



## The Annotated Kunstler

Posted by [Yankee](#) on July 19, 2005 - 1:24pm

In a post today, [Treehugger lets us](#) know about [Bruce Sterling's annotated version](#) of Kunstler's *The Long Emergency* that was published in *Rolling Stone* a few months ago. According to Treehugger:

Science fiction writer and "visionary in residence" at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, Bruce Sterling is one interesting fellow and a major thinker (read his [Viridian Manifesto](#)) of the "new" environmental movement.

Regarding the annotations, Treehugger goes on to say:

The short notes are sometimes sarcastic, but they raise many good points (or counter-points, rather) to balance some parts of Kunstler's thesis, and to defuse some others.

Well, I disagree.

Sure, Kunstler is apocalyptic, and he may be exaggerating some of the data out there to make his points (e.g., about the "cruel hoax" that is the hydrogen economy, or that modernity is essentially going to be reversed when oil is scarce). But to reject Kunstler's hypothesis outright is, I think, even more dangerous than taking it at face value. Unlike Treehugger, I don't think Sterling's snarky comments are particularly useful, or even true, really. For example:

"Most immediately we face the end of the cheap fossil-fuel era. It is no exaggeration to state that reliable supplies of cheap oil and natural gas underlie everything we identify as the necessities of modern life – not to mention all of its comforts and luxuries: central heating, air conditioning, cars, airplanes, electric lights, inexpensive clothing, recorded music, movies, hip-replacement surgery, national defense – you name it. (((Okay, how about "clean air," "biodiversity," "a stable climate" and "potable water"? I just named four stark necessities of modern life that have nothing to do with cheap fossil fuel.)))

Indeed, there is an existing scenario in which all of those things have to do with cheap fossil fuels (including coal): if we didn't have it, we wouldn't be polluting the air or the water (as much), causing global warming, or destroying many species' habitats in order to make more room for our suburban lifestyles.

I could go on, but I'll let you do that yourselves. Take a read. Let us know what you think.

Technorati Tags: [peak oil](#), [oil](#), [James Howard Kunstler](#), [Bruce Sterling](#)



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