

Anarchism and Unconventional Oil

Jonathan Parsons

On Transitions and Revolutions

“What can be done about it?” This question is often left hanging, explicitly or implicitly, in research related to the social, cultural, and political implications of fossil fuel. A sophisticated body of knowledge exists to understand the centrality of fossil fuel in contemporary life and the way our petroleum-based world has developed, and, since fossil fuel is by definition a nonrenewable resource, such research always already gestures to some future world beyond oil.¹ Take for instance the projection with which Columbia University historian Timothy Mitchell ends his landmark *Carbon Democracy*: “The possibility of more democratic futures,” Mitchell concludes, “depends on the political tools with which we address the passing of the era of fossil fuel.”² Mitchell does not speculate on what a more democratic future may look like or the political tools to achieve it, but he nonetheless suggests that the means of transitioning away from fossil fuel prefigures the post-carbon worlds that can emerge. In this sense, the transition to a post-carbon world is a moment of rupture, an opening up of a space in the social imaginary that offers an opportunity to rethink the economic, political, and cultural conventions that depend upon a fossil-fueled polis. My aim in this chapter is to reframe the immanent energy transition as not just an opportunity for, but categorically tied to, political transition.

The thread Mitchell leaves loose at the end of *Carbon Democracy* poses similar questions of political possibilities: the kinds of political

theories and practices that coincide with the end of fossil fuels will have embedded within them the potential for various post-carbon worlds that may emerge — some more or less desirable. I am not raising a question of crude speculation about an ideal world of solar panels or electromagnetic propulsion or perpetual energy machines; I am instead calling for a political realism critical of the energy blindspot in contemporary political theories and practices of and against fossil fuel energy; *namely, that every energy system is first and finally a social system, and that a transition from one to another implies a sociopolitical transition as much as it does a technical one.* Furthermore, I argue that this struggle is to be best understood as revolutionary, since to speak of the end of oil or to gesture to a post-carbon world is to speak of an overturning and reorganization of fundamental aspects of contemporary life, from the seemingly abstract level of geopolitics to the seemingly mundane level of the everyday.³ The struggle over the energy future is a revolutionary one, and this revolution is necessarily as much about ways of thinking and living as it is about technology.

As with any revolutionary struggle, there are many competing interests and different ways of understanding the emergence of possible post-carbon worlds. Because of the nature of the conflict, some of the participants do not even necessarily think of themselves as being involved in a revolutionary struggle to begin with. Thus one part of the political challenge moving forward is translating the energy crisis into a revolutionary struggle for populations implicated in it.

Part of the task for understanding this revolutionary shift is to understand the counterrevolutionary tactics currently at work in the energy sector. The oil and gas industry responds to the proposition of the end of oil by attempting to expand production of unconventional fossil fuel reserves. Unconventional oil, as the term is used here, indicates the kinds of oil and gas resources that are increasingly being extracted in the absence of easier to extract conventional oil. Some of the best known sources of unconventional oil are shale oil and shale gas, sometimes extracted through hydraulic fracturing (fracking); oil sands, such as extra heavy crude and crude bitumen; as well as

biofuels, such as the large-scale production of certain plants for conversion to ethanol. The notion of extreme oil, indicating extraction processes that require much more effort or energy input compared to conventional oil, is also relevant when discussing unconventional oil, since this may allow us to think of Arctic oil or other difficult to access offshore oil as in some sense unconventional as well, even if such oil is extracted in the form of typical crude. The kinds of unconventional oil on which this chapter focuses are shale oil and oil-sands developments in the global West, along with the pipeline infrastructure necessary to transport unconventional oil. A notable counter response to this industry response, the widespread grassroots rebellion against unconventional oil, is, I will argue, best understood as a practice of anarchism. Viewed through theories of anarchism, this resistance can be understood as insurrectionary, because it combats the oil industry as an occupying force with a colonial infrastructure.

This chapter begins by setting the theoretical context of unconventional oil and anarchism, and then examines some specific instances of resistance to unconventional oil developments in the form of hydraulic fracturing and oil sands and its related pipeline infrastructure. I then show how the resistance to unconventional oil is usefully understood as an example of anarchism in action, and imagine what sorts of worlds this practice of anarchism prefigures. Thus, I am proposing a prefigurative, anarchist approach to the struggle for a post-carbon world. Such prefigured post-carbon worlds necessitate a fundamental reconfiguration of economic and social relations — a paradigm shift — and in this sense the resistance to unconventional oil heralds the revolutionary struggle over the end of oil. Nonetheless, I need to make clear from the outset that I am not setting out to describe the post-carbon revolution as a heroic narrative of overcoming. It is important to have a prefigurative politics, but not to mistake what those politics makes possible with the desire for an ideal future. My argument is that the current practices of resistance to unconventional oil do indicate the potential for a more democratic future, as Mitchell puts it, but also indicates the potential

for a protracted insurrectionary struggle that may only ever achieve a Pyrrhic victory.⁴

How to Think about the Rebels and Reactionaries

I am going to reframe the struggle against fossil fuel, and the climate change it generates, by isolating two factions motivating the politics of energy: Rebels, who wish to do away with the present economic system; and Reactionaries who wish to maintain it. Of course, the struggle for the end of oil is not especially new, arguably stemming from the 1960s and the emergence of the modern environmental movement, as well as from the so-called anti-globalization movement of the 1990s.⁵ One aspect of the early environmental movement entailed nascent research about greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, which has come to something of a crescendo in the present day with increasingly dire warnings from climatologists and catastrophists that present a particular kind of challenge to the oil and gas industry.⁶ The anti-globalization summit protests, perhaps best exemplified by the demonstrations against the 1999 World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle, critiqued the system of international trade and finance, of which oil is the most significant part.⁷

The environmental and anti-globalization movements are different from the sorts of struggles that organized labor participated in (and arguably lost) with the oil industry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries because organized labor was not in the same sense attempting to bring an end to the oil and gas industry or the web of global trade and finance it supports. Organized labor was involved in a democratic struggle for rights and justice, something along the lines of a traditional class struggle. The similarity shared by the environmental and anti-globalization movements and the struggle of organized labor with the oil industry is that they were all defeated for much the same reason: there was no effective leverage to be used against the oil industry and its networks of global finance in order to achieve political demands, since disruption and sabotage of critical points in the production process and distribution network was difficult

by design.⁸ For example, the environmental movement, which has waged a reasonably effective public relations campaign on the issue of climate change, does not have any straightforward way of making industry or governments acquiesce to demands. And even though the summit protests were at times successful in stopping global trade meetings from taking place, the anti-globalization movement has never significantly impacted the momentum or overall development of globalization and has never overtly seized or sabotaged the critical infrastructures of international trade.

