

I am pleased to announce that my forthcoming book, *Navigating The Coming Chaos: A Handbook For Inner Transition* will be in print and available for purchase in the next 3-4 weeks. Please stay tuned to my website at www.carolynbaker.net for details.

Endorsements

In the deepest sense *Navigating The Coming Chaos* is a handbook for midwifing the birth that is struggling to be embodied through the great death that is erupting, and like any authentic handbook of sacred midwifery, it is at once stringently unsentimental in its facing of the gritty and grueling process of birth, and loving and joyful in its depiction of what could be possible.

Andrew Harvey, author of *The Hope: A Guide to Sacred Activism*

What a pleasure it is to endorse a book of this quality and genius. But more to the point, a book of great urgency. I not only recommend this book, I urge you to it.

Caroline Myss, author of *Anatomy of The Spirit* and *Defy Gravity*

Introduction

We are here...to love as broadly and as deeply as we possibly can—knowing that we cannot do this without the support of the entire community of Life. Our purpose is to consciously further evolution in ways that serve everyone and everything, not just ourselves. This is our calling. This is our Great Work. Indeed, this is our destiny!

~Miriam MacGillis, Director of Genesis Farm, Blairstown, New Jersey~

In the closing months of the first decade of the twenty-first century, what does the world need most? Does it need another book on Peak Oil—another confirmation of the disappearance of cheap and abundant fossil fuel energy? Will the world benefit from yet another among tens of thousands of books on climate change as global warming, now operating with a life of its own, ravages the planet with natural disasters of epic proportions? Is the world crying out for another book on economic theory that will champion a particular system of resource acquisition and distribution? While an analysis of these three factors—energy, environment, and economics is pivotal in making sense of the

predicament in which we find ourselves, is yet another and deeper analysis what the human species is demanding?

I have been researching the state of the world since approximately the year 2000. Few books or movies on the topic of the unprecedented changes facing our species have escaped my attention. My intention in writing *this* book is to offer something more in alignment with what the human heart and the community of beings inhabiting this planet are crying out for because I understand viscerally that one more piece of analysis will only bore the mind and completely bypass the heart.

My deep conviction regarding this issue was underscored by the words of Clive Hamilton in his brilliant 2010 book *Requiem For A Species: Why We Resist The Truth About Climate Change*:

Climate disruption's assault on all we believed—endless progress, a stable future, our capacity to control the natural world with science and technology—will corrode the pillars that hold up the psyche of modern humanity. It will be psychologically destabilizing in a way exceeded in human history perhaps only by the shift to agriculture and the rise of industrial society.¹

While Hamilton's assertion was written in relation to climate change, it is applicable to the impact of energy depletion and global economic meltdown on humans and their responses to those, especially as these three crises converge in our lifetime in an unprecedented fashion.

In 2006 the Transition movement was born in Totnes, England and since then has virally spread throughout the world until there are now over 300 Transition initiatives on the planet. Some people reading this book are familiar with Transition and the efforts it continues to make to create sustainable communities everywhere on earth. Its model offers a brilliant map for transforming the conditions of the external world, or in situations where that may not be possible, responding to them resiliently. However, even though the *Transition Handbook* contains a section on the psychology of change, the focus of the movement remains on external Transition. Because I feel passionately that external Transition cannot succeed without a transformation of consciousness among the human species, *Navigating The Coming Chaos* has been written to address the void created by a predominant emphasis on outer Transition and offer specific tools to

facilitate inner Transition. My hope is that this book will become an intimate companion of the *Transition Handbook* as well as a map of inner transition for individuals who are completely unfamiliar with the Transition movement.

But before proceeding, I want to tell the reader what this book is *not*. It is not a book for gleaning information; *it is a study*. If you crave more facts and do not wish to explore the myriad aspects of the human soul which may offer an antidote to the lethal cocktail of horrors which our species has created, this is not the book for you. If you have picked up this book in order to get more for yourself but have little interest in giving anything momentous to yourself or the world, it is likely that you will soon lose interest in what is written here.

Perhaps you have been preparing logistically for the collapse of industrial civilization for some time. You may have attended to food and water storage, energy supply, herbal medicines, organic gardens, and sustainable shelter. Perhaps you are exquisitely prepared for what James Howard Kunstler calls *The Long Emergency*ⁱⁱ, and you have every base of logistical preparation covered, but some part of you feels queasy when you contemplate living in a chaotic world during or following the collapse of most or all of the systems of civilization which at this moment in history we take for granted, and have all of our lives.

