Crude Utopia: Performing Energy Futures in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

Crude Utopia: Performing Energy Futures in the 21st Century offers scholars interested in the relationship between performance studies and energy cultures new approaches for reading the aesthetics and politics of performances that imagine and instantiate energy transitions. By asking readers to consider utopian thinking, feeling, and performativity as modes of intimating possibilities for transitioning away from fossil fuels, it models novel and versatile strategies for analyzing how performance studies can inform understanding and action toward a more socially just and ecologically sustainable future.

To develop different approaches for analyzing energy transitions through performance analysis, the dissertation uses case studies that represent varied performance-based responses to contemporary Canadian energy culture. Chapter One analyzes two cultural texts, Newfoundland and Labrador's Fogo Island Inn and the 2013 film *The Grand Seduction,* in order to illuminate how performance practices that seem to stymy climate action by anaesthetizing populations to the environmental and social dangers of fossil fuels extraction nonetheless contain within them utopian potential for imagining how a world beyond oil might feel. In Chapter Two, the climate activism of teenager Greta Thunberg is placed alongside settler Canadian playwright Annabel Soutar's 2015 documentary theatre project *The Watershed* to argue that the utopian performativity of young climate activists triggers energy transitions. Chapter Three examines two contemporary Indigenous movements, Idle No More and Muskrat Right, which demonstrate how Indigenous land-based practices' renewable relations to futurity instantiate sustainable energy futures in the present.

RÉSUMÉ

Utopie brute : performer les avenirs énergétiques au 21ème siècle propose aux chercheurs qui s'intéressent à la relation entre les études de la performance et les cultures énergétiques de nouvelles approches pour la lecture de l'esthétique et de la politique de la performance qui imaginent et incarnent la transition énergétique. En demandant aux lecteurs de considérer la pensée, les sentiments et la performativité utopiques comme des façons de suggérer des possibilités de transition vers l'abandon des combustibles fossiles, cet ouvrage propose des stratégies nouvelles et polyvalentes pour analyser la manière dont les études de la performance contribuent à la compréhension et à l'action qui favorisent un avenir plus équitable sur le plan social et plus durable sur le plan écologique.

Afin de développer de nouvelles approches pour analyser la transition énergétique au travers de l'analyse de la performance, cette thèse a recours à des études de cas qui représentent des réponses performatives variées à la culture énergétique canadienne contemporaine. Le premier chapitre analyse deux textes culturels, le Fogo Island Inn au Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador et le film de 2013, *The Grand Seduction*, afin de mettre au jour les façons dont des pratiques performatives qui semblent freiner l'action climatique en rendant les populations insensibles aux dangers sociaux et environnementaux de l'extraction des combustibles fossiles contiennent néanmoins un potentiel utopique pour imaginer l'expérience d'un monde sans pétrole. Dans le deuxième chapitre, l'activisme climatique de Greta Thunberg est mis en parallèle avec le projet de théâtre documentaire de 2015 de la dramaturge canadienne Annabel Soutar, *The Watershed*, afin de soutenir que la performativité utopique de jeunes activistes climatiques déclenche la transition énergétique. Le troisième chapitre examine deux mouvements autochtones contemporains, Idle No More et Muskrat Right, qui démontrent comment les relations

renouvelables entre les pratiques autochtones inspirées de la terre et la futurité incarnent des avenirs énergétiques durables dans le présent.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Glenda Heaney, who passed away during its writing. Without her generosity, passion, commitment, and courage, I would never have begun – or finished – any of this at all.

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INTRODUCTION

Utopian Performativity from the Energy Impasse

On February 15, 1982, during a violent winter storm, the semi-submersible drilling rig *Ocean Ranger* capsized and sank off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, killing all 84 men onboard. At the time, my father worked offshore in two-week rotations as one of the rig's wireline operators. When he received the early-morning phone call that the *Ocean Ranger* had disappeared from radar, he had been onshore for just seven days.

The legacy of this disaster has followed me since childhood. Back then, my family attended a memorial service every year on the day after Valentine's Day. I remember making a speech in grade school about "ensuring that a disaster like the *Ocean Ranger* never happens again." When I was in my early twenties, local playwright Joan Sullivan adapted historian Mike Heffernan's 2009 book *Rig: An Oral History of the Ocean Ranger Disaster* into a play called *Rig*, and my family was invited to the premiere. There, we heard my father's familiar stories, this time spoken verbatim by a local actor.

In 2014, a few years after seeing *Rig* for the first time, I was tasked with putting together a group of actors to perform a theatrical piece related to oil for a conference called Petrocultures: Oil, Energy, and Canada's Future. With permission, I shortened Sullivan's original script and narrowed her expansive cast down to six characters, who would be played by graduate students from the theatre stream of McGill University's Department of English. Our rehearsal process was collaborative; together, we decided to set the scene in a Newfoundland kitchen in 2012, where six people connected to the *Ocean Ranger* tragedy would gather to talk about their experiences on the 30th anniversary of the disaster. Preparations for the performance consisted of

more than just running the lines of our interspersed verbatim monologues; we discussed and debated the role of the performance within the overall conference program, which focused on building a better understanding of oil culture in the hopes of theorizing possibilities for transitioning away from fossil fuels. Together, we decided that our aim was not merely to tell the story of the *Ocean Ranger*'s demise, but rather to paint a portrait of the melancholia induced by the Global North's over-reliance on oil. By staging a scene in which characters collectively worked through the losses of the disaster, we wanted to create an affective space within the theatre in which both the actors and the audience could imagine possibilities for a future beyond oil and the extractivist worldviews it perpetuates.

Rig was one of several artistic performances presented during the first evening of the conference's programming. The first, which paired excerpts from various documentary films with a talkback from Métis scholar and filmmaker Warren Cariou, underlined the dangerous effects of oil extraction on Indigenous land, culture, and stories. During the second performance, activist Christine Leclerc read a selection from the 1,173 kilometres of poetry she curated in resistance to the proposed 1,173-kilometre-long Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipelines. Finally, we performed our excerpt from *Rig*, which juxtaposed the injustices perpetuated by Mobil Oil prior to and after the disaster with the grief and trauma of the surviving families, rig workers, and rescue team. Near the conclusion, the house lights turned up, and the other actors and I rose from the "kitchen table" at which we had been conversing. We joined hands, facing the audience as we performed the final lines:

> LLOYD. February 15 we all go quiet.
>
> JESS. My brother and I throw flowers in the ocean. I'm not sure if it gets harder or easier as time goes on.

> ROBERT. I came so close. My house in town caught fire two days before February 15. They let me go in on helicopter even though my family was okay. The television reports indicated they lost radio contact around 1:30am, just 25 hours after I'd left. I got the "Why me?" syndrome. *Why wasn't I out there? How come I was so lucky?* I got some help and came to terms with what happened. I thank God every day for being alive. (*Rig*)

Hearing my fellow actors deliver these lines, their hands in mine as we made eye contact with members of the audience, I remember feeling energized by an emotion I couldn't quite place, until I read performance theorist Jill Dolan's description of a utopian performative, a moment

> in which performance […] lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense. (5)

For Dolan, utopian performativity happens when collectively experiencing live theatre provokes us to "reinvest our energies in a different future, one full of hope and reanimated by a new, more radical humanism" (2). I experienced such utopian performativity while performing *Rig*'s melancholic final scene. Ironically, the "intersubjective intensity" of collectively mourning the *Ocean Ranger* disaster in the space of the theatre gave me a sense of hope. As an actor with a personal connection to the show's story, and performing on the heels of two other provocative anti-extractivist performances, I felt deeply connected to those with whom I shared the stage, as well as with the audience members who, like us, cared deeply about the cultural and environmental impacts of oil extraction. Such feelings of collectivity instilled in me feelings of possibility for a future beyond oil. This experience of utopian performativity served as a catalyst for this dissertation, *Crude Utopia: Performing Energy Futures in the 21st Century,* as well as my later involvement in anti-extractivist activism, some of which I describe in Chapter Three.

In the Global North, there is an energy impasse – a liminal, in-between space of suspension, from which society seemingly cannot move forward – that prevents transition to more sustainable energy practices. Even though attachments to oil are destroying the planet's future livability, dispossessing global populations as the land on which they live is extracted and as more and more carbon is released into the atmosphere, oil is so deeply stuck to and embedded within social, economic, and political structures and practices that imagining or enacting alternatives to fossil fuels feels impossible. Understood this way, the energy impasse is a space of stuckness, which reinforces the status quo by foreclosing possibilities for transitioning away from oil as the dominant source of energy on earth. However, in this dissertation I explore the energy impasse in a different manner, by considering the ways in which performances within this impasse intimate alternative possibilities for transitioning into a future that no longer relies on fossil fuels. I conceptualize the energy impasse as a space of indeterminacy, where the uncertainty that grows from our attachment to oil creates conditions for performance practices that illuminate utopian possibilities of a world after oil, which is yet to come.

In the contemporary era of petro-imperialism and "carbon democracy" (Huber; Mitchell), all extractivism takes place in a resource economy where oil is king. For example, I argue that hydro-power, though often billed as an energy option that is more "sustainable" than fossil fuels, has merely reproduced the same colonial and extractivist agendas and practices that have been traditionally used in drilling, mining, and other forms of carbon extraction. This dissertation examines oil, and these other forms of energy that attempt to complement and/or replace it, not just as resources that can be extracted, but rather as resources for instigating performances that challenge dominant economic systems and the ideologies that underpin them. The current period of the energy impasse carries within it the same utopian impulses that, according to

environmental historian Philipp Lehmann, have always "been particularly strong during times of actual or predicted energy transitions" (365). I examine these impulses as a kind of utopian performativity that I call "crude utopia."

Mobilizing Performance Studies in the Energy Humanities

Crude Utopia considers oil within its context of production and reception. As multiple theorists in the field of performance studies have suggested, cultural performances occur beyond the frame of the theatre, encompassing a broad spectrum of artefacts including the performing arts, public rituals, ceremonies, embodied enactments, sporting events, popular entertainments, and aesthetically framed or heightened objects (Kershaw; McKenzie; Schechner). While such an interpretation may seem like a capacious view of what constitutes "performance," it is not to say that all aspects of daily life are performative; rather, to study how such objects and cultural expressions function performatively is to attend to the structuring power relations and normative dynamics that set up their iteration, as well as to the ways in which they engage with embodied experience, spatiality, liminality, reiteration, and transformation (Bauman, Richard; Blau; Goffman; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett; Lehmann, Hans; Roach). Following theories from within the energy humanities that examine the social and cultural roles played by oil, I explore how oil is embedded within and a mediator of human relations, a material means through which the neoliberal tenets of private property, autonomy, mobility, freedom, modernity, democracy, family, and home are propped up and perpetuated (Apter; Coronil; Huber; Kinder; Lemenager, *Living Oil*; Malm; Mitchell; Szeman, "System Failure"; Szeman and Boyer). Performance theorist Jon McKenzie defines cultural performance as that which may 1) reflect what is familiar through dramatization or embodiment of symbolic forms, 2) present imagined alternatives, and

3) present the possibility of conservation or transformation (31). These different aspects of performance can occur simultaneously. For example, a film that reflects middle-class modernity in the Global North may work to conserve specific ideas about what constitutes the "good life" (such as upward mobility, material privilege, and enduring reciprocity within institutions like political systems and families); at the same time, it may offer imagined alternatives to this "good life" and present possibilities for its transformation. I argue that the performative responses engendered by oil work in much the same way; while they can be a motor and a mirror for the ideals that make up the so-called good life, more importantly they can open up opportunities for transforming the good life's structuring power relations and normative dynamics.

Performances within the energy impasse consist of social movements, artistic productions, and theatrical performances, but also the social, cultural, and political "doings" that constitute what scholars in the energy humanities call "petrocultures." Petrocultures have been conceptualized as new imaginaries made up of the entanglements of political structures, built environments, social dynamics, gendered realities, discursive modes, and everyday values, practices, habits, feelings, and beliefs that have been fundamentally shaped by fossil fuels since the twentieth century (Petrocultures Research Group; Wilson et al.). I argue that performances within petrocultures are potentialized, like crude oil itself. Crude is oil at its most rudimentary, the form it takes before it has been manufactured or distilled. To be "crude" is to be "in the natural or raw state, not changed by any process or preparation" ("crude, adj."). As a material object that can be refined in myriad ways to fulfill multiple functions, crude oil's value lies in its potential – in the way it *anticipates* the ways in which it will later become useful. It is potentialized in that it manifests a "doing" that is in the future. I use potentiality as it has been formulated in studies of performance, politics, and affect, which suggest that potentiality is

something that is present even as it does not *exist* in the present tense (Massumi; Muñoz). Unlike a possibility, which has a temporality in the present as something that may happen, a potentiality has a temporality that lies on the horizon, as futurity. Performativity in the energy impasse is "crude" in that it is potentialized; it anticipates the cultural processes it will put it motion in the future.

Oil has created an impasse to our transition away from fossil fuels. Here, I borrow from cultural theorist Lauren Berlant, who describes the impasse as a "holding station that doesn't hold securely," where "one keep moving, but one moves paradoxically, in the same space" (199). On one hand, oil plays a key role in the acceleration of environmental degradation and economic precarity across the globe; on the other, practically every aspect of daily life in the Global North depends on it. The processes involved in exploring for, extracting, transporting, and burning fossil fuels have warmed the planet at such an alarming rate that climate scientists express dire warnings about its future livability; meanwhile, fossil fuels extraction dispossesses Indigenous populations, continuing the long colonialist tradition of imperialism, and creates boom-and-bust economies that disenfranchise marginalized workers (Alfred and Corntassel; Klein, *This Changes Everything*). Yet, on the other hand, the energy that has come from fossil fuels has been such a crucial component of the rise of modern industry and industrial capital that nearly every dimension of modernity depends on its continuous presence. Oil is so "sticky" – that is, it is so extensively embedded in economic and social structures – that one becomes stuck in its impasse. Even though its extraction for capital accumulation has created unsatisfactory and unsustainable living conditions across the globe, much of the Global North has been unable to enact alternatives to it.

