



# **Too Much Magic: Wishful Thinking, Technology, and the Fate of the Nation**

*James Howard Kunstler*

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James Howard Kunstler's critically acclaimed and best-selling *The Long Emergency*, originally published in 2005, quickly became a grassroots hit, going into nine printings in hardcover. Kunstler's shocking vision of our post-oil future caught the attention of environmentalists and business leaders alike, and stimulated widespread discussion about our dependence on fossil fuels and our dysfunctional financial and government institutions. Kunstler has since been profiled in *The New Yorker* and invited to speak at TED. In *Too Much Magic*, Kunstler evaluates what has changed in the last seven years and shows us that, in a post-financial-crisis world, his ideas are more relevant than ever.

"Too Much Magic" is what Kunstler sees in the bright visions of a future world dreamed up by optimistic souls who believe technology will solve all our problems. Their visions remind him of the flying cars and robot maids that were the dominant images of the future in the 1950s. Kunstler's image of the future is much more sober. With vision, clarity of thought, and a pragmatic worldview, Kunstler argues that the time for magical thinking and hoping for miracles is over, and the time to begin preparing for the long emergency has begun.

## Too Much Magic: Wishful Thinking, Technology, and the Fate of the Nation Details

Date : Published June 19th 2012 by Atlantic Monthly Press

ISBN : 9780802120304

Author : James Howard Kunstler

Format : Hardcover 245 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Environment, Peak Oil, Politics, Economics, Science, Technology, History

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# From Reader Review Too Much Magic: Wishful Thinking, Technology, and the Fate of the Nation for online ebook

## Scott says

This is a continuation of the socio-political prophecy of Kunstler's earlier book, *THE LONG EMERGENCY*. He foresaw a future in which America would face the end of cheap oil, with all the economic and political crises that would follow from that. This book's premise is that we are now in that long emergency, having hit the "Peak Oil" moment in 2006 (This is the long-predicted moment when oil production has reached its limit, and will begin to decline, regardless of demand. For an industrial world founded on cheap oil, this is a catastrophe).

Kunstler is funny and angry, and writes really well (he's published 10 or so novels, including two recent ones that take place in a world after the end of oil). He rages against the American suburbanization following WWII as "The most tragic misallocation of resources in the history of the world." In this book he makes two points about "Too much magic." First, we've been too successful with our technology that we developed in the age of cheap oil. Air flight, space travel, plentiful food, the electric grid, the internet--these are all miracles that we take for granted and are even bored with because we've had this surfeit of technology. But that technology was the product of energy, and the energy is running out. His second point about "too much magic" is that we have not faced the reality that fossil fuels were finite and that they allowed us to overpopulate the world, abuse nature and create overly complex systems of finance, politics and culture. Now the fossil fuels are disappearing and we are stuck in a desperate cycle of magical thinking, sure that some new technology is going to replace them and protect our way of life. We don't want to hear anything about economic and ecological contraction, it is so scary.

This is definitely the kind of book that gets called a "Jeremiad" but that's a little dismissive. Kunstler is mad because he cares, and because he knows how painful the new life of living with less will be for everyone. He doesn't spare anyone on the political spectrum, for we've all avoided facing the fact that our too-complex banking, business and political systems are letting us down.

If you haven't read *THE LONG EMERGENCY* it might pay to read it first, or at least to get some info in your head about Peak Oil and its consequences. This book may depress you, but it could also help prepare you to face the fact, that the bill is coming due for this long, long party we've had in the age of cheap oil.

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## Jennie says

This is a hard book to read. Kunstler is a gifted non-fiction writer, spinning compelling prose in the same vein as political writers such as Matt Taibbi and Michael Lewis. That's not what I mean. I mean that it's *hard* in that it says something so incredibly terrifying, that you desperately read between the lines trying to find a way to avoid coming to the same conclusions.

But you can't.

Kunstler argues that the modern era is coming to an end. That our car culture, suburbia, modern

manufacturing, and high-stakes financing are irrevocably on the decline. Why? Because peak oil has passed. Energy will never be as cheap as it was since the turn of the century. Because our modern way of living depends on not only cheap energy, but endless cheap energy. That everyone was betting on something that we should have known was impossible: endless upwards growth.

Honestly, I hope that what Kunstler predicts will never come to pass--that we will wise up and break our dependency on cheap energy. But I've been watching our nihilist politics too long. I do fear that we have reached the plateau of modern civilization as it is presently understood, and that our current woes are because we bet on expansion when we got stagnation instead. What will happen when stagnation turns to decline as the oil wells dry up?