As the present discussion is about a revolutionary shift away from oil, it is interesting to note that the oil industry has come to understand the recent boom in production of unconventional oil as the so-called shale gas revolution.⁹ Since the extraction and use of unconventional oil does not seek to fundamentally change the organization of social, political, or cultural life, and is mostly designed to maintain the present oil-based system in spite of its inevitable demise, the production of shale gas and other kinds of unconventional oil really should be understood as a reactionary or counterrevolutionary strategy.¹⁰ Conventional oil extraction takes place in locales that are often distant from population centers — something that essentially put the brakes on the mass political action of industrial democracies — while unconventional oil extracted by hydraulic fracturing, on the other hand, requires vast production areas with potentially hundreds or even thousands of well pads for a single play, and because of its expansive geography this industrial activity sometimes overlaps with residential areas. Other kinds of unconventional oil such as oil sands require the strip-mining of huge areas, such as in the Athabasca Oil Sands production area in Alberta, Canada. Both hydraulic fracturing and production of oil sands also require large quantities of water and extensive systems of tailings ponds to hold waste water.

Specific forms of contentious politics and resistance have emerged in response to the elaborate processes recently developed to produce and distribute unconventional oil. Those who are engaged in the rebellion against unconventional oil, and especially those resisting

hydraulic fracturing, have arguably been much more successful in the struggle against the oil industry than organized labor or the environmental movement ever was, evidenced by the many bans and moratoria on hydraulic fracturing in diverse regions of the globe in recent years. The development of Alberta's oil sands and the associated networks of existing and proposed pipelines have likewise faced significant grassroots resistance. A few examples of this resistance to unconventional oil, which will be elaborated in greater detail below, include Elsipogtog First Nation in New Brunswick, Canada, that successfully stopped hydraulic fracturing; the *collectifs* movement in France, that won an outright ban on hydraulic fracturing in the country; as well as resistance movements opposed to unconventional oil developments or pipelines in numerous other countries around the globe. Because the grassroots resistance to unconventional oil does not have the same relation to wage and labor demands as organized labor, it makes sense that they have been more successful in mitigating resource extraction. So how can we understand this grassroots rebellion against unconventional oil that has gained so much traction in recent years? And how do the practices of this rebellion, and the practices employed in an attempt to suppress it, indicate possibilities for a post-carbon world?

First of all, it needs to be said that the primary forces in the resistance to unconventional oil are not easily recognizable as typical political organizations: there is no central labor union directing or controlling the struggle; neither is there an international federation of anti-fracking activists that gathers for annual conferences to discuss strategy, nor is there a major environmental nongovernmental organization that might be considered the vanguard of the struggle. Theories of social movements sometimes view contentious politics in relation to these kinds of clearly defined political structures, and often such an approach makes good sense.¹¹ The lack of a defined center to control the actions of diverse communities involved in the struggle against unconventional oil, and the diffuse and distributed makeup of the movement itself, make it difficult to track using conventional

political tools of assessment. Thus, I turn to anarchism, as a theoretical and political practice, to understand the way resistance to unconventional oil has taken shape and will continue to operate.

As a tendency of thought and action, anarchism is determined to abolish various forms of domination and hierarchy. Accordingly, the term anarchy means “without rulers” or “without masters.” Anarchism has a rich history and encompasses a number of distinct lines of thought, such as anarcho-syndicalism, anarcho-communism, queer anarchism, eco-anarchism, and insurrectionary anarchism, to name a few. Across the various schools, anarchism rejects the supposed leaders of the revolutionary struggle — whether they call themselves a vanguard or have a more clearly defined political organization. Mikhail Bakunin, one of the foundational figures of anarchism, suggested that “no scholar can teach the people or even define for himself how they will and must live on the morrow of the social revolution. That will be determined first by the situation of each people... not by guidance and explanations from above and not by any theories invented on the eve of the revolution.”¹² Murray Bookchin, one of the better known thinkers of contemporary anarchism, echoes this same sentiment when reflecting on the atrocities of the Soviet Union and Bolshevik Marxism: “the treacheries and failures of the past half century have made it axiomatic that there *can be no separation of the revolutionary process from the revolutionary goal.*”¹³

Classical anarchists like Bakunin differed from some classical Marxists in that they understood revolution as something that should not be encumbered by the control of vanguard parties or other kinds of traditional political organizations. Whereas some early Marxists, like V.I. Lenin, wanted to appropriate the state apparatus so that the dictatorship of the proletariat might transform the people in a progressive march toward communism, early anarchists wanted to bypass the statist phase of Marxism and immediately go about the business of letting people work out for themselves how to run their own lives. Anarchy, therefore, is something like democracy without the government, a situation in which people directly make decisions about

how society functions, and in the absence of such a directly democratic society, anarchist practice is to assume one's own freedom, rather than to look for its delegation. Accordingly, some basic principles common to various schools of anarchism are direct action, self-organization, voluntary association, mutual aid, and direct democracy. In this sense anarchism is perhaps best understood as a name for ways of living and of organizing society that have been around for a very long time.¹⁴ These grassroots anarchistic principles and practices animate the resistance movement to unconventional oil and, thus, prefigure social relations for a post-carbon world. Bookchin's work especially, as I will discuss later, imagines the kinds of decentralized, ecologically oriented communities whose nascent form the resistance movement embodies.¹⁵ Eco-anarchist and insurrectionary strains of anarchism likewise speak to the practices and motivations of the resistance to unconventional oil, but at the same time prefigure somewhat different post-carbon worlds than Bookchin, for example. This is likewise true for a number of other strains of anarchist thought and action. In this sense, viewing the resistance to unconventional oil through various expressions of anarchist thought gives shape to the revolutionary potential of the movement.

Of course, contemporary anarchism, just as with contemporary Marxism, has changed immensely since the split of these two socialist factions in the First International, and it must be said that there are as many affinities between today's anarchism and today's Marxism as there are clear differences. David Graeber makes an interesting distinction when he suggests that "Marxism has tended to be a theoretical or analytical discourse about revolutionary strategy," whereas "anarchism has tended to be an ethical discourse about revolutionary practice."¹⁶ Simon Critchley's work on anarchism and ethics is further informative in this regard, as he focuses on ethics as a "binding factor" in anarchist political practice, as opposed to the "silence or hostility to ethics that one finds in Marx's work and in many Marxist (Gramsci is an obvious exception) and post-Marxist thinkers."¹⁷ This distinction between Marxist theory and anarchist

practice speaks to the present subject of specific practices of the resistance to unconventional oil and more generally to the social, cultural, and political implications of fossil fuel. Here, in this discourse on anarchism and unconventional oil, I am not so much attempting to create a theory or a strategy to direct those involved in resistance or to offer some program for creating a world beyond oil — though such theorizing and imagining is certainly important and worthwhile in its own right. Instead, I have set out to learn from the ways people have already begun to plant the seeds of a new world in the shell of the old.