Perhaps you have envisioned possible scenarios of that world or read books or seen movies suggesting similar or worse scenarios. As you sit with them you notice an eddy of emotions that churn and spin like whirlpools of molten lava throughout your body. One moment you feel fear, the next sorrow, and in another, disorientation as you imagine events, landscapes, situations, and behavior that in present time are scarcely fathomable.

Many options for responding to those feelings present themselves to you. You may choose to reach for a stiff drink, a comforting dessert, a hug from a loved one, the furry snuggle of a household pet, a mindless TV series—or you may just choose to go to sleep and forget about what you're feeling. Yet some part of you knows that sooner or later, you are likely to be faced not only with one of the disturbing scenarios you imagine or one like it, but even more poignantly, the *feelings* that such an event will activate in you.

Still another part of you hopes that everything you've read or imagined about the future is false. Perhaps all the prognosticators are wrong, and the diehard champions of "technology will eventually save us" are right. Perhaps the future

isn't so bright that you "need to wear shades," as the eighties rock hit boasts, but perhaps it really won't be as bleak as the "doomers" say it will be.

In fact, even now as you read these words, you may fear or resent me for writing them. You may argue that I shouldn't be scaring people. Yet after a decade of studying the state of the planet in depth and after witnessing that the majority of the human species is still unwilling to acknowledge its plight, I cannot in good conscience report to you "good news" that does not exist. More recently, James Gustave Speth, environmental attorney and author of *The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability*, asserts that "We need to be reminded of the nightmare ahead...we will never do the things that are needed unless we know the full extent of our predicament."ⁱⁱⁱ

In his June 18, 2010 blog piece, "Waiting For the Millennium: The Limits of Magic"^{iv}, John Michael Greer writes:

...the thing that most people in the industrial world are going to want most in the very near future is something that neither a revitalization movement nor anything else can do. We are passing from an age of unparalleled abundance to an age of scarcity, economic contraction, and environmental payback. As the reality of peak oil goes mainstream and the end of abundance becomes impossible to ignore, most people in the industrial world will begin to flail about with rising desperation for anything that will bring the age of abundance back. Even those who insist they despise that age and everything it stands for have in many cases already shown an eagerness to cling to as many of its benefits as they themselves find appealing.

The difficulty, of course, is that the end of the age of abundance isn't happening because of changes in consciousness; it's happening because of the laws of physics. The abundance we've all grown up thinking as normal was there only because a handful of nations burned their way through the Earth's store of fossil carbon at breakneck speed. Most of the fossil fuel reserves that can be gotten cheaply and quickly have already been extracted and burnt; the dregs that remain – high-sulfur oil, tar sands, brown coal, and the like – yield less energy after

what's needed to extract them is taken into account, and impose steep ecological costs as well; renewables and other alternative energy resources have problems of their own, and have proved unable to take up more than a small fraction of the slack. These limitations are not subject to change, or even to negotiation; they define a predicament that we will all have to live with, one way or another, for a very long time to come.

...there is no bright future ahead.

It does not predict a future of unbroken misery, or claim that there will be no gains to measure against the immense losses most of us will suffer.

What it means is that the core faith of the age that is passing, the faith that the future will be better than the past or present, has become a delusion. In almost every sense, the future ahead of us will be worse than the present and the recent past. The vast majority of us will be much poorer than we have been; many of us will have to worry at least now and then about getting enough food to stay alive; most of us will have to do without adequate medical care; most of us will not have the opportunity to retire; most of us will die at least a little sooner than we otherwise would have done. The security most of us take for granted, with police and firefighters on call and the rule of law acknowledged even when it's not equally enforced, will in many places become a fading memory; many areas that have been at peace for a long time will have to cope with the ghastly realities of domestic insurgency or war. All these things will be part of everyday life for the vast majority of us for decades, and on the other side of it lies, not some imagined golden age, but a temporary respite of stabilization and partial recovery that might last for half a century at most before the next wave of crises hits.

This is the way civilizations decline and fall. It's our bad luck to be living at the dawn of the second great wave of decline to hit Western civilization – the first, for those who

haven't been keeping track of their history, began in 1914 and ended in the early 1950s – and this wave will probably be a great deal worse than the first, if only because it comes right after the peak of conventional petroleum production and thus has to face a decline in net energy per capita on top of everything else. It's comforting, and will doubtless be common, to look for scapegoats for the troubled times ahead, but it seems more useful to recognize that this is simply what happens at this point on the curve of history's wheel.

Nearly all of our ancestors lived in times when there was no bright future on the horizon; nearly all of our descendants will experience the same thing. The great majority of the former and, no doubt, of the latter as well, found other reasons for living. That's an equally viable option right now, given a willingness to think the unthinkable, recognize that the age of abundance is ending, and consider the possibility that doing the right thing in a time of crisis, no matter how uncomfortable or challenging the right thing might be, may be a more potent source of meaning than waiting for magic to make a bright future arrive.

