climate futures.

Howe acknowledges his collection’s heavy bias toward US sources, arguing that this focus is defensible based on the Americans’ leading role in twentieth century atmospheric science and the outsized influence of domestic US politics in international climate negotiations. One might alternatively consider the scientific and social challenges posed by climate change as sufficient reason to get outside the work of atmospheric scientists and the deliberations of intergovernmental organizations in teaching this history. Howe urges readers to look beyond “the standard narrative of climate change” by scrutinizing the book’s documents for “important connections that still need to be made” (18). Yet many

such connections *have* been made, in a plethora of excellent scholarship attending to the global, long-term history of climate change and its consequences. (The large bibliography of primary and secondary sources at <http://www.climatehistory.net> is one good starting point.) Taking seriously this book's call to "make climate change history" means reading and teaching more stories than its documents alone can tell.

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Evan Hepler-Smith is a historian of modern science, technology, and environment. His book in progress, *Compound Words: Chemists, Information, and the Synthetic World*, is a history of molecular identity and information technology in twentieth-century chemistry.