Resistance to Unconventional Oil

Resistance to unconventional oil is happening for a number of specific reasons. It is not just that there are more opportunities to sabotage and disrupt unconventional oil, or that unconventional oil developments are at times immediately present in residential areas, or that concerns about climate change are reaching a fevered pitch (though these are certainly important factors). Resistance to unconventional oil is following in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis that shook confidence in structures of traditional authority; in the aftermath of a revolutionary wave, sometimes called the Arab Spring that spawned uprisings in every corner of the globe; and against the backdrop of a volatile international order in which oil is an increasingly valuable strategic resource.¹⁸ In an even more fundamental sense, the grievances spurring resistance to unconventional oil can be traced back to a pervasive political, social, and economic system that relies on cheap oil for endless growth.¹⁹ Along with the characteristic inherent in its historical development, the rapaciousness of globalized neoliberal capitalism is epitomized by the extraction of unconventional oil, stripping away layer upon layer of earth for vast surface mines and detonating explosives deep underground to open up shale formations.

Grassroots mobilizations against fracking happen in most any place the industry sets up.²⁰ In France, which eventually banned hydraulic fracturing in response to massive popular opposition, the resistance

movement organized in what came to be called *collectifs* that were often initiated by rural farmers and concerned citizens from small villages.²¹ A similar kind of bottom-up mobilization happened in the state of New York, which instituted a fracking ban in 2015.²² Tactics employed by the movement in France and New York included rallies, petitions, and public relations-style campaigns, but also significant acts of civil disobedience and blockades targeting equipment and industrial sites.²³ There was no central organization coordinating events and actions, and the overall structure of the protest movements is best understood as autonomous cells linked together in a rhizomatic fashion around a common goal. Traditional political organizations like unions, environmental NGOs, and political parties came into the protest movements after the fact, and in this sense the resistance to fracking should be considered a properly grassroots, bottom-up movement.

In some countries that have seen significant resistance to hydraulic fracturing, confrontational flashpoints catalyzed the struggle and particular communities became symbolic centers for the movement. Ain Salah, Algeria was the scene of massive demonstrations as well as numerous sit-ins, blockades, and occupations of shale gas sites and corporate offices, including the local Halliburton offices. Some of the more dramatic instances of civil disobedience in Ain Salah were organized and carried out by the women of the community, who took a leading role in the anti-fracking movement.²⁴ In the communities of Balcombe, England, and Pungești, Romania, grassroots groups created protest camps in order to block industry access to proposed sites, and in both of these communities police crackdowns enflamed tensions and spurred on national anti-fracking campaigns.²⁵ The incarnations of the anti-fracking movement in Algeria, England, and Romania, as with the examples in France and New York, should be understood as bottom-up grassroots mobilizations, with traditional political organizations coming on the scene as the struggle developed rather than in leadership roles.

One further example of a community that became symbolic of

the anti-fracking movement is Elsipogtog First Nation, a Mi'kmaq reservation in the Canadian province of New Brunswick. The development, strategy, and tactics of the grassroots movement that emerged in Elsipogtog was documented in detail by independent journalist Miles Howe, who was embedded in the community and who wrote a book recounting the events leading up to a ban on hydraulic fracturing in New Brunswick.²⁶ It is important to point out that while the movement in Elsipogtog, and more broadly in New Brunswick, was certainly focused on the environmental and social consequences of hydraulic fracturing; a significant element was also the context of Indigenous rights and sovereignty. The resistance in Elsipogtog also happened against the backdrop of a Canada-wide Indigenous movement called Idle No More. However, it was not the Canadian government-sanctioned Indigenous band council or other First Nations organizations that took the lead in the resistance to fracking in Elsipogtog. Miles Howe shows that such mechanisms of "official" Indigenous governance associated with the Canadian Indian Act were actually a source of division and subversion within the movement.²⁷ Instead, it was everyday members of the community who mobilized and set up protest camps and blockades, sabotaged equipment, and generally harassed and obstructed the progress of the American company attempting to do seismic testing in the lands surrounding Elsipogtog.²⁸

Resistance to the development of the oil sands shares many of the characteristics of resistance to hydraulic fracturing, but differs in some significant ways. Ground zero for oil sands production in the global West is in Alberta, Canada, in a vast region of interconnected strip mines known as the Athabasca Oil Sands. Although the Athabasca Oil Sands are colossal in scale, the extraction process generally takes place in areas that are distant from populated centers, and so the industry is out of view, so to speak, in a similar way that conventional oil is also out of view. One community on the frontlines of the fight against the oil sands is Fort Chipewyan, which has a predominantly Indigenous Cree and Dene population. Fort Chipewyan is downstream from the

oil sands production area on the Athabasca River and has reportedly experienced a spike in illnesses and high levels of heavy metals and other toxic substances in wildlife.²⁹ The community is a focal point for resistance to oil sands, and people from the community have organized numerous protests and other actions to raise awareness about the dangers of large-scale oil sands production.

However, while there are frontline communities like Fort Chipewyan involved in the struggle against oil sands, just as there are a number of notable frontline communities involved in the anti-fracking movement, what is distinct about the broader resistance to oil sands is that it is very often focused on the infrastructure to transport the oil rather than the site of extraction itself. For example, in recent years there has been significant resistance to the proposed Keystone XL pipeline, which would transport oil products from the Athabasca Oil Sands to the United States, as well as the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline, which would transport oil products from the oil sands to the Canadian Pacific coast for possible shipment overseas, and the Energy East pipeline, which would transport oil products to the Canadian Atlantic coast. Perhaps the best known recent example of resistance to pipelines was the Standing Rock protest camp opposed to the Dakota Access Pipeline project, though it should be noted that the purpose of this pipeline system is to transport shale oil and not oil sands products. Nonetheless, the grassroots and radical aspects of the Standing Rock protest camp, as well as its primarily Indigenous character, parallel the form and function of mobilizations opposed to pipeline projects generally. From the perspective of contentious politics, it is tactically sound that resistance to oil sands should target pipeline infrastructure rather than the site of extraction, since this provides the most leverage with respect to the possibility of disruption. Small groups of dedicated people can block or sabotage a pipeline, whereas it would be mostly impossible to disrupt a production area as large as the Athabasca Oil Sands.

In an article on resistance to oil sands pipelines, Henry Veltmeyer and Paul Bowles suggest that the pipelines have been an important

factor, in this sense, in the grassroots mobilization. Veltmeyer and Bowles traveled the proposed route of the Northern Gateway pipeline collecting data on the resistance movement. They note that along with diverse grassroots groups and communities, the resistance is also supported by “160 First Nations... 31 municipal governments, two regional districts, the Union of [British Columbia] Municipalities and six unions.” However, they are also keen to point out that even though the resistance enjoys broad support from many such political organizations, “it draws its power from the mobilizing capacity of the Indigenous communities in the direct path of the pipeline project.”³⁰ As was the case in the anti-fracking movement, it is the resistance on the ground, often in small rural communities (and not environmental NGOs or recognized political organizations) that is at the forefront of the anti-oil sands movement.