Nowhere in the literature of the Long Emergency have I read a more poignant description of the future than this. But during this past decade, I have learned much more about holding the tension of this overall bleakness with the profound inspiration the last sentence of Greer's forecast offers, namely, that *doing the right thing in a time of crisis, no matter how uncomfortable or challenging the right thing might be, may be a more potent source of meaning than waiting for magic to make a bright future arrive.*

So here Greer nails it. When industrial civilization as we know it no longer exists, what will matter—and perhaps all that will matter, is meaning.

Likewise, Clive Hamilton notes that:

As the climate crisis unfolds, and poses the question of the future of humankind, the meaning of our lives will come increasingly to the fore. After a long period of

psychological disruption stability will return only with the emergence of a new understanding of the Earth, a story to replace the one in which the globe is seen as a repository of resources to fuel endless growth.^v

But what is the fundamental definition of *meaning*, and isn't it different for everyone?

Before he left us in 2009, the brilliant and lovable Thomas Berry gave us in *The Great Work* the bigger picture of "meaning":

History is governed by those overarching movements that give shape and meaning to life *by relating the human venture to the larger destinies of the universe* (italics mine). Creating such a movement might be called the Great Work of a people.^{vi}

Humans have accessed and perpetuated the Great Work many times in our history, but industrial civilization has been a project designed to facilitate our forgetting that work, yet the work seems to keep returning incessantly to humans, however, not without incalculable anguish whenever they forget its pivotal role in their story.

Berry also tells us that the universe knows itself through humans who have developed conscious self-awareness. And certainly history seems to reveal that when humans de-value conscious self-awareness, they behave destructively, but when they deem it sacred, they function more harmoniously with the community of life on earth.

Miriam MacGillis, student and promoter of Thomas Berry's work, adds that:

The human is the being in whom the Earth has become spiritually aware, has awakened into consciousness, has become self-aware and self-reflecting. In the human, the Earth begins to reflect on itself, its meaning, who it is, where it came from, and where it's going. So in our deepest definition and its deepest subjectivity, humans are the Earth—conscious.

Mathematical cosmologist and physicist, Brian Swimme, in his lecture series "The Powers of The Universe" emphasizes that cataclysm, or the constant rising and falling of life, is contiguous and cannot be reversed because it is inherent in the Second Law of Thermodynamics, that is, "things fall apart and break down."^{vii} But for Swimme, the issue is not preventing or avoiding cataclysm but rather, attentively responding to it. "Cataclysm is happening," he says, but "the choice before us is whether we will participate consciously."

This was precisely the red thread which ran through my 2009 book *Sacred Demise: Walking The Spiritual Path of Industrial Civilization's Collapse*. Essentially, in that book I emphasized repeatedly: Stop trying to avoid or prevent collapse. Open to collapse, understand it, move with it, do not resist it, and discover what it is asking from you. Or as Brian Swimme states: "By allowing the destruction of the earth to be the ground out of which we think, we enable cataclysm to proceed in a more conscious way."

Yet some would argue that the earth may be saved by alien beings in the universe who are more intelligent or more highly evolved. Others would argue that humans need to vacate the planet they have nearly destroyed and colonize other worlds, simply relocating their venue of pillage after having learned nothing. While I do not wish to argue these theories here, I hold unequivocally that just as a "savior" politician or President cannot provide solutions that address the needs of local communities, alien beings or geographic relocations in our galaxy cannot enable humans to cross the evolutionary threshold to which I believe we are being inexorably called by our own conscious self-awareness.

Recently, John Peterson of the Arlington Institute spoke to a group here in Boulder, Colorado and asked the question: What's happening to us? What are we becoming? He called our predicament "a punctuation in the human species," an evolutionary threshold, and asserted that a "new kind of human being" is necessary.

Peterson then asked: Do you really want to become a new kind of human being? If we do, he suggested that we ask the question: What is my purpose?

When someone asked Peterson, "But how do I find out my purpose?" he replied, "Just ask, because when you do, magic starts to happen."

In fact, it may be that without deep reflection on our life purpose, we lack the capacity to create meaningful change in our own lives and in the functioning of our communities. The great Czech playwright and politician, Vaclav Havel, asks:

What could change the direction of today's civilization? It is my deep conviction that the only option is a change in the sphere of the spirit, in the sphere of human conscience. It's not enough to invent new machines, new regulations, new institutions. We must develop a new understanding of the true purpose of our existence on this Earth. Only by making such a fundamental shift will we be able to create new models of behavior and a new set of values for the planet. ^{viii}

Much of this book is designed to assist the reader in asking and receiving the answers that serious reflection on one's purpose and calling may arouse. However, in order to ask the question and respond consciously, the wounds of industrial civilization in the form of so-called "dark emotions" must be explored. An entire section of the book is devoted to understanding and working with those.