This era is referred to as the Anthropocene – a new conceptualization of geological time used to describe the effects of human activities on the earth since the 1780s, which has accelerated as a result of the atmospheric consequences of extracting carbon-based materials since the 1960s (Davis and Todd). In the Anthropocene, and especially since the mid-20th century, our social, political, cultural, and economic systems have become saturated with oil. Global capitalism is primarily fueled by extractivism – an economic model of development practiced by states and transnational corporations worldwide that involves large-scale operations such as hydroelectric dams, mining, clear-cut logging, and drilling, which remove raw materials from the earth and bring them into a global market for profit (Klein, *This Changes Everything*; Mitchell; Szeman, "System Failure"; Willow). As a "pattern of resource procurement based on removing as much material as possible from the earth for as much profit as possible," contemporary extractivism sustains a neoliberal relationship to natural resources; it prioritizes continuous expansion, private property, free markets, and free trade above all else (Willow 2). Its disregard for long-term social and environmental consequences in favour of short-term economic gains dispossesses populations and destroys local and global environments.

More than the exploitation of the earth and its resources, extractivism is a way of thinking and being in the world. Extractivist practices have become mirrored by our attitudes and habits of thought. In a 2013 interview, climate justice activist Naomi Klein and Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson discuss how extractivism encapsulates a nonreciprocal, dominance-based approach to nature, bodies, and ideas; it is a colonialist mindset that is as much about "taking without consent, without thought, care or even knowledge of the impacts on other living things" as it is about mining and drilling in resource-rich territories in

order to produce wealth (Klein, "Dancing the World Into Being"). To a question from Klein about the meaning of the word "extractivism," Simpson responds:

> My land is seen as a resource. My relatives in the plant and animal worlds are seen as resources. My culture and knowledge is a resource. My body is a resource and my children are a resource because they are the potential to grow, maintain, and uphold the extraction-assimilation system. The act of extraction removes all of the relationships that give whatever is being extracted meaning. Colonialism has always extracted the [I]ndigenous – extraction of [I]ndigenous knowledge, [I]ndigenous women, [I]ndigenous peoples. (qtd. in Klein, "Dancing the World Into Being")

The colonial mindset of extractivism borne of capitalism keeps us stuck in the energy impasse. Growth-oriented and accelerationist at its heart, capitalism – and the extractivist attitudes it props up – depends on continuous expansion and investment in its own reproduction to enable profit; therefore, it is at odds with a decolonial transition towards reduced energy use.

The liminal space of the energy impasse is reinforced and naturalized by the immense material privilege and the good life fantasy that fossil-fueled modernity (i.e. industrial capitalism) makes possible for the Global North's middle class. We must transition away from oil in order to protect the future of the planet, but to do so requires us, as Naomi Klein writes, to "change everything" (*This Changes Everything*). Energy transitions are about detaching from the many benefits afforded to us by oil, which also means breaking away from much broader systems of capitalism, colonialism, extractivism, private property, and even family and home. In their book *Cruel Optimism*, Berlant observes and analyzes ways in which our optimistic attachments to such systems generate the conditions of our own suffering. They suggest that, even though many of these systems are no longer sustainable and have led to the deterioration of

our social and economic lives, we remain compulsively attached to them. Convinced that these systems still hold the promise of the "good life," we ignore the destructive nature of our attachments and irrationally (or, "cruelly") adopt a sort of optimism towards them. By analyzing the modes through which we practice such cruel optimism, writes Berlant, we can "track the affective attachment to what we call the good life, which is for so many a bad life that wears out the subjects who nonetheless, and at the same time, find their conditions of possibility within it" (27). For Berlant, cruel optimism persists because the ordinary conditions of living in the present wear us down to such an extent that we continue to "ride the wave of the system of attachment" (28) we are used to, even when that system fails us and prevents us from flourishing (1).

Playing off Berlant's notion of cruel optimism, performance studies scholar Kimberly Skye Richards refers to our binding attachment to oil and to the systems sustained by it as "crude optimism" (140). Like cruel optimism, crude optimism exists "when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (Berlant 1) – when we remain attached to the neoliberal values and good life privileges that are (re)produced by fossil fuels extraction, even though fossil fuels are the foremost cause of the global climate crisis and contribute to the disenfranchisement and dispossession of large swathes of the global population. For example, crude optimism is at play in the film *The Grand Seduction*, which I examine in the first chapter of this project: a rural town attempts to resolve the economic demise caused by its extraction-based, boom-and-bust local economy by adopting the same exploitative worldviews and behaviours that led to its poverty in the first place, which results in a cynical perpetuation of the deadlock in which it finds itself. Thus, for the film's characters, crude optimism sustains the "stuckness" of impasse and forecloses possibilities of transitioning to an ecologically sustainable and socially just future.

Rather than staying "stuck" in the impasse of present-day energy cultures, this project traces different ways through which the impasse becomes potentialized. Berlant's description of impasse hints at such potentiality. They write that impasse is a space of suspension and gesture; activities undertaken in this space "produce impacts and events, but one does not know where they are leading" (198-99). Berlant suggests that the impasse becomes potentialized through the "situation," which allows us to be "reflexive about […] contemporary historicity" as we are living it (Berlant 5). They describe a situation as "a state of things [within the present] in which *something* that will perhaps matter is unfolding amid the usual activity of life" (5; emphasis in original). In this state of "animated and animating suspension," there is the "sense of the emergence of something in the present that may become an event" (Berlant 5). Berlant explains that, unlike a situation, an event is "a drama" that "constitutes the potential for a scene of ethical sociality" (5). For an example of how a situation becomes an event, consider my personal experience rehearsing and performing the play *Rig*. The collective melancholy the other actors and I worked through in rehearsal and onstage created the "state of animated suspension" that Berlant associates with the situation (5). It was in this state of suspension that I sensed "the emergence of something" – an emotion I couldn't quite name – at the performance's conclusion (Berlant 5). Later, conducting scholarly research while thinking about the relations between our performance of *Rig* and the present energy impasse, I was able to make sense of the emotion I had felt during that evening onstage. It was during this time of reflection that the potentialized "situation" that presented itself during *Rig*'s performance became an "event." As I theorized about the emotions I had felt onstage, I opened up further potential for future "scenes of ethical sociality" (Berlant 5); I realized I wanted to become more involved in anti-extractivist activism and became hopeful about being part of working towards a future beyond oil. Understanding my

experience during and after the performance of *Rig* as an example of utopian performativity transformed the situation that emerged onstage into an event, illuminating its potentiality.

This dissertation contributes to the scholarship of performance studies and the energy humanities by making two central interventions. First, I argue that the impasse produces a series of affects and emotions (such as fear, anxiety, and melancholia), which are nevertheless the conditions of possibility for utopian performativity. Within the impasse, performative "doings" – which, following Dolan, I call utopian performatives – allow us to navigate these affects and emotions. Secondly, I argue that utopian performatives actualize potentials that are latent within the energy impasse, thus pointing us toward ways out of this impasse. Even as the impasse creates an affective climate of cruel/crude optimism, human activities within the impasse – such as our performance of *Rig* – open up a temporal "not yet" that activates possibilities for transitioning away from extractivism. In this way, situations and events within the impasse "anticipator[ily] illuminate" a future in which we no longer reduce the earth into an object for us to use, but rather attend to the relationships that the earth sustains to ensure the regeneration of future life (Muñoz 18).

My contention is not that the impasse itself is a performatively utopian space. In fact, once utopian performativity becomes part of the impasse, then it is no longer the impasse; the performatively utopian gesture enables the subject to emerge from the "stuckness" of the impasse. Berlant suggests that, as a "stretch of time that is being shaped and sensed," the impasse is performative in that it compels us to find ways to adapt, feel out, and live within the present (199). Cruel optimism is an affective climate that is created by these performing gestures, which Berlant argues "revise" rather than resolve crises that may arise (199). For example, faced with the impasse created by our dependence on fossil fuels, petrocultures in the Global North often

attempt to "revise" the predicament by invoking cruel/crude optimism, which legitimizes extraction through rhetorical strategies and cultural performances that, far from "resolving" the crisis, only solidify our attachments to oil and in turn keep us stuck in the impasse. Thus, cruel/crude optimism allows us to keep moving within the impasse, but we never really get anywhere. While part of this project's first chapter explores the ways in which cruel/crude optimism maintains the holding patterns of the energy impasse, I am more interested in the potentiality it opens up. I argue that the impasse is a liminal space of contingency and indeterminacy in which the potential that is obscured by business-as-usual – activities that "revise" the present and (re)produce crude/cruel optimism – can be mobilized. Rather than understanding impasse as a space of foreclosure, I imagine it as a condition that opens up possibility precisely because of its uncertainty. It is a space where, without being certain of how things will turn out, we can begin to transform social and economic life as we know it by breaking with the limitations, assumptions, and material relations left behind by a legacy of oil that can no longer hold or sustain us.

This dissertation examines performances from within the energy impasse that illuminate possible pathways for transformation; they look beyond capitalism and extractivism for alternative ways of being in relationship to energy by reviving local economies, constructing more equitable relations between humans and between humans and the land, and respecting Indigenous land rights. Without providing a blueprint for how all these changes may be achieved, these performances anticipate the future "doings" that make up the transitions to life after oil.

Utopian Thinking and Affect Theory

This dissertation explores interdisciplinary theories of utopia in order to argue that the potentialized time and space of the energy impasse are performatively utopian. My definition of utopian performativity amalgamates theorizations of performance theorists José Esteban Muñoz and Jill Dolan, who themselves primarily draw from thinkers like Angelika Bammer, Ernst Bloch, Fredric Jameson, and Miranda Joseph. In 1516, Sir Thomas More considered utopia as an island, an imagined space (*Utopia*). Dolan, too, looks at utopia as a "no-place" – one that can be reached via the apparatus of theatre (63). For Dolan, utopian performatives are fleeting moments within performances in which one grasps what a better world might feel like (5). She suggests that, because of the affective experiences of connection and collectivity that the theatre engenders, as well as its openness to human interactions that may be prohibited outside the theatre's space, the theatre can productively model social change. In contrast with Dolan's primarily spatial and affective interpretations of utopia, Muñoz draws from Ernst Bloch, who primarily considers utopia to be a temporal stage, like a phase – a "certain futurity, a could be, a should be" (99) that is "not yet here" (1). This dissertation suggests that any transformational criticism of the energy impasse must be oriented toward the future and therefore leans heavily on temporal interpretations of utopian performativity; I therefore consider utopian performativity to instantiate a time and a place that is not yet here. Further, I argue that the aesthetic of performance offers a productive mode for understanding the utopian potentiality of impasse. As Muñoz reminds us, transformative politics are disabled by an emphasis on concrete "ends" rather than "means" (100). Thus, impasse's political value lies in the performative "doings" and perpetual becomings it induces. It is in the processes of moving through and within it that the

impasse produces meaning; such processes provide opportunities to grasp and embody an affective otherwise that is always on the horizon. These performative practices offer utopian intimations of transformation that have the potential to help us carve out new ways of living and being.

Throughout this dissertation, I refer to utopian performativity that occurs in the energy impasse as "crude utopia." Such a formulation highlights the partiality, indeterminacy, and inchoateness – in other words, the "crudeness" – of utopia itself. Further, it stages the temporal frame of this project within the energy impasse of the twenty-first century. Utopia is liminal, potentialized, and unfinished; it anticipates "doings" that are in the future. It demonstrates potentiality in its capacity to unfold in countless ways, which are impossible to predict. Utopian thinkers like Dolan, Jameson, and Muñoz agree that utopian imaginings must always be partial; never "stabilized by [its] own finished perfection," utopia is about the "'what-if' rather than a more restrictive, finite image of 'what should be'" (Dolan 6-7, 13). Drawing from Jameson, who believes that the force of utopia is not to bring the future into explicit focus, but rather to raise our consciousness to the horizons and outer limits of the present in order to leave room for yet-to-be devised political orders, Muñoz seeks to examine utopia not as a fixed schema but as a "horizon of possibility" that is always in flux (97). Similarly, Dolan considers utopia to be "an approach toward" transcending the here and now in order to reach a then and there that is not yet here (7). "Crude utopia" underlines the irresolvable uncertainty of the energy impasse and suggests that it is through the processes of navigating these uncertainties that transitioning away from fossil fuels becomes possible. Despite the fact that our visions for transition must always be "crude" – they will never fully come into focus in the present – the only way to approach energy transitions is through the utopian imagination. As Jameson writes, reviving utopia does not mean

that "the outlines of a new and effective practical politics […] will at once become visible; but only that we will never come to one without it" ("The Politics of Utopia" 36).

Ironically, the energy impasse is at the heart of crude utopia; it creates the conditions that lead to our utopian imaginings of transitioning away from fossil fuels. Utopian thinkers tend to agree that utopia is primarily a critique of the here and now; it is a diagnosis that proclaims that the present is not enough, a self-correcting critical process that serves as a driving force of human development and history (Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*; Cojocaru; Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future* and "The Politics of Utopia"; Muñoz). As Jameson writes in "The Politics of Utopia," utopia's function lies in demonstrating "our imprisonment in a non-utopian present […] so as to reveal the ideological closure of the system in which we are somehow trapped and confined" (46). Jameson refers to the end of the nineteenth century in the West and the 1960s in the United States as periods of time that were particularly utopian; he describes them as "rudderless" and "without agency or direction," but ultimately claims that such directionlessness opened up "ideational and utopian-creative free play […] in the political imagination" (45). I argue that the same can be said for the present moment, in which utopian performatives work against petro-capitalism's false claim that impasse is the inevitable, natural order of things – the way things "must be." Jameson's description of the utopian moment resonates with my own attempts to define impasse; he writes that it is a "suspension" – a "calm before the storm, the stillness at the centre of the hurricane" (45). According to Jameson, this suspension "allows us to take hitherto unimaginable mental liberties with structures whose actual modification or abolition scarcely seem on the cards" (45). Thus, the impasse is a necessary precondition for the critical impulses of utopian performativity, and indeed for transforming petro-based society and culture in the Global North. While the impasse doesn't prescribe *how* to

achieve such transformation, our suspended, stagnated efforts in this time and space are a fundamental part of the transition away from fossil fuels. As my colleagues and I have written in *After Oil*, "If we already knew the end, and we already knew how to install it with certainty, then we would not be at an impasse" (Petrocultures Research Group). Foregrounding the limits of our current energy culture, utopia diagnoses the symptoms of this impasse – such as anxiety, fear, and grief – in order to help us usher in alternative ways of being in relationship with energy.