One such community involved in the resistance to oil sands pipelines is the Unist’ot’en Clan, an Indigenous group whose traditional territory is in British Columbia on the path of proposed Enbridge pipeline project. The Unist’ot’en created a resistance camp and have been blocking industry access to their territory at strategic bridges and chokepoints, insisting that any unauthorized use of their territory by industry will result in the seizure of equipment. The Unist’ot’en host summer action camps, inviting activists from across Canada and beyond to come into the territory to learn about the struggle and to assist in monitoring the backcountry.³¹ As was the case in the example of anti-fracking resistance in Elsipogtog, the Indigenous resistance to pipelines has had to contend with internal differences and divisions stemming from the “officially” recognized Indian Act political structures of Canadian governance.³² The Unist’ot’en, who do not rely on Indian Act political structures but instead draw legitimacy from treaty-based approaches to their sovereignty over the territory, are in this sense another example of grassroots resistance.

Other grassroots mobilizations against oil sands pipelines, in the eastern part of Canada, came to be called the Swamp Line 9 protest camp. This group, made up of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples,

carried out actions such as the occupation of an oil and gas facility in Hamilton, Ontario.³³ The police eventually raided the Line 9 camp, which led to numerous arrests of activists who had locked themselves down or otherwise refused to disperse. There are also examples of grassroots resistance to the Keystone XL pipeline on the route south from the oil sands to the Gulf Coast of the United States. One such group, as Naomi Klein notes, is the coalition called the “Cowboy and Indian Alliance,” made up of ranchers and Indigenous groups along the pipeline route in the United States.³⁴ Another notable example of this is the Texas-based direct action group Tar Sands Blockade, which carried out an eighty-six day blockade on the Keystone XL pipeline route.

I am cataloguing these various actions and groups, first of all, to show the diversity and distribution of the broader resistance movement that opposes unconventional oil and to show its grassroots anarchistic character. But what is also instructive is the way the grassroots resistance is rooted in specific geography. All of these various groups strategically target the infrastructure of unconventional oil — the point is not to debate the relative pros and cons of a particular development, but rather to resolutely and absolutely resist. For all of these diverse manifestations of the movement, resistance involves direct action, such as putting bodies and barricades in the way of proposed developments or sabotaging critical junctures. Although such resistance groups generally also make an appeal to the broader community and are presenting moral and technical arguments, for example through statements or literature expressing their point of view, the strategy is not necessarily to build mass popular support. Instead, the resistance to unconventional oil is at first an expression of a pragmatic politics — direct action — in that it is a disruptive force in a specific geography of struggle.

Major environmental NGOs and other formal political organizations are not in the same sense rooted in such specific geographies of struggle but are instead engaged in struggle on what might be considered a more abstract or discursive terrain. Thus, their

acts of resistance are much more symbolic and indirect, often aimed at raising public awareness or attempting to sway public opinion. A good way to understand this is through the resistance to the Keystone XL pipeline project, which has both site specific and discursive terrains of struggle. On the one hand, the opposition to the pipeline happens in grassroots, on-the-ground configurations as noted above. On the other hand, one event associated with Keystone XL that brought significant attention to the oil sands was a fourteen-day series of sit-ins in front of the White House in Washington, DC, organized by Bill McKibben's climate-change-oriented 350.org, during which hundreds of activists were arrested including a number of celebrities. To be clear, of course this action took place in a specific geographical terrain (that is, the front fence of the White House), but it was largely a symbolic gesture of defiance aimed at making an intervention in political discourse. As discussed above, unions, municipal governments, political parties, civil society organizations, and other such groups are involved in the struggle against unconventional oil, even as they may not be on the front lines and do not function as vanguards or in leadership roles, as it may sometimes appear. Public opinion does matter in the calculations of industry and governments, and so for controversial issues like unconventional oil, consent needs to be manufactured in various ways. The mainstream element of the movement, which is typically composed of recognizable political structures, functions to delegitimize unconventional oil in the court of public opinion. In this way, it might be generously understood as a broad support network for those engaged in more militant acts of resistance.³⁵

Certainly this is a somewhat oversimplified account of the role of NGOs and other such organizations in contentious politics; however, unless resistance is willing to go beyond the law (and perhaps even beyond nonviolent civil disobedience), unless it is capable of transgression in the form of disruption and sabotage, it essentially carries no threat.³⁶ The reason industry and government are willing to talk to and bargain with more mainstream elements of the movement is not only because they are recognizable political structures, but

because the more militant element of the resistance *does* offer a clear threat. Moreover, it is precisely the distinction between the geographically specific direct action of the grassroots resistance and the mainstream, symbolic strategies of resistance common to political parties and NGOs that marks the shift to a revolutionary struggle over the end of oil (more on this in a moment). Klein, who was herself arrested at the White House sit-in, suggests that while the protest was certainly a significant flashpoint for the movement, it was still following on the heels of earlier grassroots direct actions throughout the United States and Canada.³⁷ Some of the activists involved in organizing the protests at the White House were also acutely aware of the need for the anti-oil sands movement to remain true to its grassroots character, even though they were affiliated with major environmental NGOs.³⁸ This is just to say that activists involved in moderate or mainstream organizations are often self-reflective of the role they play in the movement and are keenly aware of the importance of grassroots, on-the-ground resistance and direct action.³⁹

Finally, the kinds of tactics and practices the oil industry, governments, and security forces use in combating resistance to unconventional oil use are largely PR-style campaigns attempting to sell various sorts of unconventional oil projects to the public and generate social license. These campaigns are sometimes carried out by marketing firms, think tanks, or governments, and that may function to delegitimize resistance. One pertinent analysis of such a strategy is described by Riley Dunlap and Aaron McCright, who chart the aspects and evolution of the discourse of climate change denial.⁴⁰ Dunlap and McCright note that although the claims of the climate change denial movement “differ and evolve over time (there’s no warming, it’s not caused by humans, it won’t be harmful, and so on), the theme of ‘no need for regulations’ remains constant.” Some of the key actors Dunlap and McCright identify as being involved in organized climate change denial includes the petroleum industry, conservative think tanks, front groups for particular public relations

campaigns, and also what they refer to as the echo chamber of the mass media. Interestingly, they also theorize the denial machine as a reactionary mechanism attempting to save industrial capitalism in spite of its own entropy:

Viewed through a broader theoretical lens, climate change denial can be seen as part of a more sweeping effort to defend modern Western social order, which has been built by an industrial capitalism powered by fossil fuels. Since anthropogenic climate change is a major unintended consequence of fossil fuel use, simply acknowledging its reality poses a fundamental critique of the industrial capitalist economic system.⁴¹

Dunlop and McCright argue that contemporary Western civilization is built on the premise of oil being plentiful and readily available for transportation, agriculture, manufacturing, and generating electricity, and suggest that any threat or challenge to the oil industry, such as is offered by those opposing unconventional oil, is an existential threat to capitalism.