Like Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It*, we ignore Kunstler at our own peril.

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### **Paula says**

I'm sensitive to profane words, and so didn't appreciate Kunstler's too casual use of such words. Aside from that issue, I enjoyed his writing style. Sometimes you just want to hear someone express your most intense frustrations. Kunstler is a master at raving, and he has plenty to rave about. The environment and society both are terminally ill. The western lifestyle that is utterly dependent on cheap oil is the cause of that illness, and yet we keep carrying on with business like a bunch of addicts who can't kick the habit that's killing us. Wake up, America! Stop before it's too late!

That being said, Kunstler is one of the doomsayers. At one point, he acknowledges that people often call him that. He denies it. He insists that he is a cheerful fellow with hope for the future, it's just for a future that will not be like the present. In spite of his resistance to the label, it is what he is. Yet, what he doesn't understand is that it isn't his knowledge about the trouble ahead that makes people insist that he is a doomsayer. It is his very vision, albeit somewhat hopeful, of the future that is at issue. He sees the future as--at best--some grim, dark, after-the-apocalypse, return to agrarian society. That is the doom that people are labeling him with.

I believe in the coming crisis, as well all should. It could involve some real horrors like war, looting, collapse of government, and so forth. However, ultimately I believe humanity will get back up, dust itself off, and rebuild healthy communities. And I believe that much of the drama could be averted by preparing for it now. Communities are capable of filling in the gaps that the collapse will take away. Local food, water, energy and so forth will be the future. Whether we do something about it now, or go through the drama first is up to us.

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### **Vincent says**

I will be simple and to the point. If you are aware of Kunstler and his ideas then you probably do not need to bother with this one. There really isn't anything new although he does make a nice effort tying the vulgarities of peak oil with all of the recent financial shenanigans. His comments about a lack of future capital for oil/ng exploration and exploitation are thought provoking. If, however, you have never heard of Kunstler then I recommend this book as it will make you more aware of the peak oil issue and how it just might plow over you with the force of a freight train if you decide to remain ignorant of its dire message.

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## Esmeralda Rupp-Spangle says

This is a wonderful follow up to The Long Emergency. I would say- you should absolutely read the Long Emergency first- this is *\*definitely\** a follow up book- there's a lot less in the way of facts and figures and a lot more sort of grumpy philosophical musing and citing facts and figures that he laid out thoroughly in his previous work. It's a fantastic book, but should not stand alone; this really should be read only after you've finished The Long Emergency.

Any way you cut it though, it's the same despairing, cranky, caustic, abrasive, no nonsense, cut-and-dry, BS free Kuntsler that I know and love. He's Funny as hell, a very entertaining writer- which is really what makes such depressing literature so oddly delightful.

I feel a sort of vague nihilistic satisfaction emanating from his work- especially this one. It's a kind of "See? I told you this was going to happen- but it's going to get a whole lot worse... here's how and why" Oddly, I find this undertone of smugness to be satisfying rather than obnoxious. I'm frankly sick of climate scientists and science writers being overly optimistic and spinning tales of an alt-energy paradise. It's not "almost" too late, it's super-duper completely too late. We're WAY beyond the point of no return- and I think Kunstler is one of only a handful of people who recognize (or are willing to acknowledge publicly- for which he takes a lot of grief) this deeply disturbing fact. It's part of what makes him so appealing to me. I now avoid books with titles like "Doom, and How We Can Avoid It" because that's nonsense. There's no avoiding it.

This hesitance about their own terrifying conclusions a tactic that scientists use in abundance- a sort of skeptical caution about their own work- partially because constantly re-examining your data is just how science works, but partially because the world- specifically the powerful right wing lobbyists, politicians, and those who benefit most from keeping on as we are- has become so completely hostile to people who suggest this way of life is unsustainable that many climatologists (& the like) are terrorized by email inboxes full of threats and insults. (Clive Hamilton approaches the psychology of this brilliantly in Requiem for a Species)

It's time the media brought our civilizations imminent collapse to center stage, but it's not going to happen. Ineffectual governments, dishonest or misguided political figures, apathetic, ignorant populations, and habit keep us stuck in this rut.

JHK is one of a very small number of authors who are willing to approach this topic realistically- peppered of course with his characteristically harsh wit.