Without adequate emotional and spiritual preparation for the collapse of industrial civilization, the human psyche is very likely to be overwhelmed to the point of madness or death. Collapse is humanity's next rite of passage, our imminent initiation into adulthood as a species. And as is sometimes the case, those undergoing initiation do not survive. In an August, 2010 interview I conducted with Transition Colorado's Co-Director, Michael Brownlee, he stated, "Primarily because of our use of fossil fuels and our profligate burning of fossil fuels, we've unleashed profound changes in our climate that are probably going to give us the equivalent of a species near-death experience. The near-death experiences for many individuals will be a profound wake up call and will produce a shift from an aimless, dissipated, wasted life to a focus on purpose and service. Climate change is likely to be affording us as a species, that kind of opportunity."

The "good" news, you see, is that we *have* such an opportunity because without it, we will have precious little to motivate us in persevering. Clive Hamilton reminds us that "The foundational beliefs of modernity—the unlimited scope of human achievements, our capacity to control the world around us, our belief in the power of knowledge to solve whatever discomforts us—will collapse."^{ix}

One of the qualities desperately needed in navigating the coming chaos is resilience. All resources for preparing for the Long Emergency emphasize resilience, but few offer a detailed explanation of what it is and how to cultivate it. Within the following pages lie several explanations along with many opportunities to practice greater resilience.

This book is a hands-on, practical toolkit. Because it is a study, it offers a cache of personal reflection exercises to which a great deal of deep thought and contemplation have been given. These provide the essential implements of inner transition. If you are reading this book only for information and do not work through all of the exercises, you will have missed a treasure-trove of guidance, inspiration, and untapped inner resources. Again, this is about giving—to yourself and to the people and experiences you may encounter in the collapse process, as well as to the earth community. You will give and receive the most if you treasure and work the exercises that are provided at the end of every chapter.

The first section of this book “Building Your Internal Bunker” focuses on cultivating an inner life and utilizing internal resources to confront the shadow self in order to savor our inherent connectedness with the earth community. Without the fortification and nurturance of a rich inner life, it may be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to engage in the work of subsequent sections of the book. Moreover, without a robust internal bunker, it will be virtually impossible to navigate the coming chaos.

The second section “Allies In The Great Turning—Who’s Turning With You?” explores the issue of relationship and relatedness—with nature, with other human beings, and even with our own bodies. A broader definition of relationship is offered than we typically encounter in modern culture with the intention of also expanding our sense of support as we prepare to navigate a daunting future.

Section three “Emotions: Becoming A Warrior of Vulnerability” provides extensive support for consciously befriending all of our human emotions, with particular attention to the so-called “dark” emotions. In this section we draw upon the extraordinary wisdom of psychologist Miriam Greenspan whose life and work offer tangible tools for enhancing our emotional health and deepening our capacity to experience joy as well as the emotions we may prefer to avoid but which will be invariably stirred in the Long Emergency.

In the fourth and final section, “Elderhood At Any Age: The Skillful Use of Inner Transition Tools” we examine the concept of elderhood and its relevance to our community and our own lives, no matter how old or young we are. Here we discover the seeds of wisdom and the capacity to create beauty which enable us to prepare for the many unknowns of the future as well as imagine and create a new culture.

ⁱ Clive Hamilton, *Requiem For A Species: Why We Resist The Truth About Climate Change*, 2010, p.222.

ⁱⁱ James Howard Kunstler, *The Long Emergency*, 2005, Grove/Atlantic.

ⁱⁱⁱ James Gustave Speth, *A Bridge At The Edge of The World: Capitalism, The Environment, and Crossing From Crisis to Sustainability*, 2010, p. 234.

^{iv} John Michael Greer, “Waiting For The Millennium: The Limits of Magic”:
<http://www.energybulletin.net/node/53150>

^v Clive, Hamilton, *Requiem For A Species*, p. 219.

^{vi} Thomas Berry, *The Great Work*, 1999, p. 1.

^{vii} Brian Swimme, “The Powers of The Universe”: <http://www.brianswimme.org/store/default.asp>

^{viii} Vaclav Havel, quoted in *A Bridge At The End of The World*, p. 200.

^{ix} Clive Hamilton, *Requiem For A Species*, p. 210.