This project explores such symptoms of impasse by examining the affects and emotions produced by our attachments to contemporary forms of energy, such as oil. Following Jameson, who writes that "a genuine confrontation with utopia" demands that we explore the anxiety produced by the conditions that lead to utopian thinking, I argue that it is through this process of grappling with the affective symptoms of impasse that we can potentially render our visions of alternative futures and utopian transformations politically operative ("The Politics of Utopia" 53). In her book *Living Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century*, cultural studies theorist Stephanie Lemenager explores some of the affects and emotions produced by our reliance on and interactions with oil. On one hand, she suggests that within contemporary oil culture in the Global North, our "ultradeep" love for oil is "lodged in gasoline fuel, cars, and in the thousands of everyday items made from petroleum feedstock, from lip balms to tampon applicators, dental polymers, and aspirin tablets" (13). On the other hand, we are at the same time engaged in "petromelancholia," a state of "unresolved grieving" over the loss of the conventional fossil fuels reserves typically associated with vertical well extraction. Because of our need for more and more oil, we can no longer rely solely on vertical wells to meet demand, and so we have turned to more intensive, "unconventional" extractive processes, such as through fracking, oil sands, and offshore drilling (Lemenager 16). These unconventional methods of extracting oil are often

dangerous and lead to disaster, exacerbating our petromelancholia, such as when British Petroleum's Macondo well exploded in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 (Lemenager 104), or when the *Ocean Ranger* sank in 1982.

Throughout this dissertation, I define affects and emotions by synthesizing ideas from Erin Hurley and Deborah B. Gould. Affects, according to Hurley and Gould, are experiences of bodily energy that register immediately, unconsciously, and at the skin level in response to stimuli that impinge on the body (Gould 19; Hurley 147). For example, a cool breeze may produce goosebumps on the skin, or an abrupt change in image or event may produce an involuntarily jump in the viewer of a horror movie. The intensity of these responses occurs before we cognitively register what we think about the stimuli or our affective responses to them; while we can sense the impingement of an affect upon the body, this sensing is outside of our conscious awareness, inchoate and not yet articulable. Emotions, on the other hand, result when affects are consciously actualized by passing into our cognition and becoming expressed in gestures, feelings, or words that we have coded from our storehouses of knowledge, habits, experiences, and cultural systems of meaning. To illustrate the difference between affects and emotions, Gould explains how we get from one to the other. Affect, she explains, might be understood by considering times when our feelings are "opaque to ourselves […] something that we do not quite have language for, something that we cannot fully grasp, something that escapes us but is nevertheless in play" (20). When affects induce efforts to figure out what we are feeling and how to express it, we experience an emotion.

Affect and emotion are useful areas of study through which to explore the potentiality of the energy impasse, since they are themselves full of potential (Gould; Massumi). First, affects are potentialized in that they anticipate futurity; they exist within the present, giving the body

force to respond to that which is impinging on it, but as it is not possible to make cognitive sense of their intensities within the present, they must always gesture toward a future in which they will be articulated. Emotions, too, contain potential; by their very nature, they anticipate the future approximation of the affects that engender them, but such an approximation is impossible, because emotions can never fully articulate the intensity of the affects that precede them (Gould 21). Furthermore, the process of "becoming" that exists between affect and emotion further emphasizes potentiality. The precise moment at which affects experienced in the body pass through our cognition to become emotions is indeterminate and unknowable, which creates an overall affective state of anticipation, regardless of the emotion that is produced. Affects and emotions that are experienced within the energy impasse become doubly potentialized: first, by the affective structure of anticipation produced by affects and emotions themselves, and second, by the indeterminacy of impasse.

These potentialized affects and emotions are a fundamental part of the impasse's utopian performativity. As affects impinge upon our bodies in the energy impasse, we produce anticipatory emotional reactions. For example, when we experience an increased heart rate or muscle tension after a news report about a climate-related weather event, we often feel anxiety and fear – future-oriented emotions that anticipate what *might* come next. Often unprecedented, climate-related weather events produce such emotions because we have no way of knowing how such events will turn out, or how they may present themselves in more devastating ways in the future. Symptoms of the energy impasse, such emotional reactions are full of potential, which is manifested through the anticipatory affective structure produced both by the emotions themselves and through the ways in which we grapple with them. This potentiality is a prerequisite for the transformations that must occur as we transition from fossil fuels. As we

attempt to navigate, make sense of, and move through these emotional reactions to the energy impasse, we may be able to bring into view a future that exists beyond the petro-capitalistic conditions that produce the emotions in the first place. These performative doings have the potential to give rise to crude utopia.

Interventions in the Energy Humanities

While the environmental humanities have been participating in the analysis of environmental and climate issues as far back at the 1970s, the field has grown exponentially since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Since the 1990s, a multidisciplinary field of petrocriticism has been exploring the local and global impacts of oil, as well as the ways in which our consumption of oil has shaped the ideals of freedom, modernity, and democracy in the Global North (Apter; Coronil; Ghosh; Hitchcock; Mitchell; Szeman, "System Failure"; Wenzel, "Petro-Magic Realism"; Yaeger et al.). The past decade has produced numerous collections and readers (Barrett and Worden; Petrocultures Research Group; Schneider-Mayerson and Bellamy; Szeman and Boyer; Szeman and Diamanti; Szeman et al.; Wilson et al.), as well as book-length studies (Diamanti; Lemenager, *Living Oil*; Huber) that have become associated with the term "energy humanities." Stephanie Lemenager defines "energy humanities" as an "aspirational, activist, interdisciplinary field" that has grown from rising awareness of global climate change and from a desire to demonstrate the humanities as a "transformational cultural practice" ("Infrastructure Again, And Always" 25). Stemming from the environmental humanities and forming part of a body of eco-criticism, the energy humanities examine how exploration for and extraction and distribution of oil has intersected with developments in culture, society, and

politics, ultimately bringing into being new social imaginaries called petrocultures (Wilson et al.).

In addition to contributing to this recent groundswell of scholarship on oil's embeddedness in everyday life in the Global North, this dissertation directly intervenes in a conversation begun at the University of Alberta in 2015, when a cluster of scholars and artists working in the energy humanities across the Global North convened for one week to come up with a plan for transitioning to a world "after oil." Our collectively-authored text *After Oil* suggests that studying petrocultures is fundamental to understanding how the necessary techno-scientific and economic shift from oil as a primary source of energy will also involve a transformation of social dynamics and affective attachments, through which we must "redistribute the power embedded in political structures as much as in energy systems" (Petrocultures Research Group 72). Its collective origins model what is needed for a "transition from fossil fuel[s] to renewables, and from a petroculture to the new global culture that we can see just over the horizon" (12). Such utopian language is mirrored in the conclusion:

> After oil: the phrase can sound like a threat or the naming of an apocalypse. This project will have accomplished its intent if "after oil" changes its valence, becoming the name for a place and time in which we want to be. (73)

After Oil led to a new wave of scholarship about energy transitions, including notable work from a fresh generation of scholars who emphasize the economic and social transitions required for energy transitions. For example, Jordan Kinder historicizes the ways in which fossil fuels and global capitalism have been conceptualized as co-determinant; Kimberley Skye Richards explores how contemporary oil spectacles build group cohesion against those who stand in the way of petro-imperialism. Such scholarship has effectively argued that the prevention of climate

disaster requires grappling with the way oil has saturated social and political life. This dissertation substantiates but modifies this position by taking up the utopian thrust of *After Oil*, ultimately arguing that the processes involved in grappling with the affective challenges of petrocultures can become performatively utopian.

Because of its attention to liminality and transformation, the field of performance studies is well-suited to *After Oil*'s utopian call; it offers useful approaches for thinking through the affective, social, and ecological transformations required to transition to a world after oil. A foundationally interdisciplinary field, performance studies applies a range of approaches, including Marxist and feminist analysis, critical race theory, queer theory, and affect theory, to interpret its objects in their conditions of production and reception, as well as to attend to the political effects of performance practices, especially the ways in which performance negotiates power relations. This dissertation mobilizes the approaches listed above as needed, while at the same time engaging with critical Indigenous lexicons. It follows the traditions of performance theorists Baz Kershaw and and Jon McKenzie, whose theories about performative societies and performance as an "onto-historical formation of power and knowledge" suggest that performative politics inform social and political transformation (McKenzie 18). I analyze interdisciplinary theoretical scholarship and engage in close readings of films, theatrical productions, and social movement actions in order to underline the performativity of the energy impasse. Ultimately, I argue, this impasse leads to artistic productions and social movements which themselves give rise to affective strategies and social dynamics that anticipate ecological and political transformation.

To my knowledge, *Crude Utopia: Performing Energy Futures in the 21st Century* is the first study of this scale to explore energy transitions through the lens of performance. Thus, the

dissertation expands the energy humanities and the field of performance studies by creating the first extended critical taxonomy of figures through which we might understand the relationship between performance and energy transitions. While there is a substantial amount of scholarship that analyzes the role of oil and other forms of energy in film, literature, and visual art (Lemenager; Macdonald, "Oil and World Literature" and "The Resources of Fiction"; MacDuffie; Szeman, "Conjectures on World Energy Literature"; Wenzel, "Petro-Magic-Realism Revisited"; Yaeger et al.), there is a paucity of academic discussion about the ways in which theatre and performance inform, and are informed by, energy use. The extended foreword of Graeme Macdonald's 2015 edition of John McGrath's *The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black, Black Oil* examines the real-world "oily machinations" of Scotland's colonial history; his scholarship lays important groundwork for the study of performance within the energy humanities (1). So, too, does Mel Evans's *Artwash: Big Oil and the Arts*, which explores the use of performance art in raising awareness about (and demonstrating resistance to) the relationship between public cultural institutions and oil companies. However, given the recent wave of energy-centred theatrical productions and performances that has emerged in Canada (Charlotte Corbeil-Coleman et al.'s *Highway 63: The Fort Mac Story*; Joan Sullivan's *Rig*; Annabel Soutar's *The Watershed*; Len Falkenstein's *Lac/Athabasca*; Aaron Veldstra's *Our Anaerobic Future*), as well as national acts of energy resistance, there remains much space within the energy humanities and performance studies to explore energy-related theatre and the performativity of petrocultures, particularly in a Canadian context.

Though the interventionist thrust of this dissertation is theoretical rather than historical, together, my chapters tell a story about how contemporary Canadian performance practices engage crude utopia. The first two chapters examine the affective dimensions of impasse – that

is, of petroculture-induced climate crisis – (cynicism, fear, and despair) as represented in performance in Canada. Further, they demonstrate how the impasse is potentialized by and in performance; my close readings bring to the surface the latent potential of impasse as activated by and in these performances. In the third chapter, I examine Indigenous responses – in the mode of performance – to petrocultures. In these examples (primarily Idle No More and Make Muskrat Right), I draw out the consonance of the utopian performative with radical resurgence.

In an attempt to structure the project in a way that is consistent with the progression of "performance" as an analytical category, I begin with filmic representations, then a theatrical performance, and finally grassroots activism. I then conclude by exploring how performances of activism become co-opted in the realm of corporate performance, which often uses activist ideas to further extractivist agendas. I've chosen my objects of study, all of which have been produced or have occurred in the period that spans the late aughts to 2020, because they are situated in what I call the energy impasse. Diagnostic of this impasse and its symptoms, such contemporary artistic works and social actions effectively illuminate the crude utopia of performative responses to the present. The geographic frame of the project, which reflects my own locatedness in Canada, has allowed me to examine a host of performance-based objects that work through the effects of extractivism while at the same time refining my research scope.

As a resource-rich, neoliberal, extractivist state with a well-documented history of exploiting the natural environment and Indigenous culture to sustain its capitalist economic system, Canada is rife with performance-based objects that engage crude utopia. In the introduction to a special issue on Extractivism and Performance for *Canadian Theatre Review*, settler performance scholars Kimberly Skye Richards and Heather Davis-Fisch suggest that performance practices in Canada are shaped by the natural resources of the land as well as the

corporate and political entities that have a vested interested in extracting these resources (5). Part of a tradition of contemporary Canadian theatre that dramatizes how the industries that have developed around the nation's natural resources have shaped social values and political relations (for example, Ted Johns and Paul Thompson's *The Farm Show*; Marie Clements's *Burning Vision*; and Annabel Soutar's *Seeds*), these performance practices reflect the resource dependence that has shaped Canada from its beginnings. As Naomi Klein writes in "Canada's Founding Myths," Canada was a commercial colony, established by the British for the extraction of fish and furs and overseen by the Hudson Bay Company, before it was officially designated as a country. Since then, Canada's economy has been shaped by the staples thesis, developed by Harold Innis and W.A. Macintosh, which posits that the country's economic reliance on staple commodities (such as fish and oil) make the nation vulnerable to booms and busts as international markets fluctuate. Richards and Davis-Fisch note that such emphasis on single commodities has historically allowed extractive industries to gain political power and impede Indigenous self-determination and land rights in Canada. To their point, I add that such emphasis on single commodities has led to Canada's current energy impasse. While I agree with Richards and Davis-Fisch in that it is important to attend to the ways in which Canada's contemporary performance practices enable, perpetuate, and "render visible the social and environmental cost" of extractive colonialism, I posit that it is equally important to attend to the ways in which such practices also hint at and imagine alternatives to it (5). The crude utopia within such performance practices reveals a horizon that exists beyond the energy impasse, after oil.