Along with such discursive strategies to delegitimize the resistance to unconventional oil and to obfuscate the issue of climate change, there are also somewhat more direct attempts at subversion of resistance movements, whether by infiltrators or by established political organizations, as in Elsipogtog when infiltrators and members of recognized political structures attempted to subvert resistance.⁴² Resistance may also be deterred by legal means, such as injunctions against activists or by the introduction of specific legislation; some laws currently on the books in the U.S., the U.K., and Canada describe disruption of certain industrial projects or infrastructure as terrorism, such as the Canadian Bill C-51. Along with these methods of soft power, security forces may aggressively raid protest camps or blockades and make arrests. Security forces may also initiate confrontations or attempt to frame activists through dirty trick campaigns, such as when police tried to frame Wiebo

Ludwig, who was suspected (and eventually convicted) of sabotaging numerous gas wells and pipelines.⁴³ Risk management firms suggest that sabotage of facilities, equipment, and pipelines associated with unconventional oil is likely to increase if the resistance movement becomes further radicalized.⁴⁴ If the resistance to unconventional oil indeed progresses along this path, industry, governments, and security forces will likewise refine or intensify their strategy and tactics.

Practicing Anarchy

Once again, and to be emphatic, the various mobilizations against unconventional oil described here do not necessarily self-identify as anarchist and do not explicitly draw on theories of anarchism in the ways they organize or set about operating. However, because resistance to unconventional oil is best understood as grassroots, decentralized, and dispersed and because it characteristically exists outside the formal organizational structures often associated with contentious politics such as unions, NGOs, or political parties, it is generally reflective of anarchism in action. Of course, these various movements, impressive and inspiring as they are, do not provide on their own a definitive shape of the post-carbon world. They should instead be understood as prefigurative, offering a general outline of the kinds of strategies and tactics that may be expected as the struggle progresses and perhaps also offering a glimpse of the possible worlds that may emerge. I now turn to a reading of these movements through an anarchist lens in order to bring to the surface their revolutionary potential.

Of immediate note is the refusal by the resistance movement of recognized authority, whether that is the authority of governance and law that is discarded by acts of civil disobedience and sabotage, or the authority of recognized political structures, including those sometimes associated with contentious politics like environmental organizations or official Indigenous political structures. Bookchin suggests that this refusal of authority is typical of embryonic phases

of revolutionary movements and that such antiauthoritarianism effectively pulverizes the system to be overturned by “molecular action from below long before [it is] toppled by mass revolutionary action.”⁴⁵ The refusal of authority is consistent with the grassroots, decentralized character of the global movement against unconventional oil, and each transgressive action also functions to show others how they may resist as well — a kind of propaganda by the deed.

Even though the movement is decentralized and geographically dispersed, its actions remain consistent and come together to form something like a united front that is opposed to a common foe. In this sense, the movement is akin to what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri discuss as a distributed network operating with swarm intelligence:

When a distributed network attacks, it swarms its enemy: innumerable independent forces seem to strike from all directions at a particular point and then disappear back into the environment. From an external perspective, the network attack is described as a swarm because it appears formless. Since the network has no center that dictates order, those who can only think in terms of traditional models may assume it has no organization whatsoever — they see mere spontaneity and anarchy. The network attack appears as something like a swarm of birds or insects in a horror film, a multitude of mindless assailants, unknown, uncertain, unseen, and unexpected. If one looks inside the network, however, one can see that it is indeed organized, rational and creative. It has swarm intelligence.⁴⁶

This formulation of the tactic of distributed attack is immediately recognizable in the case of the global movement against unconventional oil and is likely why the movement has been somewhat successful to date. Oil and gas companies, and the governments supporting their efforts, have appeared wrong footed in the face of steadfast resistance, and more so because this diverse network of resistance activity has been able to sabotage and interrupt critical points of the production or distribution process. Resistance to unconventional oil is essentially

anarchistic in the way it acts without defined leadership or political structures that can be bargained with or brought to the table in any straightforward manner. Nonetheless, even as the movement has no coordinating center, it does have a kind of intelligence of action, attacking weaknesses in the production and distribution system, often in creative and unexpected ways.

This notion of organization without a clearly defined center, of common action in loose association without strict authority, relates to some of the conceptualizations that come up in various theoretical and speculative writings on anarchism of how an anarchist society might function.⁴⁷ In this sense, the movement opposed to unconventional oil acts as a mutual aid network of voluntary associations that is, at least in part, setting out to create the world it desires through the way it acts. And because environmental concerns are central to resistance, some of the anarchist writings focused on ecology and environmentalism are especially worth noting. Bookchin, a key figure in the development of the ecology and environmental movements, has written extensively on a concept he calls social ecology. A basic idea in the theory of social ecology is that the relationships of dominance and hierarchy between humans and the environment, evident in the wanton exploitation of natural resources and nonhuman animals, is a correlate of the relationships of dominance and hierarchy within human society. Put differently, because people exist in a society of dominance and subordination, a society with rulers and bosses, the logic of domination and hierarchy may then be extended as a way to understand our relationship to the nonhuman world.

What Bookchin sees as emerging out of or beyond this world of domination and hierarchy is an anarchist society, which is “a precondition for the practice of ecological principles.”⁴⁸ He imagines this anarchist society as made up of numerous independent communities whose day-to-day operations will be based on principles of direct democracy, that will be mostly self-sufficient in terms of food and energy, and that will not exploit the nonhuman environment in the same way hierarchical society does.⁴⁹ Bookchin, writing in the

1960s, argued that social ecology needs to be understood as a new form of anarchistic social relations, and that such a way of life is directly related to the kinds of energy such communities will use, namely community-based solar, wind, tidal, and geothermal energy systems. Some of the characteristics of the various examples of resistance to unconventional oil indicate the emergence of something like this anarchist society Bookchin imagines. Those involved in the movement generally have an ecological understanding of the world, and the movement as a whole is the kind of loose affiliation of autonomous communities of resistance that can be understood as the seeds of a federation of anarchist communes. Furthermore, the movement is decentralized and has an antiauthoritarian and directly democratic character, in that various groups involved in the struggle make decisions on their own about how best to operate without necessarily needing formalized or regimented decision-making processes.

