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The End of the Long Summer: Why We Must Remake Our Civilization to Survive on a Volatile Earth

By Dianne Dumanoski

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The End of the Long Summer: Why We Must Remake Our Civilization to Survive on a Volatile Earth By Dianne Dumanoski

For the past twelve thousand years, Earth's stable climate has allowed human civilization to flourish. But this long benign summer is an anomaly in the Earth's history and one that is rapidly coming to a close. The radical experiment of our modern industrial civilization is now disrupting our planet's very metabolism; our future hinges in large part on how Earth responds. Climate change is already bearing down, hitting harder and faster than expected. The greatest danger is not extreme yet discrete weather events, such as Hurricane Katrina or the calamitous wildfires that now plague California, but profound and systemic disruptions on a global scale. Contrary to the pervasive belief that climate change will be a gradual escalator ride into balmy temperatures, the Earth's climate system has a history of radical shifts—dramatic shocks that could lead to the collapse of social and economic systems.


The question is no longer simply how can we stop climate change, but how can we as a civilization survive it.

The guiding values of modern culture have become dangerously obsolete in this new era. Yet as renowned environmental journalist Dianne Dumanoski shows, little has been done to avert the crisis or to prepare human societies for a time of growing instability. In a work of astonishing scope, Dumanoski deftly weaves history, science, and culture to show how the fundamental doctrines of modern society have impeded our ability to respond to this crisis and have fostered an economic globalization that is only increasing our vulnerability at this critical time. She exposes the fallacy of banking on a last-minute technological fix as well as the perilous trap of believing that humans can succeed in the quest to control nature. Only by restructuring our global civilization based on the principles that have allowed Earth's life and our ancestors to survive catastrophe—diversity, redundancy, a degree of self-sufficiency, social solidarity, and an aversion to excessive integration—can we restore the flexibility needed to weather the trials ahead.

In this powerful and prescient book, Dumanoski moves beyond now-ubiquitous environmental buzzwords about green industries and clean energy to provide a new cultural map through this dangerous passage. Though the message is grave, it is not without hope. Lucid, eloquent, and urgent, *The End of the Long Summer* deserves a place alongside transformative works such as *Silent Spring* and *The*

Fate of the Earth.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

A former environmental journalist, Dumanoski examines how societies are continuing to disregard the inevitability of drastic climate change—even if carbon emission levels dropped to zero overnight—and how world leaders have shown tremendous capacity to put off preparing for the possible eventualities.

Fortunately—according to Dumanoski—humanity has reached a seminal moment when everything is possible, and the time has arrived for individuals to redefine societal values, to reconsider not simply the means by which we pursue endless growth, but the wisdom of the goal itself. Dumanoski recounts relevant scientific and political history to prove her theory that a tipping point has been reached. Her theories on the possible consequences of climate change are well reasoned and thought provoking, but her ruminations on the history of human hubris dominate the book and prove so effective that they leave the reader feeling depressed rather than convinced of her optimism. Time alone will determine whether she is an uncannily prescient thinker or an environmentalist Chicken Little. (*July 14*)

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Review

“Remarkable . . . lucid . . . unsensational. . . . With personable authority, she makes the case for familiar environmentalist prescriptions as well as—which will surprise many—much that is usually considered culturally conservative (indeed, this isn’t an ideologically progressive tract at all). She concisely and trenchantly questions globalization’s effects on agriculture and traditional emergency preparedness. She cautions against trusting technology to handle all emergent catastrophes but for faith in what humanity outstandingly proved in the hundreds of millennia of dire weather before the long summer; namely, its prodigious adaptiveness. The popular environmental book of the year? Could be, and of many more to come.”

—*Booklist*, starred review

“A passionate, precise account of climate change and a persuasive strategy for dealing with ‘Nature’s return to center stage as a critical player in human history.’ . . . Insightful. . . . Convincing.”

—*Kirkus*

“Dianne Dumanoski understands, as few have, the scale of the changes coming at us from our warming planet, and the scale of the changes we must make in return. A timely book, and a deep one!”

—Bill McKibben, author of *Deep Economy*

“A splendid book. We cannot now stop global change, but we can adapt and survive. Crucial to survival is the need to understand our planet, and Dianne Dumanoski’s powerful book is the best guide that I have seen. It is a delight to read and clearly written in the best tradition of great American journalism.”

—James Lovelock, author of *The Revenge of Gaia*

“Lyrically, luminously, Dumanoski has summoned up such a display of scientific and historical perspective that finally we are able . . . to confront the enormity of the cultural transformation we must now make. A work of great wisdom and insight and, I would add, courage, her book commands our attention.”

—James Gustave Speth, author of *The Bridge at the Edge of the World*

“There is perhaps no book that provides such a perceptive analysis of the cultural hurdles we are facing to

create a sustainable future. There is also no book that combines this perspective with rigorous scientific information regarding the immense challenges of climate change. This book is a tour de force—providing hope in the midst of sobering news. Dianne Dumanoski has created a classic.”

—Mary Evelyn Tucker, cofounder of the Forum on Religion and Ecology

“Dianne Dumanoski makes it clear that we are facing a planetary emergency driven by climate change. She then asks the question that political leaders everywhere should be asking, namely, Can we harness the economy to a mission that goes beyond the accumulation of wealth? Thoughtful, insightful, and deeply informative.”

—Lester R. Brown, author of *Plan B 3.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization*

“*The End of the Long Summer* provides a startlingly honest point of entry into a future that is as uncertain as it is threatening. Dumanoski makes clear that we need to change not just our technologies but our fundamental worldview if we are to survive as a coherent civilization.”

—Ross Gelbspan, author of *The Heat Is On* and *Boiling Point*

“Dianne Dumanoski transforms the daunting complexities of our planetary emergency into a lucid, fascinating, and compelling book. With impeccable thoroughness she converts a wealth of information into an easy-to-read thriller. I couldn’t put it down.”

—Theo Colborn, coauthor of *Our Stolen Future*

From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author

DIANNE DUMANOSKI is an award-winning journalist who writes on environmental issues and is the coauthor of *Our Stolen Future*. She lives in Massachusetts.

From the Hardcover edition.

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From reader reviews:

Megan Rivera:

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Helen Leavitt:

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Randy Mosley:

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