Chapter Breakdown

The first two chapters of this dissertation examine the affective dimensions of the impasse that has been created by petroculture-induced climate crisis, as represented in Canadian performance. By exploring cynicism, melancholia, and fear, my readings of texts within these chapters demonstrate how the impasse is actualized and potentialized by and in performance. Further, these readings bring to the surface the latent potential of the impasse as it is activated by and in these performances. In the third chapter, I examine Indigenous responses to petrocultures, which occur in the mode of performance. By exploring the examples of Idle No More and Make Muskrat Right, I draw out the consonance of the utopian performative with Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's concept of radical resurgence.

Scholars in the energy humanities have recently explored how crudely optimistic performance practices re-inscribe extractivism as unavoidable and cynically perpetuate the political and affective deadlock that forecloses possibilities of working towards a future beyond oil (Huber; Richards). This dissertation's first chapter, "Beyond Cruel Optimism's Grand Seduction: Cynical and Kynical Responses to Extractivism," directly intervenes in this discussion about the way cynicism perpetuates the energy impasse. My analysis suggests that performance practices that seem to stymy climate action by anaesthetizing populations to extractivism – what cultural theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff might call "Anthropocene (an)aesthetics" (220) – nonetheless contain within them a crudely utopian potential for imagining how a world beyond extractivism might feel. My chosen cultural texts, which include Newfoundland and Labrador's Fogo Island Inn and the 2013 film *The Grand Seduction* (produced and set in Newfoundland and Labrador), are examples of how the province's contemporary performance practices, which evoke the aesthetics and nostalgic pleasures of the rural, use cruel/crude

optimism to sustain the impasse of extractivism. However, by exploring these texts through the lenses of cultural theorists Peter Sloterdijk and Slavoj Žižek, the chapter argues that even as contemporary performance practices keep society mired in extractivism and the cynicism required to perpetuate it, cynicism's ludic and comic internal opposite, "kynicism," simultaneously becomes a tool for managing and working through the energy impasse. I examine the texts' kynical humour and collectivity, as well as kynicism I both witnessed and experienced by attending a screening of the film and by touring the Inn, in order to argue that the very cynicism that perpetuates the energy impasse also, paradoxically, opens up the utopian possibility of moving beyond it.

Chapter Two, "Hope, Fear, and Futurity: Climate Crisis and the Figure of the Child," builds on the conceptual approach established in Chapter One by examining the figure of the child – a symbol of what queer theorist Lee Edelman has called "reproductive futurity," or the reproduction of society and its normativities (2). I tease out how the child figure both perpetuates and opens up possibilities for transcending the energy impasse. The climate activism of teenager Greta Thunberg is placed alongside settler Canadian playwright Annabel Soutar's 2015 documentary theatre project *The Watershed* in order to argue that, through the emotions they bring forth and their refusal of reproductive futurity, young climate activists help us move beyond the energy impasse. Borrowing Muñoz's concept of "coterminous time" (49), I argue that, as actively engaged citizens who also mobilize the future-oriented affect of hope, child climate activists co-exist in both the present and the future; their activism creates new formations in both temporalities. As they resist and critique present-day normativities and the extractivist status quo, they perform crude utopia. I also employ queer theorist Kathryn Bond Stockton's concept of "sideways growth" in order to suggest that the significant periods of delay that

characterize childhood provide space and time for child activists to reorient themselves in directions that run counter to normative modes of being, which opens up possibilities for imagining worlds beyond the energy impasse. Finally, I explore how the emotion of love, brought forth by the child figure, might complicate cultural theorist Sara Ahmed's affective economy of fear and gesture toward the possibility of transforming anxious responses to climate fear into love that is not predicated on family alliances. In this way, rather than driving us apart and turning us inward, climate fear can be harnessed to instead turn us outward, as part of publicly rehearsing and enacting the possibilities for better relations in the future, both between humans and between humans and the non-human.

Many of the utopian performativities I explore below are derived from leftist critiques that propose social-democratic reformism, within the system, rather than radical alternatives for socio-political transformation. Their "crude" utopics lie, in part, within the way they perform utopia's partiality and indeterminacy; they hint at the "not yet" of a reformed world after oil without offering a blueprint for radical otherness. The utopian performativity I examine in the project's final chapter, "Performing Renewable Relations: Idle No More and Make Muskrat Right," contrasts with such reformist ends. As opposed to, for example, the fictional characters in *The Grand Seduction* – who, even as they yearn in an inchoate manner for another kind of situation, seek to adapt their thoughts and actions to the sociopolitical givens of the petro-economy and petroculture – the Indigenous resistance explored in this final chapter does not seek to reform relations to extractivism but rather to replace them with renewable relations toward both humans and the natural environment. Still, while these Indigenous movements present radical alternatives rather than reformist changes, their utopics remain crude. Rather than laying out a fully-realized, fantastical concept of what it would look like to inhabit a future in which we

act as responsible protectors of the land and its resources, they, like the other utopian performativities explored throughout this project, hint at a *feeling* of the otherwise beyond extractivism.

Indigenous communities, which are disproportionately affected by resource extraction in Canada, have produced the most radical examples of crude utopia present in this dissertation. Taiaiake Alfred (Kahnawake Mohawk) and Jeff Corntassel (Cherokee) suggest that the "oppositional, place-based existence" and the "consciousness of being in struggle against the dispossessing and demeaning fact of colonization […] fundamentally distinguishes Indigenous peoples from other peoples of the world" (597). When I deploy the term "Indigenous," I take direction from scholars like Alfred and Corntassel, as well as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Audra Simpson, Glen Coulthard, Warren Cariou, and Nick Estes. They use the term not to consolidate distinctive populations whose experiences under colonialism and extractivism have been vastly different, but rather to describe a powerful, politically-radical practice of collectivity between communities who are Indigenous to the lands they inhabit and who remain "in contention with the colonial societies and states that have spread out from Europe and other centres of empire" (Alfred and Corntassel 597). I engage the teachings of these Indigenous scholars, as well as those of Indigenous activists from across Turtle Island, not to suggest that Indigenous populations possess the "solution" to the energy impasse or to extract and mine Indigenous knowledge and practice as resources to enrich theoretical discourse within the field of performance studies. Rather, I wish to draw attention to the ways in which this knowledge and practice has been mobilized by Indigenous populations as part of resisting imperialism. As a non-Indigenous scholar who lives on Indigenous land, which means that I hold a structural position and embodied experience of power and privilege, I aim to centre Indigenous knowledge

in order to shed light on the potential of the radical practices borne of this knowledge to disrupt the neoliberal extractivist project.

My final chapter is informed by radical resurgence theory, a tradition of decolonial thought and practice generated by Indigenous communities and articulated through the work of scholars like Audra Simpson, Glen Coulthard, Taiaiake Alfred, and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. Radical resurgence involves actively practicing Indigenous ceremony, stories, language, legal and political systems, foodways, and ritual – all of which are intimately tied to the cycles of nature and its resources – as part of resisting the efforts of the state and corporations to harvest the land, and in turn to mine Indigenous peoples, cultures, and knowledge (Simpson, *As We Have Always Done* 19). I consider the role of radical resurgence within two contemporary Indigenous anti-extractivist movements, Idle No More and Make Muskrat Right, which occurred in the territory now called Canada between 2011 and 2020. By examining several of the radically resurgent and direct actions that constituted these movements, I suggest that their revival of Indigenous land-based culture and knowledge demonstrates that extractivism, which attempts and sometimes succeeds to destroy Indigenous presence, is also "a fault line along which Indigenous presence upsurges," as Algonquin Anishinaabe-kwe performance scholar Jenn Cole writes (14). I posit that such Indigenous resurgence creates radical alternatives to the extractivist settler-colonial state, which has created the conditions of the energy impasse. Their crude utopics illuminate the necessity of seeing oneself in relationship not only with other humans, but in complex webs of interconnections with lands, waters, and all the creatures that inhabit these terrains. Ultimately, I argue that Indigenous land-based relations have a renewable relation to futurity that has the potential to trigger a transition from the energy impasse into a more sustainable energy future.

Crude Utopia: Performing Energy Futures in the 21st Century asks readers to consider utopian thinking and feeling as modes of moving beyond the energy impasse, and as a next step in the scholarly discourse of the energy humanities, which anticipates the potential of moving beyond the energy impasse by constantly grappling with the dominant cultural, political, and economic forces behind it. To develop different approaches for analyzing energy transitions through performance analysis, I have selected case studies that represent varied performance-based responses to the energy impasse, including kynicism, the child figure, and Indigenous radical resurgence. By examining their crude utopics as affective and critical modes of working through, imagining, and instantiating horizons beyond the energy impasse, my goal is to model novel and versatile strategies for analyzing how performativity and performance studies can inform understanding and action toward a future after oil. Illuminating possibilities for intervention in the energy impasse, this dissertation is a primer for new kinds of political thinking and practice that have the potential to trigger transition towards more socially just and ecologically sustainable futures.

CHAPTER ONE

Beyond Cruel Optimism's *Grand Seduction*: Cynical and Kynical Responses to Extractivism

In the fall of 2018, my partner and I spent a weekend on Fogo Island, an island off the main island of Newfoundland to which neither of us had ever been. On a Friday afternoon, we left the province's capital city, St. John's, and drove five hours by car to a boat terminal, where we took an hour-long ferry ride across a channel to the smaller island. Standing on the deck of the ferry, the brightest stars we'd ever seen dotted the horizon. After disembarking, we drove along the island's main road for another half hour in search of our AirBnb, slowly realizing we should have planned for the lack of mobile coverage and brought a flashlight. When we finally found the small saltbox house, situated on a stretch of the subarctic barrens near a private airstrip used almost exclusively by wealthy international tourists, we understood why Fogo Island is considered "one of the four corners of the flat earth" ("Fogo Island Inn: An Island off an Island"). We were at the edge of the world.

In the past decade, Fogo Island has reinvigorated its flailing economy and dwindling population, thanks in large part to Newfoundland-born entrepreneur Zita Cobb, founder (and primary funder) of Fogo Island Inn. Envisioned as a saviour of rural Newfoundland culture, the $41-million luxury hotel was conceived as a social enterprise; profits from visitors to the Inn would be funneled directly back into Fogo Island's future economic development, and everything from the building materials to the wallpapers to the staff would be sourced locally. After eight years of planning and building, the Inn opened its doors in 2013 and immediately garnered international praise as a business model and as a feat of contemporary architecture; the 29-room Inn is supported by massive steel columns drilled into bedrock, hearkening back to the

400-year-old Newfoundland tradition of building fishing stages on stilts. Featured in glossy magazines from *Vogue* to *Forbes* and boasting a list of former guests that includes Gwyneth Paltrow, David Letterman, Justin Trudeau, and others whose privacy is meticulously guarded by the Inn's staff, the hotel has been described by *National Geographic* as a space that "exist[s] in symbiosis with the local community, employing its people, celebrating its traditions, and offering guests an honest, authentic experience with an outport culture that remains little changed over the centuries" ("Fogo Island Inn"). As a result of the renaissance of traditional woodworking, weaving, quilting, and other crafts provided by the Inn, the magazine explains, "the once-threatened community now thrives – precisely by embracing the customs that define them" (*National Geographic*). The Inn's website describes a utopic space that provides a return to the traditional as well as "[…] stimulating relief from the numbing uniformity of modern times" ("Fogo Island Inn: An Island off an Island"). Just as it serves as a balm for the local economy, the Inn also apparently acts as a therapeutic space for visitors.

Such positioning of the rural as a space of nostalgia, respite, and repair has an established lineage in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador tourism, and has been examined at length in psychoanalytic and cultural studies. In "Englishness, the Country, and Psychoanalysis," Kenelm Averill explores rural imagery in English culture, drawing a connection between the contemporary idealization of rural landscapes and the anxieties of 21st-century life in the Global North. Amid the intensification of work, the fragmentation of community life, and fast-paced change, he writes, the rural has been imagined as an antidote to stress, chaos, and insecurity (166). Newfoundland and Labrador has capitalized on these therapeutic capacities of the rural. In "Find Yourself in Newfoundland and Labrador: Reading Rurality as Reparation," Ursula Kelly describes how the Newfoundland and Labrador tourism campaign "Find Yourself Here," which

Fig 1. "Fogo Island Inn, Newfoundland." 2016. *Flickr*, http://www.flickr.com/photos/72874821@N03/26599112044/in/album-72157668433221/. Licensed under CC by 2.0.

ran from 2006-2010 and racked up 173 awards globally, targeted "alienated, affluent moderns"– the "well-educated and literate" with "higher than average household incomes" and interest in "discovering and experiencing the unspoiled natural environment" and "unexpected and intriguing experiences" – who would be attracted to the rural as a therapeutic space (57). The nostalgic visuals of "Find Yourself Here" present idealized, utopic versions of a landscape that, while inhabited, is pristine and unharmed. Idealized scenes of everyday rural life – white women hanging clothes to dry on the line and white children playing in grassy meadows next to a gleaming ocean – present the rural as a "vibrant, highly textured, and lyrical" space that evokes feelings of comfort and camaraderie (Kelly 61). The campaign's creative strategy was to "stir a powerful emotional turn to a 'once (upon a) time'" by painting the rural landscape of the province as a place to return "home" (Kelly 54). Central to the campaign is the association of the

rural with a certain conventionality or normativity, especially with regard to domestic gender roles and the family. So, too, is the nostalgic notion that, away from the anxious bustle of city life, visitors can find insights into the self and the world – appeals that have been a fixture of thought in the Global North since at least the English Romantic poets.