I have a whole shelf full of climate change, peak resource, and other doom related literature: Richard Heinberg, Clive Hamilton, Mark Lynas, Fred Gutrl, James Hansen, Heidi Cullen, Peter Ward, Bill McKibben... but of all of this gloomy stuff, I really- truly ENJOY Kunstler the most. He's the funniest, and the most relatable. I would recommend his book to a friend before ANY of these others. He's definitely the only one of them who's made me LOL.

Highly recommended, AFTER you read The Long Emergency.

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## Charlene says

This is James Howard Kunstler: some witty observations, some reasonable assessments of certain aspects of modernity, a few good ideas, and a few wild misses. This book will definitely provide food for thought. That said, don't take any of it too seriously or you will soon find yourself living a solitary life in the piney woods, eating suspect berries and wild mushrooms, all while bathing only once a fortnight in rainwater collected from the roof of your hut. And if you're particularly incautious about the berries and the misanthropy, you might start sending combustible things to people with bad results for you and them.

Short and sweet version: points out many failings of modern life but a bit too slanted toward the doom-porn genre to be entirely realistic.

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## Glen Krisch says

Nothing new if you follow Kunstler.

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## Mike Moskos says

While the themes will be familiar to anyone who listens to Jim's weekly podcast or his reads Monday blog, the chance to get your hands on Jim's wonderful command of the English language alone makes the book worth a read.

I don't think most Americans have any idea how much their lives will change in the coming years, no matter what magical thinking they have about their future.

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## Jason says

I was very early in life inoculated against the triumphs of technology and imprinted instead with a respectful hypersensitivity for its implications.... [and] this conditioning has led me much later in life to take an extremely skeptical view of what is commonly regarded as "progress." By an odd coincidence, I have also found myself later in life in a society that is crumbling under the weight of its investments in technology (and tortured by the unintended consequences and diminishing returns of these investments), not to mention the agony of its ongoing fantasies about a technological rescue from the very predicaments already spawned by the misuse of technology. (pp. 243-4)

If you find yourself resonating with any of those sentiments, you may want to check out this collection of informed rants by the author of *The Long Emergency* and the "World Made By Hand" novels. Many of the topics will be familiar to readers of his blog—peak oil, peak finance, the cultural cul de sac of Happy Motoring, the bankruptcy of modern architecture and urban planning, the implications of climate change, the

failure of contemporary party politics, the future of race relations in the US, and the sorry implications of the ubiquitous tattoo. He even has a chapter on Ray Kurzweil and the Singularity, which Kunstler sees (with some good reason) as a sort of religion. Not much of the information here is new, and I don't always agree with Kunstler, but the book is decently written and oftentimes pretty funny.

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## **Joy says**

I found this so real and so heavy on my heart. The energy that powers our world comes from the sun, the oil we pump represents millions of years of stored energy from the sun. We've burned through the majority of stored fuel in less than 120 years. Can democracy help us to manage the loss of free energy? How will society deal with food shortages, famine, disease, and fighting over resources? It's a doom and gloom read; it's very thought provoking.

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## **Eric says**

A warning of the long emergency that our society is heading into, this is a good book that is definitely worth reading, though it does have flaws. This is an update to his earlier book, *The Long Emergency*. Kunstler predicts a future of significant climate change and energy shortages which will result in major changes to the way we will have to live, including the abandonment of auto-oriented suburban sprawl, and the return to higher density urban living patterns and reduced energy consumption. In the best parts of the book, he lays out the history of the development of America's two political parties, and gives a great description of the financial crisis, and the many problems involved with it.

The title of the book reflects Kunstler's view that we are relying on "too much magic", that we put too much faith in the idea that technology can save us from the climate change, depletion of fossil fuels, and other problems. While he is most likely right about this, the problem is that he has too little faith in technology or in our ability to work out solutions to our problems. In the chapter on energy sources, he dismisses every possible solution (as he also did in *The Long Emergency*) as being unfeasible with no hope of being able to supply any amount of power to support any kind of civilized society. He seems to hold the view that American society will always demand, and be completely dependent on the ability to consume huge amounts of energy as we do today despite dwindling supplies, disregarding simple rules of economics; as energy prices rise, people will make efforts to cut back their consumption. Also, although it may be difficult and painful, people can learn to make lifestyle changes to reduce their consumption in the face of rising costs. He also seems to think that oil is soon to suddenly become almost completely unavailable, and that there is a high possibility that national systems of electrical distribution, telecommunications, and the internet are going to collapse in as soon as a decade, for reasons that are not explained. He goes so far as to predict that animals will once again be needed to work the farm fields of America, due to lack of fuel to run the tractors.