It is easy, however, to view the resistance to unconventional oil as the opening chapter of some heroic narrative that ends with an ideal world. Certainly, Bookchin's descriptions of communities based on principles of social ecology paints a beautiful and compelling picture, and the possibility of participatory direct democracy allowing everyday people to actually be involved in the decisions affecting their lives must tug on the heartstrings of even the most cynical and jaded radicals. However, Bookchin is aware that a directly democratic and ecologically oriented world may be desired but is in no way guaranteed. Because of the unsustainable and destructive way of life of contemporary neoliberal capitalism, it is as likely that, in Bookchin's words, "we will simply go under as a species."⁵⁰ Of course, there are many possible worlds in between idealized anarchist communes and total collapse, and so it is useful to consider other sorts of futures that are also prefigured by the rebellion against unconventional oil, even as they may not be as optimistic as Bookchin's social ecology. A few other strains of anarchist thought are helpful in this regard, and so I now turn to consider the resistance movement through a lens of eco-anarchism, and then through a lens of insurrectionary anarchism.

Eco-anarchists are those who outright refuse to consider any kind of glib idealized future in discussions of the ecological crisis and instead take an uncompromisingly stark view. Eco-anarchism is sometimes associated with the deep green resistance movement, with primitivism, and with anti-civilizational theory and practices. Some of the better known groups associated with eco-anarchism include EarthFirst! and the Animal Liberation Front, as well as many other underground groups. An important criticism offered by eco-anarchism to mainstream environmentalism (and, indeed, to other strains of anarchism as well) is that it tends to assume the maintenance of the contemporary way of life in the visions it presents for the future — for example, imagining that a world beyond fossil fuel could somehow look mostly the same as contemporary mass industrial civilization, only with wind turbines and solar panels instead of oil and gas. Moreover, eco-anarchism critiques mainstream environmentalism for potentially doing more harm than good, since it allows people to believe that merely recycling and using energy-efficient light bulbs is enough to avert ecological catastrophe. In this sense, eco-anarchists may view mainstream environmentalism as part of a reactionary mechanism, essentially propping up the very industrial system it pretends to oppose.⁵¹ Civilization itself, which is to say the organization of human society based on cities, is a significant part of the problem for eco-anarchists, as the maintenance of such a civilized way of life requires ever greater use of resources and ever greater strain on the environment, which, if left unchecked, will doom our species and many other forms of life on the planet. Those who subscribe to various strains of eco-anarchism argue that civilization needs to be brought down through whatever means necessary — sabotage, disruption, and blockades, as well as *any* other methods available — regardless of whether a significant portion of the population agrees, and the sooner the better.⁵²

Eco-anarchism relates to, and is indicated by, the resistance to unconventional oil in a few ways. First of all, the resistance to unconventional oil puts into practice many of the tactics common

to eco-anarchist direct action. Although the participants in the movements against unconventional oil may not necessarily have thought through various perspectives of eco-anarchism, they are nonetheless carrying out part of its program in that the end of oil is in some respects anti-civilizational, at least in the sense that there is no readily available way to replace the contemporary oil-based industrial society without also assuming the collapse of mass industrial civilization. Indeed, this is an intersection of the scholarship on the social, political, and cultural significance of oil and eco-anarchist perspectives. Given the massive overturning implied by the end of oil, one has to wonder whether so many people would currently be involved if the fundamentally revolutionary aspect of the resistance to unconventional oil was more apparent. Without some technology unborn or some durable and easily transportable fuel source to replace oil, without some *deus ex machina*, the post-carbon revolution may be far more catastrophic and have far more dire consequences than those involved in the struggle over the end of oil may realize. Beyond the intention of individual instances of resistance, the political current made available in the struggle against and for energy is, in this sense, already revolutionary, and this is precisely why energy is the locus around which revolution is and will continue to unfold.

Even if the logical conclusion is that the current oil-based world must come to an end, whether it is brought down by revolutionary action or whether fossil fuel eventually runs out (even unconventional oil has limits), it will be unacceptable to a significant number of people. Perhaps this is part of the reason why those with an interest in maintaining the status quo, such as governments and captains of industry, have created legislation to criminalize resistance to unconventional oil and to label participants in the movement as terrorists, since from the point of view of the politicians and industrialists such resistance movements are genuinely terrifying. Any revolutionary action aimed at bringing an end to industrial civilization based on oil, whether the participants in that action fully understand what they are doing or not, will be met with reactionary

force. The kind of repression and subversion currently faced by the resistance to unconventional oil is telling, in this regard. As the age of oil comes to an end, increasingly stark options will be available to those wishing to retain power. The kinds of soft force currently mitigating resistance (such as swaying public opinion, infiltrating resistance groups, or co-opting the mainstream environmental movement) may give way to hard power in the form of direct repression by security forces. This potential for an increasingly authoritarian political order is likewise prefigured by the responses of police and private security in the current flashpoints of resistance to unconventional oil, and this eventuality may in fact be desirable to significant numbers of people when faced with alternatives that point to the end of mass industrial civilization without any attractive alternative. In this sense, the prefigurative anarchist politics of the resistance to unconventional oil, perhaps despite itself, is also pointing to what must be characterized as a reactionary future.

The resistance to unconventional oil can also be read through theories of insurrectionary anarchism, first of all, because of how it functions: in loosely affiliated cells without an apparent command structure or unified organizational center, and through distributed attacks against strategic but geographically distant targets. The notion of insurrection as a way to understand resistance to unconventional oil, thus, also compels an interpretation of the oil industry as an occupying force, one that generates a particular terrain of struggle along its network of pipelines, well pads, survey lines, tailings ponds, and port facilities. Just as the extraction of conventional oil generates a particular map and configuration of the terrain of struggle, unconventional oil generates a different map, one with chokepoints and strategic weaknesses which can be sabotaged or otherwise disrupted. In this sense, the practices of the anti-fracking and anti-oil sands movement have affinities to insurrectionary anarchism, and appear as insurrectionary moments. These insurrectionary moments may be fleeting and may fade away once a particular struggle has been won or lost, but they are, at the same time, gesturing toward

a much larger revolutionary transformation on the horizon, just as insurrectionists imagine the emergence of social revolution out of many insurrectionary moments. Indeed, analyzing the context of the current struggle, with as many and various incarnations throughout the world, indicates that a number of low-intensity insurrections are already taking place.

Some recent insurrectionary anarchist texts, and most famously *The Coming Insurrection* by the Invisible Committee, specifically talk about ecology and the end of oil, and also about the role of mainstream environmentalism, echoing some of the criticisms of eco-anarchism but with a characteristically insurrectionary anarchist twist:

Everything about the environmentalist's discourse must be turned upside-down. Where they talk of "catastrophes" to label the present system's mismanagement of beings and things, we only see the catastrophe of its all too perfect operations.... Let the petroleum reserves run out earlier than expected; let the international flows that regulate the tempo of the metropolis be interrupted, let us suffer some great social disruption.... Either way, any loss of control would be preferable to all the crisis management they envision.⁵³

The perspective on civilizational collapse offered here is admittedly bleak and potentially nihilistic. Nonetheless, it goes some way to illustrating the diversity of thinking on the end of oil and the consequences it may bring. For some insurrectionary anarchists, the kind of catastrophes that may occur with the end of oil or to do with climate change are not only desirable but should, if at all possible, be helped along. Industrial civilization and its associated institutions are certainly not something that can be reformed, since the functioning of the system is no more than the playing out of precisely what the system was designed to do, and so destruction and collapse is preferable since at least the possibility of even fleeting freedom might then exist.