Just as Fogo Island Inn has been poised as a space to rehabilitate a "sick" economy, the results of "Find Yourself Here" were meant to be as therapeutic for those who inhabit the rural landscape advertised in the campaign's visuals as for those who come from the mainland to enjoy it. In 1992, Newfoundland and Labrador's economy was decimated by the closure of the province's cod fishery. In the years following, populations in rural communities began to diminish; opportunities in oil, gas, and other resource-based sectors led to outmigration and internal urbanization. Campaigns like "Find Yourself Here" have been an immensely successful response to rural Newfoundland and Labrador's high levels of unemployment; in spite of a worldwide economic recession and overall decrease in the tourism sector, non-resident visits to Newfoundland and Labrador rose 22 percent and visitor spending in the province rose 37 percent between 2006 and 2010 (Krashinsky). Each year, the US$400 million added to provincial revenues by tourism easily justifies the province's US$20 million marketing budget (Kelly 53-54). In addition to these revenues, tourism campaigns like "Find Yourself Here" also appeal to Newfoundland and Labrador's city dwellers, who flock to the province's rural areas on the weekends, just as my partner and I did when we visited Fogo Island in 2018. The hashtag "#baycation" – coined as a name for a weekend out of town or, as locals say, "around the bay" – has been used tens of thousands of times by Newfoundlanders on Instagram, and was coopted by the province's Department of Tourism, Culture, and Recreation during the COVID-19 pandemic; in an attempt to recoup the tourism dollars lost because of travel restrictions, it targeted its 2020

campaign directly at Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with the brand and hashtag "#staycation." Hence, Newfoundland and Labrador's tourism industry seduces through the promise of the rural-within-the rural. Fogo Island Inn, located on a remote island off of a remote island, capitalizes on this promise. From its architecture to its cozy, folk-like décor, the Inn feeds into the same rural romance adopted by the province of Newfoundland and Labrador's marketing team – though, of course, there is nothing particularly rustic about it, or about the luxury of its accommodations, which includes in the price of a room (rates start at C$1,975 per night, with a two-night minimum) sumptuous multi-course meals and snacks prepared using local ingredients by artisanal chefs, private adventure excursions on both land and sea with "Community Hosts," and full access to the Inn's amenities, which include a cinema, a library, a tea room, an art gallery, as well as a sauna, gym, and several rooftop hot tubs ("Fogo Island Inn: Rates").

After returning from Fogo Island, I spoke with a friend who grew up on the island but who now lives and works in Newfoundland and Labrador's urban centre, St. John's. His parents and extended family still live on Fogo, where they are employed by the Inn to show guests around. When I asked my friend about his thoughts on Fogo Island's tourism, he recounted a story about a recent visit to his parents' small coastal home: coming downstairs in his pajamas after sleeping late, he found his family having a cup of tea with a wealthy manager of hedge funds who had been staying at the Inn. The highlight of the trip, according to the visitor, was skating on a pond with his kids, who were amazed and thrilled to have free rein of the vast landscape. With no crowds and a lake that wouldn't thaw for months, there were no dangers for the hedge fund manager or his kids to be anxious about, and the family spent several hours horsing around and laughing in the woods. My friend expressed incredulity at the fact that the guest had likely spent tens of thousands of dollars to visit Fogo Island only to spend the weekend

doing what working-class locals do on a regular Saturday – that the super-rich hedge fund manager had likely spent more money on one weekend on Fogo Island than some of the residents on the island earn in one year, in order to experience the rural pleasures of *not* being super rich. The manager described the experience as transformative – a way of putting into perspective the kind of world he would like to see for his kids. For him, experiencing rural pleasures became a way to cope with the general anxiety of urban capitalism and imagine ways to make the future better for his children. Gallivanting with his kids on the pond allowed him to experience the joy of what such a world might feel like.

My friend's anecdote about the hedge fund manager raises questions about how "getting away from it all" often means retreating to spaces that are nevertheless imbricated in the "it" from which one wishes to get away. The rural spaces imagined as respites from urban modernity are often the very sites of the kinds of resource extraction and processing that are slowly decimating the future potential of these spaces as sites of retreat and which are contributing to the climate anxiety that has become a feature of contemporary urban life. The hedge fund manager's trip to Fogo Island can be interpreted as an exercise in cruel optimism: the funds that paid for his vacation – and which pay the salaries of locals – came from leveraging huge amounts of institutional and individual wealth that, in the age of carbon democracy, are inextricable from the global market for oil; thus, they are contributing to the extractivism that leads to the demise of places like Fogo Island in the first place. Furthermore, despite its best intentions, the Inn's practices of sourcing locally do not change the fact that the region of which it is a part continues to rely substantially on fossil fuels. Since oil and gas make up 25 percent of the province's GDP and account for almost half of its exports, funds injected into the region through tourism are inevitably reabsorbed and recirculated within a petro-economy (Government

of Newfoundland and Labrador). The extractivism that forms the foundation of this petro-economy directly contributes to the climate change which, according to Climate Central, will destroy much of Fogo Island's coastline by 2050 ("Coastal Risk Screening Tool: Map By Year"). Interpreted this way, Fogo Island Inn's modus operandi – appealing to wealthy tourists to bring much-needed income into an economically-flailing rural region in an attempt to "nurse [the region] back to economic health" (McKeough) – is itself a cruelly optimistic endeavor. For both the Inn and the region, prosperity depends on large injections of wealth from the visiting modern subject, whose participation in the systems of capitalism and extractivism have the potential to prevent Fogo Island from flourishing. Yet the Fogo Island Inn cannot exist without such visitors, who represent the inverse of the rurality signified by Fogo Island itself.

The cruel optimism of Fogo Island Inn's operations mirrors that of its beginnings. The private funds used to build it came from the founder's successful career, which began in the oil and gas sector and culminated with early retirement from a company that, around the time of Cobb's departure as CFO, went from being one of Canada's leading technology giants to setting a world record for the largest quarterly loss in corporate history (McKeough; Chafe; Tuck). As a result, upon her departure Cobb exercised stock options worth C$69 million and spent four years sailing around the world on her 47-foot yacht (McKeough). After she set her sights on home, Cobb decided to build Fogo Island Inn, intent on creating a social enterprise ("Fogo Island Inn: Social Enterprise"). Ironically, as my friend's anecdote reveals, in spite of its "social" intentions, Fogo Island Inn is not separate from its capitalist foundations; it cannot help but be implicated in the same forces that gave birth to it, and which threaten both its own flourishing as well as the flourishing of the place in which it has been built. In a 2018 interview with *The Globe and Mail*, Cobb surmised: "I think people see me as having gone from the business world to the

philanthropy world, but I've actually just gone from the 'for-profit' world to the 'not-just-for-profit' world. The basics of business are the same. What is different is the purpose" ("Why Zita Cobb Left Her CFO Job to Found the Fogo Island Inn").

Initiatives like Fogo Island Inn and "Find Yourself Here" evoke nostalgia as a tool of utopian yearning for a future beyond the anxiety of the present. Through their imagery, they conjure an idealized past which, as a response to sociopolitical conditions in the present, expresses wishes and desires for the future; they represent an idyllic version of what once was in order to imagine what could be again. They present nostalgia as a source of pleasure that will allow visitors and citizens simultaneously to work through the anxiety of the impasse and thus to "heal" the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador. Yet, while they hint at a future in which humankind engages in more intimate relations with the land and its resources, their utopian vision is tempered by the capitalist and extractivist systems in which they are rooted. Their imbrication in these systems, which create the need for healing in the first place, renders their optimism cruel. In this chapter, I use theories by Peter Sloterdijk and Slavoj Žižek to examine what I see as the cynical reason behind projects like Fogo Island Inn, which is maintained through the operation of public secrets: we know and see the masks that society wears – the way we gloss over important truths, such as the fact that Fogo Island Inn is imbricated in the extractivism it purports to resist – but we act as if we do not, which keeps us in an impasse. In the words of Žižek: "[We] know very well what [we] are doing, yet [we] are doing it" (*Mapping Ideology* 8). Using the 2013 Newfoundland and Labrador film *The Grand Seduction* as a case study, this chapter explores the rural as a space for the pleasure of nostalgia – an emotion which, ostensibly, we can use to work through the anxiety of impasse. I argue that such nostalgia runs the risk of keeping us stuck in the impasse of cynical reason. Certainly, for the characters of *The*

Grand Seduction, nostalgia and cynical reason work hand-in-hand; like the founders of Fogo Island Inn, the characters' strategies for maintaining former modes of living make use of the same systems that destroyed such modes of living in the first place. Given this paradox, this chapter asks: Are there particular structures of feeling that resist cynical reason? If nostalgia, a source of pleasure, runs the risk of keeping us stuck in the impasse of cynical reason, what other pleasures might help us move beyond it?

In the first part of this chapter I read *The Grand Seduction*, a Newfoundland and Labrador adaptation of the 2003 Quebec film *La grande séduction,* as an exercise in cynical reason, both within the diegesis and in its implied address to cosmopolitan audiences. I argue that, in the film, cynical reason diminishes the pleasures of nostalgia, the latter of which becomes a kind of false antidote to the anxiety of extractivism. For the characters of *The Grand Seduction*, who have been chronically unemployed since the demise of the North Atlantic cod fishery, nostalgia becomes a mode of dealing with the anxiety of joblessness as well as a catalyst for the actions they take to preserve the traditional life of their town. However, this nostalgia is no match for their cynical reason; by the end of the film, their cynicism fully implicates them within the systems of capital and extraction that created their anxiety in the first place. Similarly, *The Grand Seduction*'s nostalgia (and its attendant pleasures, such as humour) ostensibly helps audiences work through the anxiety of living in extractive economies; yet, in order to enjoy the film, audiences must adopt cynical reason in much the same way as the characters do.

In the second part of the chapter, I analyze the potential for a more subversive reading of the film, which features forms of spontaneously collective action and experience that are not cynical in nature, but which rather become examples of what Sloterdijk and Žižek call "kynicism": a ludic, comic constituent of cynicism that always already exists within it and which

is provocatively contrary to it. I argue that the film's kynicism, which reveals itself diegetically through the playful antics of characters and non-diegetically through the laughter of local audiences, offers feelings of pleasure that open the utopic possibility of moving beyond the anxiety of climate impasse. Ultimately the chapter argues that, while the pleasures we associate with the rural have the capacity to keep us mired within habits and ideologies that sustain extractivism, they also contain potential for undermining them.

Fig 2. "Colorful historic fishing sheds, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada." *Pikrepo*, https://www.pikrepo.com/fbvlm/colorful-historic-fish-storage-sheds-newfoundland-and-labrador-canada. Licensed under CC by 2.0. A scene reminiscent of the aesthetics of "Find Yourself Here" and the photography found on Newfoundland and Labrador's tourism website.

Emotion and Cynical Reason in *The Grand Seduction*

For *The Grand Seduction*'s cosmopolitan audiences, the fictional setting of Tickle Head is a place of respite from the anxieties of precarity and extractivism. The film's montages of brightly-coloured houses, traditional fish flakes, emerald hillsides, shimmering waves, and sun-drenched cliffs offer the same rural appeal as Fogo Island and "Find Yourself Here," creating a vision of Tickle Head that is as seductive to city-dwelling audiences as the title suggests. *The Grand Seduction*'s characters also cling to the comforts offered by the rural traditions and natural beauty of Tickle Head. Their nostalgia for the past is captured in the film's opening scene, a flashback to an early morning in the childhood of the protagonist and narrator, Murray French. As birds chirp in the pre-dawn light, he wakes up to the sounds of his father getting ready for a day of fishing. There is a montage of the objects the boy sees upon waking – a model ship, an old fishing reel, and an antique clock – and the camera follows his gaze as he watches his father don oilskins, march down the hill, and fall into step with the other men of the harbour. Brandishing lanterns in one hand, the fishermen make their way to the town wharf, where their movements synchronize as they wordlessly launch their small fishing boats. As they row away from the wharf, the waves gently rippling behind their oars, in voiceover the protagonist reflects upon his past in Tickle Head and says that "as he look[s] back now, [he] can truly say life was a thing of beauty." The scene cuts to the family's evening supper, where the boy's mother ladles chowder into chipped bowls by the muted glow of a kerosene lamp while the narrator extols his father's hard work on the sea. "He knew he earned every precious moment life gave back to him […] his work made him worthy of the cod on his plate, the salt on his skin, and the stars in the sky," he eulogizes, as his mother takes off her apron and follows his father upstairs. Sounds of lovemaking begin to emanate from their open window, as well as the open windows of other

nearby houses. The camera sweeps over the town as the lovers' moans de-escalate, eventually focusing on Murray as a boy, perched on one of the rooftops, playfully mewing at the cat and watching as the towns' chimneys emit post-coital cigarette smoke all at once.

Recent theories suggest that nostalgia, or the "homesickness" involved in sentimental longing for the past ("nostalgia, n."), is an antidote for anxiety and "the sense of 'homelessness' permeating modern life" (Kitson and McHugh, 487; 500). But for Murray – whose nostalgic tone in the first scene contrasts with the anxiety of the second, which takes place in the present – evoking the past does not affect a lasting remedy. Now in his 50s or 60s, Murray wakes late in the morning and realizes he has been dreaming of his childhood; the meows heard in his reverie are coming from the tabby lying on his chest. As he dresses for the day, it becomes clear that his dream – the Tickle Head he remembers – has only provided a temporary respite from the daily anxiety of contemporary life in Tickle Head. He makes his way down the hill like his father before him, falling into step with the other men of the harbour. But the cries of seagulls and the iconography of rural Newfoundland life – clothes billowing on the line, saltbox houses, and stacks of firewood along the country path – fail to brighten the mens' sullen and worried expressions. Their morning walk doesn't take them to the ocean as their fathers' did; instead, they line up at the bank to cash their income-support cheques. Their town, which has historically depended solely on the harvesting of cod fish for economic security, is struggling to survive; as a result of industrial overfishing, cod have become so scarce that Tickle Head's citizens have come to rely on government assistance. Juxtaposing this present-day reality with the romance of the opening scene, the film highlights the anxiety and precarity of living in resource towns of single industry.

