

= Requiem for a Species =

Requiem for a Species : Why We Resist the Truth about Climate Change is a 2010 non @-@ fiction book by Australian academic Clive Hamilton which explores climate change denial and its implications . It argues that climate change will bring about large @-@ scale , harmful consequences for habitability for life on Earth including humans , which it is too late to prevent . Hamilton explores why politicians , corporations and the public deny or refuse to act on this reality . He invokes a variety of explanations , including wishful thinking , ideology , consumer culture and active lobbying by the fossil fuel industry . The book builds on the author 's fifteen @-@ year prior history of writing about these subjects , with previous books including Growth Fetish and Scorcher : The Dirty Politics of Climate Change .

Requiem for a Species has been reviewed in Resurgence magazine , Socialist Review , Sydney Morning Herald , The Age , The Common Review , and Times Higher Education , which named it " Book of the Week " . Extracts of the book have appeared in The Guardian and Geographical magazine . The book won a 2010 Queensland Premier 's Literary Award .

= = Themes = =

Hamilton points out that there have been many reports and books over the years explaining the climate change problem and just how ominous the future looks for humanity . He says Requiem for a Species is primarily about why those warnings have been ignored .

Hamilton considers that sometimes an inconvenient truth may be too difficult to bear :

Sometimes facing up to the truth is just too hard . When the facts are distressing it is easier to reframe or ignore them . Around the world only a few have truly faced up to the facts about global warming ... It 's the same with our own deaths ; we all " accept " that we will die , but it is only when our death is imminent that we confront the true meaning of our mortality .

The most immediate reason for the failure to act on global warming is seen to be the " sustained and often ruthless exercise of political power by the corporations who stand to lose from a shift to low- and zero @-@ carbon energy systems " . Hamilton cites numerous journalists and authors who have documented the influence of large companies such as ExxonMobil , Rio Tinto Group and General Motors . Hamilton makes his argument in three stages :

Firstly , he reviews the evidence about how serious the situation is already and how much worse it will get . Secondly , he examines the roots of denial , both in terms of resistance to the evidence and in relation to the actors and agencies motivated to deny climate change . Lastly , he looks at some future scenarios and explains what people should do .

Hamilton suggests that the foundations of climate change denial lie in the reaction of American conservatism to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 . He argues that as the " red menace " receded , conservatives who had put energy into opposing communism sought other outlets . Hamilton contends that the conservative backlash against climate science was led by three prominent physicists -- Frederick Seitz , Robert Jastrow , and William Nierenberg . In 1984 Seitz , Jastrow and Nierenberg founded the George C. Marshall Institute , and in the 1990s the Marshall Institute 's main activity was attacking climate science .

When describing climate science , Hamilton says that official numbers published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change ( IPCC ) are highly cautious , and so the real effects of climate change will likely be even more severe . His conclusion is that it will not be possible to stabilise emissions :

... even with the most optimistic set of assumptions -- the ending of deforestation , a halving of emissions associated with food production , global emissions peaking in 2020 and then falling by 3 per cent a year for a few decades -- we have no chance of preventing emissions rising well above a number of critical tipping points that will spark uncontrollable climate change . The Earth 's climate would enter a chaotic era lasting thousands of years before natural processes eventually establish some sort of equilibrium . Whether human beings would still be a force on the planet , or even survive , is a moot point . One thing seems certain : there will be far fewer of us .

In terms of Australia , Hamilton says that " Australians in 2050 will be living in a nation transformed by a changing climate , with widespread doubt over whether we will make it to the end of the century in a land that is recognisably Australian " .

= = Reception = =

Michael Lynn in The Common Review says that Requiem for a Species explores the gulf between acknowledgment and acceptance of climate change . Lynn explains that the gulf has two main origins and no easy solution :

Hamilton ... argues that the gulf has two primary origins : the enormity of its consequences and the way it challenges how we as individuals and as societies have constructed our identities over the past three centuries . In doing so , he suggests that meeting the challenge of climate change requires far more than implementing the right policies and making minor adjustments in our lifestyles . Instead , it implies remaking our psyches and societies on a scale unseen since the dawn of the modern age .

The Times Higher Education listed Requiem for a Species as " Book of the week " for 3 June 2010 . Steven Yearley 's review calls it a " provocative and sobering book " . He says the heart of the book are the many explanations that Hamilton puts forward for the everyday , regular denial of the danger of changing climate . Yearley says this is also the most frustrating aspect of Requiem for a Species , because Hamilton proposes so many different explanations but does not make their relative significance clear .

David Shearman , in a review for Doctors for the Environment Australia , says that " Clive Hamilton is one of Australia 's most notable public intellectuals , his work is careful and balanced , he presents the facts as they are and has written a book which is uncomfortable for all " . According to Shearman , Hamilton 's treatment of the topic of denial is one of the best available .

Mike Hulme , in Resurgence magazine , agrees with the " consumption fetish " and " spiritual malaise " of humanity that Hamilton describes . But , according to Hulme , Hamilton has underestimated the " innovative and creative potential of collective humanity " and he has put too much faith in the infallibility of science 's predictions about future climate risks . Hulme believes that Hamilton " is placing too much weight on the foresight of science to provide his desired revolution , rather than calling for it more honestly and directly through political , psychological or spiritual engagement " .

Kelsey Munro reviewed the book in the Sydney Morning Herald and The Age , suggesting that it is pessimistic and does not present any false hope . But he says pessimism is not the same thing as fatalism , and Hamilton believes there is still an urgent need for government intervention to avoid worst @-@ case scenarios by reducing emissions . Munro also points out that some eminent climate scientists , like Princeton University 's Michael Oppenheimer , remain optimistic that humanity will act before it is too late .

Camilla Royle reviewed Requiem for a Species in Socialist Review and recommends it for those who want to get a clearer idea of climate change science . She says that Hamilton is understandably angry at the corporate lobbyists who have encouraged climate change denial . Royle suggests that Hamilton accepts that " we should at least try to do something about climate change " , but he " doesn 't give much idea of what that something is " .

There was a book launch for Requiem for a Species on 24 March 2010 at The University of Queensland and another on 29 March 2010 at the Australian National University ( ANU ) . An extract of the book appeared in The Guardian on 16 April 2010 . Geographical magazine published another extract in August 2010 . The book won the 2010 " Queensland Premier 's Literary Award for a work Advancing Public Debate " .

= = Author = =

At the time of publication , Clive Hamilton was Professor of Public Ethics at the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics ( CAPPE ) at Australia . Before taking up his position at CAPPE , he

was executive director and founder of The Australia Institute , a forward @-@ looking think tank .

= = Publishing information = =

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The book is available as an eBook document as well as a paper publication .