Overly dire predictions such as these indicate that Kunstler does not always have a good understanding of our energy predicament. Though we are running out of oil, there will still be some oil available for a long time as supplies draw down, probably hundreds of years (it will be a long emergency). In the case of operation of farms, productivity from machines is so much higher than that of animals that they will continue to be used even if fuel becomes much more expensive.

Kunstler acknowledges his particularly high skepticism of and disdain for technological advancement in the

afterword of the book. For this reason his writing cannot help being influenced by this overly pessimistic view.

I've devoted a lot of this review to criticism, however, despite the flaws in a few chapters, this is a worthwhile book. As noted above, much of the content is quite good and very well articulated. It has a powerful message that our nation continues to barrel into a severe crisis that much of society chooses not to address.

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## **Gold says**

I agree with the author that it's unwise to try to correct problems created by technology with more technology. Not all technological progress is good. The planet and humans would be better off in terms of health if we went back to preindustrial times, with the addition of modern sanitation/hygiene.

The book advocates for returning to trains because cars will become obsolete. But what will the trains run on?

The author thinks the suburbs are doomed because they require cars, which won't be able to last forever since oil won't last forever. I still hold out hope for clean energy sources like solar though. Maybe we could invent cars that could run off of salt water, or human waste, or plastic garbage? I know that humans would be better off in terms of health if they had to get around using their own leg power, but I hate to think of humans being forced to live in an urban area just because they can't walk/ride very far.

The book includes a good summary of the corrupt banks that caused the 2008 recession, and how it coincided with peak-oil.

I learned that President Jimmy Carter installed solar panels on the White House roof, but Reagan took them off. Humanity has the capability to make our world sustainable but they choose not to!

I learned about the OPEC countries. I notice that many of them are ones the US chooses to war with or otherwise interfere with (iran, iraq, libya, venezuela, etc.)

The book says people won't be able to live in the southern states due to the uncomfortable climate without AC, but how are the northern states any better? They have hot summers too, with the addition of cold winters. And how are people going to heat their homes without electricity? Not many trees left to cut down for firewood. I think people are more likely to survive the heat than the cold without electricity. Temperatures below 32 probably mean death quicker than temps of 100.

Overall, I recommend the book. The author forecasts a lot of doom and gloom, but he may be correct in his predictions. We would be wise to prepare for the worst, just in case it happens. I liked that he was mostly objective and made insightful points.

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## **Tony says**

Is you've not read "The Long Emergency," another of his books, you should probably start there. This book



is intended as a companion/follow-up to that book.

The basic thesis of this book is that, as things get more and more complex (computers, cars, supply chains, financial systems, etc.) there are diminishing returns associated with each jump in complexity. There's also a greater risk that the thing will fail completely and a lower probability that we can fix it when it does. The end result is something out of "Idiocracy," where things are horribly broken and no one can fix them. While that movie depicts humanity becoming evermore stupid, this book makes a simpler statement: that things get too complex for people to comprehend. We just have to trust that they are working because, well, the alternative is that we're screwed. No one fully understands how they work so no one can fix them.

Anecdotally, I can't argue with him.

Autozone was recently, by one analyst, downgraded because they sell, primarily, to Do-It-Yourself types and, as automobiles become evermore complex, they have progressively fewer potential customers. I used to change my oil; since getting a hybrid, I take it to a qualified mechanic for EVERYTHING.

I work in software development. Increasingly, applications consist of large numbers of libraries and frameworks, with all their attendant dependencies, and a small amount of hand-written "glue," tying it all together. Developers are, to a lesser degree, engineers and are, to an increasing degree, "sorcerers apprentices." They wield magic they do not comprehend. They have entire languages and frameworks to use just for getting the software to build. And, if you need to build it again six months later, it may not work because the libraries on which it is built have changed so much in the intervening months.

Is nearly impossible to be a true software engineer, anymore, because new stuff is always being developed, old stuff is being updated. It would be a full-time job just keeping up with the changes. When are you supposed to actually get any work done?

In short, I've witnessed this stuff firsthand.

Kunstler proposes that we've become far too trusting that technology will just supply the answer for us. Petroleum fuels becoming too expensive? Biofuels to the rescue. You don't need to change your lifestyle; just substitute ethanol, biodiesel or some other fuel in its place and carry on. Can't keep making electricity from coal? Solar or wind or nuclear (or some combination) to the rescue. Charge up your Tesla from solar panels and carry on

How energy intensive is the production of solar panels? Will we still be able to make them when cheap electricity from coal and natural gas is no longer available to run the refining and manufacturing processes? How about the aluminum, for the frame and body, and the batteries for the car? We're looking at the future as if we will still have cheap energy and transportation, assuming that technology will, magically, supply the answers. It always has. Right?

