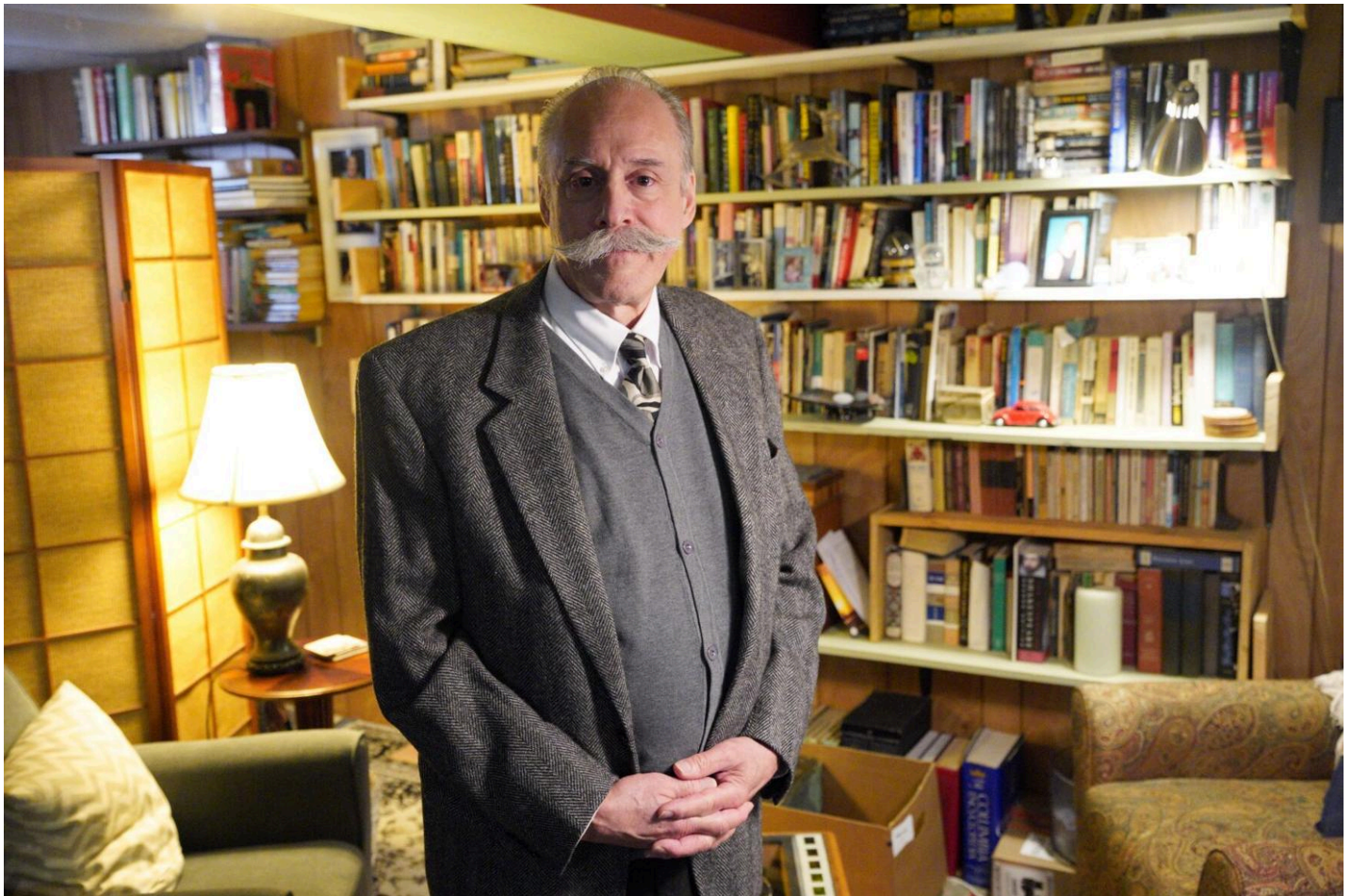


https://www.berkshireeagle.com/arts_and_culture/books/david-guenette-berkshire-athenaeum-mason-library/article_1273ba45-0710-43c3-acc5-25e3ccac80e6.html

BERKSHIRE AUTHOR

Berkshires take center stage in David Guenette's near-future climate thrillers

By Matt Martinez, The Berkshire Eagle
May 7, 2025



Author David Guenette plans talks at libraries in Pittsfield and Great Barrington surrounding climate change in reference to his literary series "The Steep Climes Quartet."

BEN GARVER — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

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NEW MARLBOROUGH — When it comes to the appeal of writing climate fiction, it's easier for David Guenette to list the things that don't attract him to the genre.