In my view, insurrectionary anarchists are not offering a particularly attractive vision of the future when compared to, say,

the optimistic vision of Bookchin's social ecology. However, the possibility for such a dark future is arguably just as much embedded in the struggle over the end of oil. This is not only the case because the practices of the resistance to unconventional oil prefigure such a future, in the sense that it is already a series of insurrectionary moments, but because of the response by the oil industry and governments to the struggle over the end of oil. Even though thoughtful and well-intentioned people have been talking about the end of oil for decades, and even though the potential for catastrophe must be obvious to anyone who thinks critically about the situation, none of the very reasonable, incremental steps that could have been taken were ever implemented. Such a colossal failure of action on so many levels, and such intransigence on the part of those with vested interests, can only give credence to the arguments of those insurrectionists who today may sound like extremists. When the struggle over the end of oil becomes more pronounced and obvious in the lives of everyday people, it should not be surprising to see the proliferation of ideas like those of various schools of anarchism, no matter how extreme such ideas may sound today.

To the Barricades

Resistance to unconventional oil prefigures a world in which social and economic relations are based on principles of anarchism. The potential for this anarchistic world can be seen in the practices of the movement — in its grassroots, decentralized character and in the way it manifests the political will of everyday people around the world. Moreover, when looking at the specifics of some of the mobilizations discussed above, it is often the people most affected by and vulnerable to bad political deals who are leading the struggle, indicating a movement through which, as Paulo Freire suggests, the oppressed liberate themselves and their oppressors as well.⁵⁴ In the sense that it is a leaderless, bottom-up movement without a defined set of organizing principles or a manifesto, the resistance to unconventional oil is essentially anarchistic. The practices of self-organization and

voluntary association central to anarchism that are evident in various facets of the movement contribute to its democratic potential and point toward a directly democratic society, such as is described in Bookchin's writings on social ecology. The configuration of energy in such a society would likewise be democratic, decentralized, locally produced and would, thus, be intrinsically related to community life and a new set of social relations.

At the same time, it is important not to lionize the movement resisting unconventional oil as a precursor to some idealized world to be desired. Doing so is potentially symptomatic of what Lauren Berlant calls a cruel optimism in the face of overwhelming or impending crisis, a positive attachment that serves as the limit to one's flourishing.⁵⁵ Such optimism blinds us to the real consequences of the end of oil and the disastrous effects of climate change and environmental degradation. In a general sense it blinds us to the problem of neoliberal capitalism itself, with its many inequalities and inherent violence. The refusal of optimism central to eco-anarchism, seen in this light, is best understood as hardnosed realism and goes along with a general refusal of complacency seen in the resistance to unconventional oil, since eco-anarchists and those participating in the resistance alike refuse to believe that someone else will make the necessary changes and so cannot help but take action when faced with the stark reality of the situation.

The resistance to unconventional oil points to a revolutionary era, and yet there are reactionary forces comprised of some of the largest corporations and most powerful governments on earth who will try to crush the rebellion and try to make things unfold in profitable ways. Police raids and subversion campaigns used against the resistance movement today contain the seeds of future repression, and so the resistance to unconventional oil also indicates the potential for an authoritarian world if business as usual continues. If some of the more hopeful visions for future worlds that are prefigured by the movement against unconventional oil are not allowed to emerge, if the resistance is suppressed or if reasonable demands are not met, the

insurrectionary aspect of the resistance may proliferate and intensify.

One way or another the oil, conventional and unconventional alike, will stop flowing and the world based on the availability of cheap petroleum products will come to an end, along with the forms of social and economic relations conditioned by this type of energy. Looking at the resistance to unconventional oil as a practice of anarchism showcases some of the political tools available for the post carbon revolution and prefigures the possible worlds that may emerge. Now that we are not on the threshold of, but firmly in the fires of catastrophe, we might as well move from reaction to rebellion.

Notes

1. Imre Szeman, "How to Know about Oil: Energy Epistemologies and Political Futures," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 473 (2013) 145–68, and John Urry, *Societies Beyond Oil: Oil Dregs and Social Futures* (London: Zed, 2013).
2. Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (London: Verso, 2011) 254.
3. Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1979) 5. Skocpol contrasts political revolutions, in which a regime change may happen in a given state, with social revolutions, in which a massive change takes place in the structure of a society.
4. A Pyrrhic victory is one in which a victory is achieved but at a cost so high that victory is meaningless. In this case, a victory by the forces resisting a fossil fuel-centric world could be considered Pyrrhic if the struggle takes so long that the land base and ecosystems necessary for human and nonhuman life have been degraded to the point of collapse. A number of other collapse and catastrophe scenarios could also be considered Pyrrhic, depending on the point of view one may have on acceptable standards of living in a post carbon world.

5. "So-called" because some of the radical left groups involved in the movement call for the removal of all restrictions on travel and residency, perhaps a much more authentic kind of globalization in its own right, as is suggested by David Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm, 2004) 77–78.
6. Syukuro Manabe and Richard T. Wetherald, "Thermal Equilibrium of the Atmosphere with a Given Distribution of Relative Humidity," *Journal of Atmospheric Sciences* 24.2 (1967) 241–59; Michael Mann, *The Hockey Stick and the Climate Wars: Dispatches from the Front Lines* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Christophe McGlade and Paul Ekins, "The Geographical Distribution of Fossil Fuels Unused when Limiting Global Warming to 2 C," *Nature* 51 (2015) 177–90.
7. Eddie Yuen, Daniel Burton-Rose, and George N. Katsiaficas, eds., *The Battle of Seattle: The New Challenge to Capitalist Globalization* (New York: Soft Skull, 2001).
8. Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy* 38–39.
9. Paul Stevens, "The 'Shale Gas Revolution': Developments and Changes," Briefing Paper, (London: Chatham House, 2012).
10. Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin* (New York: Oxford UP, 2011) 47–50, and Ryan Katz-Rosene, "The Rise of Reactionary Environmentalism in the Tar Sands," *A Line in the Tar Sands: Struggles for Environmental Justice*, eds. Toban Black, et al. (Oakland, CA: PM P, 2014) 45–54.
11. Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movements: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge UP, 1998).
12. Mikhail Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, trans. Marshal S. Shatz (New York: Cambridge UP, 1990) 198–99.
13. Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (Berkeley, CA: Ramparts, 1971), 45, emphasis in original.
14. Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology* 3.
15. Murray Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society* (Montreal: Black Rose, 1980).
16. Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society* 6.
17. Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of*