We can't make that assumption.

Stop for a moment. Let that last statement sink in.

When you start to realize just how much of our modern lifestyle depends on cheap fossil fuels, and realize that we CAN NOT assume they will always be this affordable, and start to realize just how supply chains, prices, lifestyles and lives will change, the result is one of those "uncomfortable" things no one really wants to ponder.

Much of the products and services we take for granted are only affordable if petroleum remains cheap. That will not happen. If we're going to switch to some other, drop-in, replacement, we should have that developed and be ramping it up already. This has not happened. And it's getting kinda late in the game for replacements to show themselves.

Are we doomed?

Those who have skills, useful to people in the vicinity, without needing a 1,000+ mile supply chain, will be fine. Those who are wielding the most magic, less likely to produce a tangible, necessary product, need to give some thought to developing hobbies which COULD result in a product useful to our neighbors.

It won't matter if someone 2,000 miles away needs what we can make. Computer hardware is one of those things that will be used as long as it can, but won't be replaced because of the tremendous energy required. Also, even if you offer a price lower than anyone more local to the demand, transportation will have significant cost. Power delivery networks (largely computerized and depending on refined copper and rare-earth metals; all VERY energy-intensive) and large corporate hierarchies (which rely on centralized, computerized communications networks and cheap transportation) are in trouble, too. He's quite convinced that only that which is LOCALLY useful and LOCALLY replicable has a future.

You'd like to dismiss him as some neo-Luddite crank. If you look at his evidence, though, that gets much harder to. I don't want to believe this is the reality of the future. I wield a lot of magic; by his standards I'm doomed. But, if this is the reality of the future, well, better to be prepared than surprised.

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## **Carl says**

Enjoyed this book from front cover to rear & found myself repeatedly wishing someone were handy so I could read a paragraph aloud to them. The author is knowledgeable, authoritative, & writes elegantly with humor & clarity. First & foremost he is an energy expert with long term experience in the fossil fuel industry. He claims that the amazing achievements of the last 100 or so years were fueled by & depended entirely upon cheap, abundant energy & that that very energy was magic as it was unlike anything in our previous history & unlike anything in our future. It should be added that he does not ignore the fact that this magic also brought about our current circumstances of climate disruption, extinction of species & overall resource depletion. He says we've become hooked on energy & just like addicts we expect our drug of choice to continue to be available. We're willing to accept different sources of energy but we expect not to be inconvenienced beyond what goes in the tank. BUT he says, sadly that our hopes cannot be satisfied. Alternative renewable energy sources will not be sufficient to replace fossil fuels & civilization as we know it will have to change, simplify, & become more localized. In his description of how the change might develop, he parallels the ground covered by Orlov but without providing the same ghastly details as Orlov. Kuntsler admits that he is not a survivalist. Besides the surface similarities to Orlov, Kuntsler covers some territory staked out by Wendell Berry in describing the possible charms of our coming simplified & localized lifestyles. This is a book with a ton of food for thought & should not be missed.

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## **Richard Reese says**

Far, far away, on the misty frontiers of knowledge, dwells a small and widely scattered clan of clear thinkers

who live with their eyes wide open, their minds always set to the “on” position, and their powers of reasoning cranked up to 10. They have an acute ability to instantly recognize the presence of balderdash and poppycock, even in parts per billion quantities. Even if the source is a slick-talking president, a gray-haired instructor, an industry expert, or a famous sexy celebrity, they know without a doubt when claptrap and twaddle are shamelessly being ejaculated. They can keep their eyes on the ball, even in the thick fog of a never-ending propaganda blitzkrieg.

These isolated wizards refuse to drink the Kool-Aid and dream away their lives in the colorful cartoon fantasy world of consumer society. They aren’t giddy with childlike excitement about the latest new cars, shoes, cell phones, and hairdos. They have no throbbing hunger for RVs, McMansions, or jet skis. They don’t rot and soak into the couch cushions while sitting in front of flashing screaming TVs. Their minds are capable of voyaging to realms far beyond the dreary two-step death march of working and shopping.

They often dwell on mountaintops, sitting beside a fire, horrified at the spectacular stupidity of the industrial civilization spread out below them —killing the oceans, killing the forests, killing the prairies, killing their children, killing everything they touch — all for no good reason! Nothing could be more befuddling and painful to watch! What could they be thinking? Why can’t they see what’s happening?