Such juxtaposition also underlines the cruel optimism at play in *The Grand Seduction*:

Murray and his neighbours cannot rely on old habits and narratives of life, but new ones have not yet fully formed. As a result, for them nostalgia has become a re-orienting narrative that promises to lead out of the energy impasse, even as it projects a former story of the good life that no longer can deliver on what it promises. Nostalgic dreams of Tickle Head as it once existed do not heal chronic unemployment or "cure" the town's citizens of the anxieties with which they have been imbued through generations of living within extractivism and capitalism. Rather, their nostalgia engages them in a melancholic reaction to the loss of their former "good life." Drawing on Sigmund Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia," David Eng and David Kazanjian suggest that in contrast with mourning, which lays the histories of lost objects to rest and allows for the creation of new attachments, melancholia is "mourning without end"; it results when grief has not met with resolution or closure (3). I will show how, for Murray, melancholy becomes layered upon the anxiety of extractivism's impasse, which becomes part of a cynical mask that perpetuates cruel optimism. As the film progresses, he and his neighbours become increasingly saddened and stressed by chronic joblessness but determined to resist the pull of the city, which promises employment but lacks the rural appeal of Tickle Head. Eventually, they set out on a mission to convince a company to build a factory in their town. In order to fulfill the corporation's demands, though, they have to build up the community's infrastructure by attracting a doctor to move there. Catalyzed by nostalgia for the traditional life of Tickle Head, the characters' cynical antics to "save the harbour" by bringing the doctor and the company to their town makes up most of the film's narrative. Together with the colourful, rugged landscape, the ridiculous tactics used by Tickle Head's residents to "seduce" the doctor to move to their town become the film's main focus. As I will show, these behaviours become a performance of cynical reason – a formula for cynicism that, as Žižek explains, is "no longer the classic Marxian

'they do not know it, but they are doing it'; it is 'they know very well what they are doing, yet they are doing it'" (*Mapping Ideology* 8). Murray and his neighbours exhibit cynical reason by knowingly using the tactics of the capitalist system that has left them jobless – artful deception and even bribery. In spite of the fact that commercial overfishing caused their unemployment in the first place, the townspeople wish to be part of a new form of commercial extraction – the oil company they call the "corporation." Their nostalgic and anxious desire to resurrect the "good life" of the past (even though this "good life" has, through the decimated fishery, shown itself to be threatening to Tickle Head) ultimately perpetuates the extractivism that led to the dissolution of the traditional "good life" in the first place.

The circumstances within *The Grand Seduction* reflect the current socioeconomic crisis of Newfoundland and Labrador, where the extraction and development of raw natural resources threatens long-term survival while providing jobs that are essential for sustaining daily life. The film's portrayal of the petro-corporation as a saviour of rural life is reminiscent of contemporary rhetoric about the province's natural resources; its premise of attracting an oil company whose investment will preserve a rural town is a localized, scaled-down, fictional portrayal of recent events in Newfoundland and Labrador's political and economic history. Around the time of *The Grand Seduction*'s release, the province was desperate to reassert itself after the poverty and unemployment that followed the destruction of the cod fishery, which made it easy for its citizens to show support for the shiny new energy projects of multinational oil conglomerates. In 2008, then-premier Danny Williams negotiated a deal between the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, ExxonMobil Canada, Petro-Canada, and StatoilHydro Canada, to begin development of the offshore oil field Hebron, which is estimated to contain more than 700 million barrels of heavy oil that could eventually be worth approximately $28 billion to the

province. On 20 August 2008, the province's Executive Council for Natural Resources published a lengthy press release describing the deal that had been reached, in which Williams is quoted extensively:

> The signing of this agreement reflects a bold new era of partnership between government and our industry partners. We have real and meaningful ownership of our resources in the form of an equity stake in this project and a new super royalty regime. We have achieved significant commitments for local benefits for fabrication and engineering, and are now embarking on a major industrial project that will fill our fabrication yards and employ thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. This marks our emergence as a full participant on the global energy stage […] We are soon to become a *have* province, and finally Newfoundland and Labrador is being recognized for the long-standing contributions we have made to the Canadian federation. ("Hebron Agreement Signals New Era in Province's History," my emphasis)

Williams's attempts to transform the shame of a "have-not" province into widespread support for a mega-project worked; citizens were enthralled by the opportunities the oil field would bring. Newfoundland and Labrador had been seduced: Hebron signified redemption, and Williams became a local hero.

In this chapter, I argue that that *The Grand Seduction* allegorizes Newfoundland and Labrador's embrace of the fossil fuels industry. The cynical reason that props up the characters' cruel optimism operates in tandem with the anxiety of the province's present-day energy culture. We know and are anxious about our over-reliance on particular forms of energy, which has created irreparable damage to the environment that will be detrimental to future populations, but we continue in the daily habits that perpetuate this over-reliance. As Sara Ahmed explores in

"Affective Economies," anxiety is a particularly indeterminate and potentialized affective state because it often lacks an object onto which to attach the emotional intensities that the body registers. As an anticipatory emotion, anxiety is about tensely waiting for something both threatening and vague (Ahmed 124).

I argue that much of this contemporary anxiety is related to environmentally-destructive modes of resource extraction and the resultant climate change. The climate crisis is part of energy impasse – a space of "dithering" and "dog-paddling" and suspended action where anxiety reigns and crisis becomes ordinary; as climate crisis becomes an ordinary part of life, we find ourselves stuck, unable to move forward and come up with effective ways of creating a more sustainable future (Berlant 4, 199). Within the crisis ordinary of current climate culture, sources of worry come from all directions at once: from plastic washing up on coastlines, to sea birds covered in crude oil, to the disappearance of land due to melting Arctic ice, to the chronic unemployment and underemployment of boom-and-bust extractivism. The absorption of our attention by all the sources of contemporary anxiety in the age of precarity and climate crisis makes it difficult to grasp how the activities and habits undertaken in response to the forces that have created the crisis are themselves leading us toward ever more crisis. The crisis ordinary of extractivism creates the conditions for cynical reason. In *The Grand Seduction*, Murray and his neighbours begin to recognize that their anxiety comes from the unfairness of the corporation's tactics and motivations, but they choose to adopt the strategies of capital and extractivism rather than resisting them. Thus, they demonstrate knowledge that society is wearing a mask, but they continue to act as though it isn't; this embrace of cynical reason, in turn, keeps them in an impasse.

Caught in the anxiety of the energy impasse, the residents of Tickle Head use their

nostalgic desire to revive their former "good life" as a justification for cynical reason, strategically engaging all the corrupt tools of the capitalist system that has rendered them penniless. Murray steals the income-support cheque of his deceased friend on a monthly basis, but insists that he isn't doing anything illegal because official records have not recorded the death and his "power-of-attorney" gives him a "moral obligation" to cash the cheques. He also sells salmon under the table and "rig[s] up [the] electrical box to steal from the cable company." When it becomes obvious that Tickle Head will cease to exist without an influx of jobs – the population is around 120 and dwindling – Murray and his neighbours decide to do whatever is required to save the harbour, including blackmailing a doctor, accepting a bribe from the oil company, and lying to each other. In trying to "seduce" the doctor to move to Tickle Head, they perform the "authentic" signifying gestures of contemporary rural Newfoundland life — fishing, watching hockey, playing bingo, and hanging out at the local bar — but simultaneously monitor the doctors' phone calls and try to incorporate his urban interests (mostly markers of class distinction: cricket, beef stroganoff, and experimental jazz) into the town's daily activities. Explicitly, such actions are justified because they will supposedly save the way of life for which the protagonist's father "laboured fourteen hours a day risking life and limb"; implicitly, they are justified because such deceit is the modus operandi of the world of the "good life" to which the characters aspire. They know very well what they're doing, and yet they still do it, because the situation has become so dire that they feel they have no other choice. When someone dismisses Murray's plans to seduce Dr. Lewis as "lies," he replies: "Well, lies is all we got." The implication is that even though he and his neighbours realize that oil is replacing fish as a catalyst for the boom-bust patterns of their single-industry town, they have no other choice but to embrace it.

The film compels its cosmopolitan audiences to use emotions in much the same way as *The Grand Seduction*'s characters – as antidotes to the anxiety and melancholy of extractivism. Just as Tickle Head creates nostalgia in the characters, the film's traditional iconography and rural landscapes works like a Newfoundland and Labrador tourism campaign, inducing nostalgia and serving as a balm for anxiety. Along with its nostalgia, *The Grand Seduction*'s humour becomes a mode through which audiences can work through both the anxiety depicted onscreen and the anxiety of living in the precarity of extractivism. When I attended the premiere of *The Grand Seduction* in 2013, an audience member asked director Don McKellar why he chose to use humour as part of the film's exploration of Newfoundland and Labrador's extractivism; he curiously replied: "A story about oil has got to be a comedy." I argue that his comment was likely related to the idea that, just as *The Grand Seduction*'s characters use their antics as part of a way of working through the anxiety of their current economic situation, viewers' enjoyment of these antics becomes a way of dealing with the anxiety that comes with extractivism. In his essay "Humour," Freud suggests that jokes and comedy are safety valves that enable us to deal with problems that would otherwise remain pent up beneath the surface of our consciousness (3). According to Freud, humour signifies "the triumph of the pleasure principle," which asserts itself "against the unkindness of the real circumstances"; it helps to fend off the possibility of suffering, which places it "among the great series of methods which the human mind has constructed in order to evade the compulsion to suffer" (3). For viewers of *The Grand Seduction,* laughing at the ridiculous antics of Murray and his neighbours becomes a way for the body to respond to and deal with the precarious situation presented onscreen, which allegorizes the impasse of climate crisis.

To find enjoyment in *The Grand Seduction*, viewers must adopt the same cynical reason

as the characters, ignoring the fact that the film's humour often elides important considerations of issues such as economic precarity, Indigenous rights, and environmental protection. Even though the film centres the establishment of a factory designed to process petrochemical byproducts, neither Tickle Head's residents nor the film itself seems to acknowledge the climate crisis or the long-term implications of the economic precarity faced by the rural town, repressing the recent political events that constitute its allegorical subtext. Viewers are compelled to enjoy the landscapes depicted onscreen and to laugh at the jokes in which the characters' antics are couched, which rely on the kind of conventional, recognizable humour that elicits a groan. Often sexist and heteronormative, the film's jokes poke fun at the rurality of Tickle Head and its citizens' backward idiosyncrasies. For example, we're urged to laugh when a stressed mother brings her half a dozen children to the doctor with a litany of illnesses, and concludes with resignation that "[she] needs to go on the pill." Similarly, we're meant to chuckle at the homophobia of the oldest citizen of Tickle Head, Simon, who doesn't know how to take the bus to the city: hugged by one of his friends in a moment of celebration, he warns the friend "not [to get] too close." Later in the film, Simon taunts the unemployed Murray when his wife, Barbara, gets a new job: "You'll become the new little missus [now] I guess […] you'll love yoga, great for the posture." Given their backwards gender and sexual politics, we are encouraged to laugh at, not with, these jokes. However, this laughter exercises cynical reason: we know the jokes are objectionable, but by laughing we take part in the same kind of pleasure as those who agree with the jokes' premises. This pleasure makes us complicit in the gender and sexual politics which, along with extractivism, have given rise to our present-day anxieties. Like Murray and his neighbours, we get stuck in the impasse of extractivism.

The Grand Seduction's final scene solidifies the imbrication of both Tickle Head and the

audience in the capitalist forces of extractivism. In a montage reminiscent of the opening scene, the film suggests that the "good life" has been restored in Tickle Head; community pride has been revived and the economy has been revitalized. Just as the film's opening scene depicted the shared labour of Tickle Head's fishermen on the water, in the final scene, shots of the characters working together in the newly-built factory are accompanied by voiceover that highlights their achievement of financial signifiers of success: a health plan and enough money to take holidays and send their kids to university. The feeling that harmony has been restored extends to the audience, as well; the final scene proffers the pleasures of "homecoming" and return by mirroring Murray's dream of his childhood: after a day of hard work in the factory, the citizens of Tickle Head go to bed and, in tandem with the sounds of lovemaking, the camera pans over the rooftops, repeating the dream-image in which the town's chimneys simultaneously expel post-coital cigarette smoke. This conclusion suggests a happy return to normal, but cynicism lies underneath its façade. Closing by return, the film's narrative structure highlights the fact that, for the citizens of Tickle Head, one exhausted extractive economy (the fishery) has been replaced by another (oil production and manufacturing), which will eventually and inevitably produce the same exhaustion. Ostensibly a salve for his sadness and anxiety, the nostalgia that catalyzed the actions of Murray and his neighbours has likely only perpetuated their unfortunate circumstances; in the boom and bust of extractive capitalism, the opportunities offered by the oil company are likely to dry up just like the fish. Likewise, the audience's desire for the release from anxiety that humour provides has left it further enmeshed in the heteronormative, extractivist status quo. The image of the chimneys and their post-coital cigarette smoke, which suggests that each factory worker has been rewarded for his labour by going to bed with his wife, cynically reinscribes the heteronormativity of the film's humour. Thus, the final scene

emphasizes that, as viewers who have allowed ourselves to be "seduced" by the film, we have become complicit in its cynicism. In the end, both characters and viewers stay in place, mired in impasse.

The Grand Seduction's Internal Kynicism

Although *The Grand Seduction* seems to seductively pull focus away from Tickle Head's precarious economy and the petro-factory's unsustainability, the film offers brief moments that acknowledge its elision of such issues. One character in particular, a young postal worker named Kathleen, refuses to participate in her neighbours' charades for the doctor and the corporation; her full dismissal of the cynical reason that motivates them is one way the film playfully pushes back against the cynicism that sustains its ostensibly extractivist worldview. In a short scene near the beginning of the film, Murray asks Kathleen to flirt with the doctor so that he will stay in Tickle Head and thus help the town meet the corporation's requirements; Murray wants Kathleen to give Dr. Lewis the impression that "Tickle Head is a great place to be a man." Rolling her eyes, Kathleen refuses his proposal and explicitly rejects Murray's desire for the factory in the first place, arguing that its establishment is part of a public relations strategy for the corporation to "repay" the town for "environmental damage done." Like Murray and the others, Kathleen understands the structures of power the factory will maintain; unlike her neighbours, however, she refuses to adopt the cynical reason that allows them to pretend as if they do not. In this moment, one of the film's only acknowledgements of the town's imbrication within extractivism, *The Grand Seduction* exposes its own deflection of our attention from its complicity in such systems – the way it "seduces" the audience along with Dr. Lewis and the corporation. The attention the scene draws to the film's capacity for seduction invites a consideration of it as a text

that deconstructs its own ideological and formal strategies, including its use of cynical reason. In this section, I argue that whereas cynical reason keeps us in an impasse – we know the negative ramifications of what we are doing and yet we keep doing it – moments like this one, and characters like Kathleen, draw attention to and deconstruct such behaviour, making space for us to imagine pathways outside it. *The Grand Seduction*'s use of cynical reason is infused with the potential to move beyond the cynicism that generates it.