- Resistance* (New York: Verso, 2007) 125.
18. Nafeez Ahmed, *A User's Guide to the Crisis of Civilization: And How to Save It* (London: Pluto, 2010). Ahmed's complex systems analysis describes the interconnectedness of various economic, political, social, and cultural factors in creating the conditions for unrest, revolts, and revolutions.
 19. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005).
 20. Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2014) 348; Jonathan Wood, "The Global Anti-Fracking Movement: What It Wants, How It Operates and What's Next," *Control Risks* (2012); "Fracking: The Gathering Storm," *New Internationalist* (December 2013).
 21. René Weile, "Beyond the Fracking Ban in France," *Journal of European Management and Public Affairs Studies* 1.2 (2014) 12.
 22. Colin Kinniburgh, "From Zuccotti Park to Zurawlow: The Global Revolt Against Fracking," *Dissent* (Summer 2015) 44-45.
 23. Wood, "The Global Anti-Fracking Movement" 10, and Weile, "Beyond the Fracking Ban in France" 12.
 24. Kinniburgh, "From Zuccotti Park to Zurawlow" 47-49.
 25. Martin Dale, James Bolam, and Sue Jameson, *Balcombe and Beyond: The U.K.'s Frack Free Movement* (London: Createspace, 2015), and Simon Devey et al., "Shale Gas U-Turns in Bulgaria and Romania: The Turbulent Politics of Energy and Protest," *Journal of European Management and Public Affairs Studies* 1.2 (2014) 53.
 26. Miles Howe, *Debriefing Elsipogtog: The Anatomy of a Struggle* (Black Point: Fernwood, 2015) 94.
 27. Howe, *Debriefing Elsipogtog* 86-96, and Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, "Through our Eyes — Who Leads?" *The Winter We Danced: Voices from the Past, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement* (Winnipeg: ARP, 2014) 335-341. Turpel-Lafond discusses the composition of the Idle No More movement as essentially grassroots and not in any sense led by the officially recognized Indian Act political structure. She suggests, as does Howe, that the Indian Act structures and leadership were a source of subversion rather than of liberation. Similar ideas are expressed by, among others, Patrick Wolfe in his analysis of ongoing settler-colonial

relations, who highlights the way supposedly autonomous Indigenous political structures may be better understood as neocolonial mechanisms of control (Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8:4 [2006] 387–409).

28. *Debriefing Elsipogtog* 117, 137–138.
29. Klein, *This Changes Everything* 326–327.
30. Henry Veltmeyer and Paul Bowles, "Extractivist Resistance: The Case of the Enbridge Oil Pipeline Project in Northern British Columbia," *The Extractive Industries and Society* 1.1 (2014) 66.
31. Sâkihitowin Awâsis, "Pipelines and Resistance across Turtle Island," *A Line in the Tar Sands: Struggles for Environmental Justice*, eds. Toban Black et al. (Oakland, CA: PM P, 2014) 260.
32. Sâkihitowin Awâsis, "Pipelines and Resistance across Turtle Island" 258–259.
33. Martin Lukacs, "Canada's Eastward Pipelines: A Corporate Export Swindle, Confronted by Cross-Country Resistance," in *A Line in the Tar Sands: Struggles for Environmental Justice*, eds. Toban Black et al. (Oakland, CA: PM P, 2014) 80–82.
34. *This Changes Everything* 302.
35. A less generous view is that the mainstream elements are actually a major hurdle, as they may delegitimize particular practices of resistance and direct action, and in some sense function as a self-policing mechanism for the movement.
36. Peter Gelderloos, *How Nonviolence Protects the State* (Cambridge: South End, 2007); Stephen D'Arcy, *Languages of the Unheard: Why Militant Protest is Good for Democracy* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2013); Ward Churchill, *Pacifism as Pathology: Reflections on the Role of Armed Struggle in North America* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring, 1998).
37. *This Changes Everything* 139–140.
38. Joshua Kahn Russell et al., "Lessons from Direct Action at the White House to Stop the Keystone XL Pipeline," *A Line in the Tar Sands: Struggles for Environmental Justice*, eds. Toban Black et al. (Oakland: PM P, 2014) 166–168.
39. For an analysis of the interaction and cross-pollination of mainstream

- and more radically oriented environmental activism, see Ruth Reitan and Shannon Gibson, "Climate Change or Social Change? Environmental and Leftist Praxis and Participatory Action Research," *Globalizations* 9:3 (2012) 395-410.
40. Riley Dunlap and Aaron McCright, "Organized Climate Change Denial," *Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011) 144-160. It makes sense that this overall trend be understood as "organized denial," as Dunlap and McCright put it, even as the discourse may evolve or adapt to shifting public opinion to acknowledge that climate change is real, since the purpose of obfuscating the climate change discourse, just as initially denying the climate change discourse, is the same: to maintain the petroleum-centric status quo.
 41. Dunlap and McCright, "Organized Climate Change Denial" 145.
 42. *Debriefing Elsipogtog* 86-96.
 43. Andrew Nikiforuk, *Saboteurs: Wiebo Ludwig's War Against Big Oil* (Vancouver: Greystone, 2002) 210-12, 58-65.
 44. "The Global Anti-Fracking Movement" 12-13.
 45. Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* 49.
 46. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004) 91. Earlier, I noted that there are perhaps more affinities between contemporary Marxism and contemporary anarchism than there are clear differences. Hardt and Negri are an interesting example of this, since they self-identify as autonomist communists, perhaps closer to the anarcho-communist or insurrectionist strains of anarchism. See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000) 350; David Bates, "Situating Hardt and Negri," *Libertarian Socialism: Politics in Red and Black*, eds. Alex Prichard et al. (London: Palgrave, 2012) 275-293.
 47. For speculative writing on anarchism, see Hans Widmer, *Bolo'bolo* (Zurich: Panorama City Verlag, 1983).
 48. *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* 76.
 49. The name Bookchin uses for the organizations and practices of these kinds of anarchist communities is libertarian municipalism. See Murray Bookchin, *The Murray Bookchin Reader*, ed. Janet Biehl (London: Cassell,

- 1997) 173–196.
50. *Toward an Ecological Society* 70–71.
 51. Derrick Jensen and Stephanie McMillan, *As the World Burns: 50 Simple Things You Can Do to Stay in Denial* (New York: Seven Stories, 2007).
 52. Aric McBay, “Decisive Ecological Warfare,” *Deep Green Resistance: Strategy to Save the Planet*, eds. Aric McBay, Lierre Keith, and Derrick Jensen (New York: Seven Stories, 2011) 425–474; Derrick Jensen, *Endgame Vol. 1: The Problem of Civilization* (New York: Seven Stories, 2006) 251–268; John Zerzan, ed., *Against Civilization: Readings and Reflections* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral, 2005).
 53. The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2008) 25–26.
 54. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2005) 44.
 55. Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke UP, 2011) 3.