To start with: he doesn't think a post-apocalyptic setting is relatable enough for the pre-apocalyptic audience. "The climate change frenzied zombies," Guenette said, providing examples. "The desert where the pint of water can only be gained at the end of a gun."

If You Go

What: Talks by David Guenette, author of "Steep Climes Quartet"

When:

- **6:30 p.m., May 21:** Berkshire Athenaeum, 1 Wendell Ave., Pittsfield
- **4 p.m. May 23:** Mason Library, 231 Main St., Great Barrington

Admission: Free

Information: pittsfieldlibrary.org and gblibraries.org

"I tend to really keep my eyes open for climate fiction that's trying to do what I'm trying to do, which is to have the reader identify with the characters and identify their own lives with the situation that the characters are in," Guenette

said. “I think through that identification, it’s more likely that people will actually continue to think about climate change. It becomes their issue.”

There’s nothing inherently wrong with stories set in dystopian futures — he views some of the more famous examples, such as “Waterworld” and “Mad Max” as fun escapism, but he doesn’t find much common ground between himself and the protagonists.

He contrasts that with the 2020 novel “Weather,” by Jenny Offill, wherein the book’s narrator balances the minutiae of everyday life with the existential dread of a changing, volatile planet. The experience of the book’s main character, Lizzie, mirrors the way that we encounter climate change — mostly in the background, as we continue in the day-to-day, he said.

“I think about climate change a lot, but guess what? I think about my own life a lot more,” Guenette said. “I think about my relationships. I think about my family. I think about a cocktail I haven’t yet tried.”



CMTI PUBLISHING

In his own climate fiction series, “The Steep Climes Quartet,” the New Marlborough author attempts to capture the subtle and overt ways that people in the Berkshires encounter climate change both now and tomorrow.

Guenette will discuss the series with two volumes still on the way, and the issues driving it, during free lectures at the Berkshire Athenaeum 6:30 p.m. May 21 and the Mason Library in Great Barrington 4 p.m. May 23. Borrowing excerpts from the published novels, Guenette will use the narrative to enliven discussions of climate policy, mass migration and renewable energy.

The series imagines Berkshire County in the throes of climate change, pondering how an institution like Tanglewood might be affected by frequent high temperature days or how a lack of affordable energy could send city-

dwellers flocking to camp out in the woods near Monument Mountain.

The first two books are set in the very near future – the first, 2023's "Kill Well," takes place in 2026, while "Dear Josephine," takes place in 2029. The final two installments, "Over Brooklyn Hills" and "Farm to Me" will spin the story forward to 2035 and 2049 respectively, as the effects of climate change gradually worsen for residents in the Berkshires, transitioning from locals hearing about natural disasters on the news to feeling their effects firsthand.

Read it

"Kill Well" and "Dear Josephine," Books One and Two of "The Steep Climes Quartet" by David Guenette.

Published by CMTI Publishing

\$16.99 each

The series is replete with wide-ranging conspiracies taking place in various locations around the globe, as oil divestment lobbyists and investigative journalists clash against fossil fuel interests and climate denial think-tanks. Guenette uses blood, intrigue and colorful language to propel a narrative that is largely concerned with greenhouse gases and climate accords to dress up his findings after years researching global warming.

"There's thriller aspects in all of them," Guenette said. "My real suspicion for that is I want to keep people reading so they'll go through some of what I am deathly afraid is just pedagogical climate change science exposition or policy exposition."

The heart of the story, though, resides at the Housatonic home of recurring protagonist Davin Caine and various locations throughout the Berkshires, taking readers from heated annual town meetings to the streets of downtown Great Barrington.

The fictive Davin Caine inhabits the real-life home that Guenette renovated after moving to the area. The author centered the action there to lend some authenticity to its setting.

“The house that I rebuilt sort of largely became a character in the novels, simply because I know it so well and I know the rooms,” Guenette said, “so as I move the characters through, I can coordinate the dance with accuracy.”

The whole saga is in aid of generating a conversation that deepens the audience's understanding of climate change and the steps that can be taken to mitigate it. The lectures have been a success thus far, Guenette said, with the most enriching part generally coming during question and answer periods where he's been pleasantly surprised by the specificity of some attendees' inputs.

The overall goal is to make the sometimes abstract reality of the future more tangible for readers, Guenette said, following his theory that climate change is a hard thing for the human mind to fully grasp.

“On one hand, it's long-term relative to our lives – I mean, climate itself is defined at a minimum as a 30-year period of weather – but it's also pressing,” Guenette said. “We see examples of it, we hear it in the news, we understand the science, and we understand that the longer we take to react, the bigger bill we have to pay.”

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Tags

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Matt Martinez

Features Reporter