The idea that cynical reason contains within it the tools for its own subversion has been theorized by Sloterdijk and Žižek, who suggest that cynicism entails its own internal opposite, "kynicism," which uses humour, laughter, satire, irony, and sarcasm as critiques of cynicism from within. Both kynicism and cynicism wear an ideological mask – that is, they are fully imbricated in the structures of power that produce them – but kynicism exposes and confronts the existence of the mask. While cynicism is aware of the way power is structured and distributed but chooses to ignore it, kynicism confronts the ideological falsehoods that are masked by cynicism; in turn, it resists the political fatalism that cynicism implies. Žižek writes:

> Kynicism represents popular, plebian rejection of the official culture by means of irony and sarcasm: the classical kynical procedure is to confront the pathetic phrases of the ruling ideology […] with everyday banality and to hold them up to ridicule, thus exposing behind the subtle noblesse of ideological phrases the egotistical interests, the violence, the brutal claims to power. (*The Sublime Object of Ideology* 29)

For Sloterdijk, kynicism goes a step further than simply using sarcasm and irony; he contends that kynicism involves material, collective argumentation through the cheeky and irreverent actions of a defiant body and can only be meaningfully demonstrated within the public sphere (105). Sloterdijk views kynicism as experiential and collective; it is based on kinetic movement

that affects others ("kyn" derives from the Greek root "kin": to move, to set in motion through muscular activity). Whereas cynical reason compels us to continue on as usual in the anxiety of the present (despite knowing that this continuation only perpetuates the impasse in which we find ourselves), kynicism's humour, collectivity, and embodiment create capacity for new modes of acting and being.

Through kynicism, *The Grand Seduction* first exposes its own cynical reason and the forms of enjoyment (nostalgia, humour) which, as discussed in the previous section, structure and sustain this cynicism. Then, by playfully thumbing its nose at its own cynical reason, it undermines it. But while the film subverts its own cynicism, it does not necessarily do away with the pleasurable feelings associated with it; pleasures also exist in the practice of kynicism, and can even be intensified as they take on different meanings and contexts. As I explore in the remainder of this chapter, for both the characters and the local audiences of *The Grand Seduction*, kynically resisting cynical reason brings enjoyment through playfulness, collectivity, and embodiment – sources of pleasure that make up kynicism's structure of feeling.

Though *The Grand Seduction*'s characters use tactics rooted in cynicism to entice the doctor and the corporation to Tickle Head, the collectivity of their actions demonstrate a kynical attitude toward this cynicism. Murray and his neighbours expose and defy the power structures of contemporary extractivism – and the cynical reason that exists in tandem with it – by refusing individualism and using their bodies in playful, physical, performative, and collective ways to benefit as many people within Tickle Head as possible. For example, when representatives of the oil company come to visit as part of negotiations for the factory, the film's characters kinetically (and kynetically) try and save the future of their town by coming together to solve a problem: the company needs 150 labourers to work in the factory, but according to census information, Tickle

Head only has a population of 120. In a town meeting, Murray takes the floor and insists that they can convince the company to build the factory anyway, "if everybody works together." The following scenes reveal their plan: to make it look as if Tickle Head is actually full of capable workers, they use the physical movement of their assembled bodies to trick the company into thinking that the town is more populated than it actually is. First, they make sure everyone in town is at the bar when the company representatives show up there for a meeting. As Murray leads the executives inside, he assures them that there has been a mistake with the census; as they can see with their own eyes, Tickle Head is clearly filled with able workers. Pleasantly surprised, one of the executives counts 84 people in the bar. Murray is thrilled that the plan seems to be working and insists on leading the company representatives to the local church, where another large crowd of people is apparently playing bingo. As the oil men, led by Murray, casually saunter out the door of the bar and down one of Tickle Head's trails, the scene changes and the camera reveals what's happening at the bar's back door, where those inside are frantically hurrying en masse down a hidden trail to the church. The horde from the bar arrives at the church, breathless, and begins to simulate a bingo game just in time for the company men to show up and count 82 people inside. Satisfied with such eyewitness "proof" that the census miscalculated the population of Tickle Head, the executives decide to proceed with the next steps toward building the factory.

Such collective, playful, physical charades are kynical not only because they become signifiers of the community's ability to move and work together as they cynically play along with dominant ideologies and power structures; they also demonstrate a type of knowledge where the body knows how to act without conscious thought. For Sloterdijk, such embodied knowledge is necessary for kynicism. In *The Grand Seduction*, this knowledge is demonstrated

through the spontaneity of the characters' capers, which often occur without the advanced planning required to move 80-plus people from a bar to a church. For example, when Murray and his friends learn that Dr. Lewis loves to play cricket, they decide to stage a match in a meadow above the entrance to the harbour, just as Dr. Lewis's boat is arriving. The plan is that Murray will accompany Dr. Lewis on the boat so that as soon as the cricketers become visible, he can expound about the cove's love of the sport; the others will ensure the "match" is concluded once the boat docks, since they have no idea how to play cricket and can at most simulate what the game might look like from afar. However, their plans go awry when Dr. Lewis is overcome with excitement about the match and insists on mooring the boat as close to the meadow as possible, rather than at Tickle Head's community wharf, so that he can catch the tail end of the game. With no option but to blare the horn of the boat to warn the others, Murray anxiously chases him up the steep path to his neighbours. The camera pans across the meadow, revealing the panicked looks on the faces of the "players," when all of a sudden one of them begins to cheer; without speaking to one another, the rest instinctively join in. Standing on the sidelines with Dr. Lewis, Murray takes the wordless hint: "Oh, there you go," he says to Dr. Lewis. "Game's over. Season's over. Let's get back to the boat." Their collective movements are so habitually engrained from years of fishing, drinking, and playing bingo together that when their plans go wrong they automatically know how to work together to get them back on track, without saying a word to one another.

Through both the cricket match and their movement between the bar and the church, Murray and his neighbours demonstrate the spontaneous collectivity of kynicism. While, on the surface, it seems as if Murray and his neighbours have fully adopted cynicism's mask – they are aware of the injustices within capitalist extractivism but choose to ignore them – their actions

can be read as a way of resisting these injustices by taking the system's tools of deceit and exaggerating them, making them ridiculous. In turn, they allow the audience to see the mask of their own cynicism. The pleasures they derive from such exposure, which primarily come from the collective humour derived from tricking the powerful people around them, provide opportunities to work through the cynicism at the root of their actions. For example, while the celebratory jubilation and camaraderie of Murray's neighbours at the close of the match are clearly meant to be part of a performance for Dr. Lewis, it's hard not to interpret the elation they demonstrate as genuine. The fact that, as the match "ends," members of both teams join in one big group hug, cheering and laughing all together in spite of the fact that one "team" has just "lost," suggests that the celebration isn't purely performative. For a moment, they break away from their performance as "characters" for Dr. Lewis; though their cheers are part of an act, everyone is also genuinely thrilled – and finds it quite funny – that their cheeky cricket charade has successfully pulled the wool over Dr. Lewis's eyes. As Dr. Lewis watches their communal celebration, he looks at Murray, puzzled at the collective celebration he is witnessing: "Both teams won?" he asks. Murray comes up with a quick explanation: "Well, one team won the league, one team won the match. You know, it's basic good sportsmanship." Not only have their collective acts of kynicism exposed the cynicism of the extractivist power structures that are threatening Tickle Head, the enjoyment they demonstrate after the simulated match suggests that the collective structure of feeling created by kynicism can lead to new and different kinds of pleasure.

Insider Kynicism

Many of these alternative kinds of pleasure come as much from the reactions of *The*

Grand Seduction's viewers as they do from its characters. Indeed, while Murray and his neighbours demonstrate enjoyment after the cricket match, there are other instances throughout the film that suggest that they do not derive pleasure from carrying out the antics they use to seduce the doctor and the corporation. Often, they are dead serious, and quite anxious, about their mission, and the scramble to prepare their town for the ongoing charade is full of hurry and worry. Additionally, moments of character laughter, such as the post-match celebrations, are part of performances for Dr. Lewis, which detracts from the authenticity of the pleasure portrayed onscreen. Although the film's characters do manage to undermine their cynicism through feelings of enjoyment, many of the pleasures ultimately derived from this process – the elevated feelings that give us hope that the future could be also be full of such elevated feeling – largely belong to the audience. Thus, the film's utopic possibilities are often realized non-diegetically, through the enjoyment felt and expressed by its viewers.

Because they centre upon kinetic and collective action, the kynical responses of *The Grand Seduction*'s villagers align with Sloterdijk's formulation of kynicism. Audience responses to the film at the 2013 premiere of *The Grand Seduction* also aligned with Sloterdijk's conception of cynicism. As I will demonstrate, our laughter involved collective, kinetic movement; when one person started laughing, they compelled others to do the same. This laughter allowed us to resist structures of power and thus create potential for a future that prioritizes equality. At the same time, the laughter often came as the result of confronting ruling ideology and holding it up to ridicule by creating an insider/outsider dynamic. As such, it involved sarcasm and irony, which also made it consistent with Žižek's conceptions of kynicism.

Made up primarily of urban, left-leaning intellectuals, students, artists, and white-collar workers, the audience would most likely have recognized themselves and their values in the

character of Kathleen, the postal worker who spends her free time reading by the sea and who explicitly critiques the cynical reason demonstrated by Murray and his neighbours. While Newfoundland and Labrador is an isolated province, the audience of the 2013 screening mostly resided in its capital city of St. John's, where they enjoyed urban privileges, such as proximity to artistic and intellectual institutions as well as job opportunities. Even when we collectively recognized the film's rural characters and perhaps saw ourselves in them – many of them remind me of my parents and their extended families, who still live in towns similar to Tickle Head – there was a distance between the characters and the audience at the 2013 screening that is similar to the distance Kathleen maintains between herself and the rest of her community. Yet, the screening revealed a marked difference between the local audience and Kathleen; whereas Kathleen resisted both cynicism and kynicism, the audience fully embraced them. While much of the audience's laughter was indeed cynical, it also contained elements of kynicism, which the audience used to push back against the cynicism they demonstrated by laughing in the first place.

Much of the laughter generated at the 2013 premiere was the result of inside jokes. Randy Y. Hirokawa and Marshall Scott Poole describe in-jokes as allusions to shared common ground that trigger responses from those who have shared that common ground (96). Such jokes serve to build community, which is created when a listener is invited to laugh and accepts the invitation. Part of the power of the in-joke comes from the listener's assumption that many other listeners, who do not share common ground with whoever has extended the invitation, will not understand the joke. Thus, a bond results from the awareness that, by responding or laughing at the joke, one is part of a group that has insider knowledge over another, outsider group. When the local audience at the 2013 screening laughed at *The Grand Seduction*, it was often out of an urgency to connect with others who, like them, also understood the meanings and messages beyond the

diegetic events presented onscreen, which solidified our acceptance in the insider group of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who were present. Connecting with other viewers in such a way added to the euphoria already associated with laughter, doubling our pleasure.

The Grand Seduction's consistent nods to local politics may not be immediately recognizable to those from outside the regions that produced them, but the discerning (and cynical) local viewer can't miss them. At the 2013 screening, viewers' recognition of the similarities between the events depicted onscreen and the contemporary socioeconomic and political circumstances in Newfoundland and Labrador imbued viewers with the pleasures of insider understanding, which became clear through audience laughter. For example, viewers laughed at the film's allusion to former Premier Joey Smallwood — and Premier Danny Williams, who later followed a similar trajectory — in the character of the mayor, who leaves town and office right after formalizing an unconditional tax exemption to the corporation. Like the mayor, both Smallwood and Williams left politics shortly after making economic decisions that continue to haunt the province's economy. Smallwood gave up politics abruptly after negotiating the Churchill Falls Agreement, which will be discussed later in this section; likewise, Williams quit his position as premier after setting the stage for both the aforementioned Hebron project, which so far has proven to be less lucrative than the province thought it would be, and the new Muskrat Falls project, which triggered a public inquiry due to its management and its massive price tag. The film's playful inclusion of a mayor character who leaves town instead of dealing with the ramifications of a major economic risk was not lost on the St. John's audience. Laughing at this allusion was a practice in kynicism: not only did it afford us the pleasures of cementing ourselves within the in-group of those other viewers who also "got" the allusion; it allowed us to publicly assert our collective left-leaning political alignments and push back

against the individualistic choices and extractivist agendas of the province's former centrist and right-wing politicians.

For audiences in a province that has been historically marginalized, and often the butt of humour like the derogatory "Newfie" joke (a joke told at the expense of a dim-witted character from Newfoundland and Labrador, dubbed a "Newfie"), the laughter that accompanied such in-group knowledge allowed us to turn such humour away from us and back onto the outsiders who tend to make fun of Newfoundland and Labrador. When we laughed at the film's portrayal of the province's "backward" idiosyncrasies, our laughter was about recognizing the film's exaggeration of these idiosyncrasies, thus turning the joke back onto outsider viewers who think such representations are accurate. For example, we knew that while there are certainly some Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who fit the stereotype of Simon, the town eccentric who refuses to take even one trip to the city (and the originator of many of the film's sexist jokes), the majority of the province's residents do not fit into this mold. For us, laughing at Simon was a kynical gesture that resisted the creation of the stereotype in the first place. We laughed less at the stereotype itself and more at the fact that, in Simon, the film provides mainland audiences with an exaggerated portrayal that tends to match their inaccurate preconceptions of Newfoundlanders. While these outsider audiences may think they are getting "one up" on us when they laugh at such portrayals of rural people, our laughter signals that we understand we are the ones who have actually gotten "one up" on them. Thus, although at the screening we demonstrated cynical reason through our laughter, this laughter also allowed us to shift some of the structures of power that marginalize Newfoundland and Labrador.