James Howard Kunstler is one of those clear thinkers, and the twenty-first century is just driving him bonkers! It’s ridiculously easy for clear thinkers to comprehend the glaring, obvious truth, and they can’t understand why most of humankind seems to be incapable of doing this, too. Kunstler can see that consumer society remains on the worst possible path, and at every fork, they choose the bigger mistake. It’s immensely pathetic, to the degree that the tragedy develops a ticklish aroma of comedy, and Kunstler uses wit like a sharp whip.

Consumers behave as if they are completely disconnected from almost every aspect of reality, spending their lives in an artificial world of pure whimsy. They are like excited children waiting for piles of fun presents from Santa Claus. They have a profound blind faith that science and technology will protect everyone with its boundless magic. Kunstler calls this the Jiminy Cricket Syndrome: “When you wish upon a star your dreams come true.”

In his book, *Too Much Magic*, Kunstler hurls a super-sized bucket of ice water in a heroic attempt to rouse sleeping zombies into a state of consciousness. “By the time you read this, the empire in question may be a smoldering ruin.” He rips down the curtains and reveals the stinking, burning, fever-crazed world outside. Wake up! We’re speeding toward multiple catastrophes! “This entire book is about the manifold failures of all kinds of people to anticipate the changes we face.”

Fossil energy is the foundation of our world economy. The global production of conventional oil peaked in 2006. By 2008, the price of oil had skyrocketed to \$147 — big trouble. With regard to the miraculous new shale oil and shale gas fields, he’s convinced that most of the hope is based on industry hype, intended to attract dreamy investors and half-smart high-risk gamblers. All the magic in the world cannot replace fossil energy with alternative energy, or even come close.

The end of the 90-year era of “Happy Motoring” is approaching, and we’re not far from the peak of suburban sprawl. American style suburbia was “the greatest misallocation of resources in the history of the world.” Suburbia has no future, but Americans haven’t grasped this yet. “I expect many suburbs will become slums, ruins, and salvage yards.” Southern California will turn into a ghost town.

Shortly after oil hit \$147, the housing bubble popped, the financial system collapsed, and trillions of dollars

vaporized. The collapse is far from over, since banks still hold a huge number of worthless mortgages, pretending that they are assets — pretending that they are not the living dead. A shortage of capital means that perpetual economic growth is close to finished. This means that trillions of dollars of debt are never going to be repaid.

This means that the party is over. This means that we're moving into an age of contraction. Economic life is going to get much smaller, more local, and will use far less energy. Much of the labor force will be shifted toward the production of food. If we choose to acknowledge this, then we could make efforts to contract in an orderly manner. If we choose to bet everything on magic, the trip down will be more brutal, painful, and dumb. This is the core message of the book.

Kunstler takes us on a tour of a number of problems that are major threats to our future, and a few lesser issues that he just enjoys kvetching about (like infantile young bozos who wear their baggie pants way too low). He laments that the overpopulation problem has been assigned to Mother Nature to fix, since we're not capable of giving it serious thought. He grieves over our unwillingness to do anything to slow the advance of climate change. (Well, we're totally eager to help in any way that doesn't involve changing our lifestyle to the slightest degree.) He spews extra large doses of venom on the political system and the finance industry.

George W. Bush was a memorable president. He involved us in two expensive wars for no good reason. He nearly succeeded in obliterating our economy. He made conservatives look like a clown act. Many believed that his shenanigans would drive the Republican Party into extinction. Nobody imagined that Barack Obama would grab the baton and simply maintain the same policies (his #1 campaign contributor was Goldman Sachs).

Obama approved borrowing hundreds of billions of dollars for stimulus spending, mostly for highway projects and runway improvements, updating a transportation system that has no future. Tens of thousands of finance industry fraudsters are never going to wait in line at the guillotine, because the president completely refused to enforce existing laws. Obama will be remembered for “botched health care reform, a dumb energy policy, keeping two of the longest wars in our history going, and not reestablishing the rule of law in banking in the face of arrant misconduct.”

He gives us Reality for Dummies, but not Solutions for Dummies. No amount of magic can undo climate change, painlessly shrink our population, make coal burning clean, or fix our economy. But today is an excellent day to open our eyes, and make an effort to comprehend our dire predicament. Today is an excellent day to take a good look, to see if there are less catastrophic places to crash land our airborne Titanic. At this point, it's all about damage control, and trying very hard to learn as much as possible from our mistakes. It's about clear thinking.

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