A final example of the 2013 audience's kynical in-joking is related to the fraught history between Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador. *The Grand Seduction*'s most obvious allusion

to the relations between Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec is the aforementioned "unconditional" tax exemption Tickle Head's mayor offers to the oil company, which is reminiscent of the Churchill Falls Agreement, a similar "unconditional" deal Newfoundland and Labrador's then-premier Joey Smallwood struck with the province of Quebec in 1969. The Churchill Falls Agreement continues to impact Newfoundland and Labrador's already-straitened economy and remains a major source of resentment for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Smallwood brokered the Agreement because, in 1969, Newfoundland and Labrador was not in a financial position to develop a hydroelectric dam at Churchill Falls, Labrador, on its own; in exchange for Quebec's financial support, Smallwood signed a contract stipulating that almost all the power generated by the Churchill Falls hydroelectric facility – one of the largest of its kind in the world – would be sold to the province of Quebec at a fixed price for a period of 75 years. Since then, North American demand for hydroelectric power has increased, and the province of Quebec has made billions of dollars from selling the power it receives from Churchill Falls. Economists James Feehan and Melvin Baker estimate that, by 2010, Churchill Falls had resulted in approximately C$26 billion in profit for the province of Quebec, compared to C$2 billion for Newfoundland and Labrador ("The Churchill Falls Contract and Why Newfoundlanders Can't Get Over It"). The contract continues to resonate in the political culture of Newfoundland and Labrador, whose residents – already resentful of the foreign overfishing that decimated the economy in the 1990s – consider it "another case where the province's resources have been exploited by outsiders" (Feehan and Baker).

For a Newfoundland and Labrador audience haunted by this history of perceived political and economic exploitation by Quebec, collectively enjoying a local remake of a Quebec film affirmed a common "outsider" adversary (Quebec) and thus a collective "insider" identity

(Newfoundlanders and Labradorians). This dichotomy between the Newfoundland and Labrador "insider" and the Quebec "outsider" has a marked political history in Newfoundland and Labrador. For example, in his 2010 public announcement that Newfoundland and Labrador would be developing its newest megaproject, the hydroelectric dam on the Lower Churchill at Muskrat Falls, then-premier Williams exploited Newfoundland and Labrador's historical antagonism toward Quebec to rally public support for the project:

> This is a day of great historic significance to Newfoundland and Labrador as we move forward with development of the Lower Churchill project, on our own terms and free of the geographic stranglehold of Quebec which has for too long determined the fate of the most attractive clean energy project in North America. ("Lower Churchill Project")

Williams's rhetorical use of Newfoundland and Labrador's decades-long resentment toward Quebec as part of his justification for development at Muskrat Falls was a nationalist exercise. It promoted support for the interests of Newfoundland and Labrador to the exclusion of Quebec's, perpetuating an us-versus-them ideology not unlike that which was propped up by the performance of insider kynicism at the 2013 premiere. As an almost scene-for-scene English/Newfoundland and Labrador adaptation of the 2003 French/Quebec film *La grande séduction*, *The Grand Seduction* became a way of kynically pushing back against Quebec's control over Newfoundland and Labrador's energy resources. For the local audience at the screening, the use of a Quebec story to make a Newfoundland and Labrador film, which employed hundreds of locals and made the province look inviting to potential tourists, was a cheeky way of "stealing back" the profits from Churchill Falls. Even the last name of *The Grand Seduction*'s protagonist (French) became a playful piece of resistance. Further, the way in which *The Grand Seduction* maintained many of the original film's signifiers of authenticity – its

picturesque seaside and entertaining characters – suggests that these signifiers are translatable and transplantable, which undercuts Quebec's claims to cultural uniqueness and authenticity. When we collectively laughed at and enjoyed *The Grand Seduction* at the 2013 premiere, it was as if we were getting "one up" on Quebec and shaking the interprovincial power structures that have shortchanged Newfoundland and Labrador.

As of 2022, Newfoundland and Labrador hasn't been saved by offshore megaprojects or by charismatic politicians like Williams. Since 2008, and particularly since the onset of COVID-19, the price of oil has dropped significantly; thousands of citizens have lost well-paying jobs both locally and as rotational workers flying back and forth to Alberta; and the province's major oil refinery has been shuttered. Williams is no longer universally held in the high esteem he enjoyed during his years of political life. Given such events, the political unconscious that *The Grand Seduction* labours to obscure is that the short-term gains of extractivist projects can be seductive, but the pleasures of them do not last.

At the premiere, the response of laughter, often expressed immediately and without conscious thought, allowed us to experiment with and test out our cynicism toward these forces, playfully exposing this cynicism as a means of working through and undermining it. In moments of laughter, we were released from the anxious dithering with which were so familiar in the energy impasse; the film became an object onto which our anxiety about Newfoundland and Labrador's socioeconomic situation could be safely located and attached. At the same time, our cynical laughter contained within it the same playfulness demonstrated by the characters, which aims to subvert not only the cynicism itself but also the material forces that have created the need for cynical reason in the first place. Meredith Clermont-Ferrand suggests that laughter can be a utopian response; it interrupts fear and physiologically induces euphoria, which reinforces the

utopic idea that everything is as it should be. When a text produces laughter and its physical pleasures, it "places the utopian response extra textually," in the realm of the body and its experiences (Clermont-Ferrand 379). When Newfoundlanders and Labradorians collectively viewed *The Grand Seduction* at the premiere, our shared insider knowledge of the province's humour and politics allowed us to establish a mutual recognition that heightened the pleasures of our viewing experience and turned our cynical laughter into kynical laughter. Moreover, our laughter at the characters onscreen made us complicit in their actions, so that the reversals of hierarchies represented onscreen also took place in the act of viewing itself. Collective laughter became a tool that allowed us to kynically (and kinetically) resist structures of power that continue to marginalize Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, such as energy conglomerates, politics, and the Canadian and Quebec governments, which position Newfoundland and Labrador as a "have-not" province. As we laughingly took part in the townspeople's antics, we glimpsed what a more equitable society might look like while enacting and embodying the pleasures of what such a society might *feel* like. Through this process of "insider kynicism" and the feelings of elevated pleasure and hope that go along with it, we pushed back against our own cynicism while at the same time working though the anxiety of our dependence on extractivism. Such working-through created the opportunity to move beyond our cynicism and imagine possibilities for living more creatively and collectively. By invoking the pleasures of laughing together, the St. John's screening allowed the audience small moments of euphoria that made us aspire for a future as collective and pleasurable as the moments themselves.

New Opportunities for Collectivity

As I argue earlier in this chapter, the final scenes of *The Grand Seduction* imbricate

Tickle Head's residents within a pattern of extractivism similar to that which is depicted in the film's opening. Yet, the final scenes also contain subtle, kynical details that harken back to the ways in which the film undermines its own cynicism. Highlighting some key differences between the old extractivism and the new, these details hint that, while the prosperity of the factory has the potential to disappear like that of the fishery, there is possibility for a more equitable future for both Tickle Head and Newfoundland and Labrador. First, while in the film's opening scene, the company to whom Tickle Head sells its fish is never mentioned, by the film's end, the oil company – the contemporary version of the extractivist multinationals whose overfishing destroyed Tickle Head's way of life in the 1990s – is ever-present. The words "Petrolia Atlantic" are emblazoned on all the factory's equipment, which implies that, for the people of Tickle Head, it has become increasingly impossible to wear the mask of cynicism – to pretend as if they do not see the extractivism all around them. Indeed, capitalism's insatiable need for progress and growth has already led to job loss; though the locals now line up to cash their pay cheques rather than their income-support cheques, the local bank teller has been replaced by an ATM. Additionally, the collectivity depicted as the factory employees work together at the film's conclusion is in some ways different from the collectivity of the fishermen at the film's beginning. In the past, labour was divided so that the men of Tickle Head went fishing while the women stayed at home; but in the factory, Murray's wife is his boss, and all his neighbours – men and women – work side-by-side. Their movements in the factory are reminiscent of the fishermen's in the film's opening scene, but they also gesture toward the spontaneous collectivity of the cricket match and the mass exodus from the bar to the church. Even if the characters' kynical actions have not allowed them to work through their anxiety and form new attachments and connections in the same way as the film's audience might, they have

permitted Murray and his neighbours to develop new ways of being from within the insecurity of precarity and the impasse it presents.

For viewers, the pleasure that can be derived from these new connections and attachments has the potential to go beyond the collective laughter of insider kynicism at a local film premiere. In two separate terms in 2015, I taught both *La grande séduction* and *The Grand Seduction* in a Canadian Cinema course in Montreal. Unsettled by the idea that the pleasures of the 2013 premiere came from what I now call insider kynicism, which requires a somewhat xenophobic separation from certain others (like Quebecers) and thus risks undermining kynicism's collective and resistant potential, I wanted to place the films in conversation, carefully examining the sociopolitical contexts from which they have emerged. I used Williams's 2010 announcement, which aimed to galvanize public support for Muskrat Falls by using anti-Quebec sentiment, as a point of departure for a class discussion about the regional relations between Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador. Students had largely been appalled by both films' heteronormativity and sexism, and so they welcomed this approach, which allowed them to look beyond their ideological critique. By watching the films in tandem and learning about the contexts in which they were created, we considered how they enact a dialogue between Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador, signifying a kind of alliance between the provinces. As regional films that use the same story of rural life to make their subaltern articulations, they demonstrate a shared position with respect to historical marginalization and global energy culture. Viewed together, they suggest that there may be a way to maintain cultural uniqueness while finding common ground – and that there is pleasure to be found in doing so. As a class made up of a lecturer from Newfoundland and Labrador and students who came from Quebec, other parts of Canada, and various other countries, we discovered that we enjoyed resisting the

cultural nationalism that Williams's words attempt to perpetuate.

When *The Grand Seduction* films are viewed together, they reveal a utopian impulse that, according to Frederic Jameson, is inherent in all popular culture (115). In "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," Jameson suggests that all forms of mass culture remain "implicitly, and no matter how faintly, negative and critical of the social order" from which they spring (144). For Jameson, works of popular culture cannot manage the anxieties of the existing social order without deferring to their own utopic impulse, which is realized through an ineradicable fantasy of – and drive toward – collectivity. While each of *The Grand Seduction* films gesture toward this utopian fantasy through kynicism, the films' drive toward collectivity becomes particularly resonant when they are viewed in conversation with one another within the sociopolitical context from which they have emerged. As a response to and adaptation of the original film, the Newfoundland and Labrador version highlights the similarities between the rural culture it represents and the one presented in *La grande séduction*, without denying the differences between the cultures of Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador. The films' shared anxieties indicate potential to learn from and with one another, revealing a utopian impulse for less antagonistic and more collective relations between the two provinces.

In light of the current condition of filmmaking in Canada, where absorption into an increasingly globalized cinema industry is turning Canadian regional film into as much of an illusion as the facade presented to Dr. Lewis by the citizens of Tickle Head, Newfoundland and Labrador's adaptation of *La grande séduction* suggests a recognition that local cultures are more threatened by the homogenizing effects of the global marketplace than by regional competition for resources. The similarities between the films demonstrates how Canada's most unique regional identities and traditional ways of life can appear indistinct because they are exposed to

the same extractivist forces that are restructuring the way all Canadians identify. Within the circumstances of the precarious present, where public austerity and the Hollywood blockbuster reign supreme, independent and low to mid-budget films like *The Grand Seduction* can no longer afford autonomy, whether cultural or economic. The film's adaptation hints at a new form of Canadian filmmaking that attempts to retain local culture within and through partnerships that benefit multiple parties simultaneously – a movement toward collectivity in Canadian filmmaking that has been further gestured toward by films like 2016's *Boundaries (Pays)*. In *Boundaries*, Quebecois filmmaker Chloe Robichaud depicts the negotiation of resource royalties on the imaginary, independent nation of Besco, an island off the coast of Labrador. The film demonstrates collectivity through both its mode of production and its content. Co-produced by companies headquartered in Montreal and St. John's, the film benefitted from its joint association with both provinces; it received funding from both provincial governments and its actors came from both Newfoundland and Quebec (and elsewhere). On the other hand, both provinces also benefitted from the film's production, which features the stark beauty of Fogo Island, where it was shot, while at the same time using the French language to promote Quebecois culture.

The story told by *Boundaries* is about negotiating partnerships: the newly-elected female president of Besco wants to renegotiate the unfavourable terms of the deal her predecessors struck with the Canadian government for mining rights on the rural island. Through cinematography, plot, and art direction, Robichaud contrasts the claustrophobia and anxiety of the drab rooms in which meetings take place with the vastness of the island outside: wide-angle, 35mm shots of rugged, barren coastlines – antidotes for the tense moments in the school gym where negotiations are unfolding – work together with photographs of icebergs, waterfalls, and

coastlines on walls of negotiators' hotel rooms to establish the rural island as a nostalgic space to be protected. In private moments and through flashback, we learn the separate storylines of the three aloof and introverted female representatives of the parties involved in mediation, which include the Besco president, a Canadian Member of Parliament, and a neutral mediator. First, Canada offers to help subsidize some costs of mining and environmental protections, even offering to help Besco protect its interests and put pressure on the multinational corporation that wants to mine on the island. Suddenly, however, Canada unexpectedly pulls out of negotiations and insists that the island must grant full mining rights to the corporation; if Besco declines, Canada will sustain policy restrictions to make it impossible for Besco to revive its fishing industry. The film's attention to the personal stories of several of the key players in the negotiations depicts the diversity of their experiences in politics and business; by the end of the film, though, physical threats as well as shared experiences of condescension and misogyny result in a collapse of the barriers between them, and they manage to find moments of connection with each other. Without unifying the characters, the film shows their mutual understanding of what it feels like to be women in the male-dominated milieu of international politics and business, hinting that there is more pleasure to be found in recognizing a common plight against structural forces of influence than in perpetuating antagonistic competition for resources. The film serves as a pointed allegory for Quebec's relationship with Newfoundland and Labrador, underlining that cultural individuality can coexist with ethical and political responsibility. Depicting the rural as a space of respite for those who are tasked with negotiating the future of rural life itself, it also shows how the aesthetic and nostalgic pleasures of the rural help to usher us through the energy anxiety of the present.

Kynicism at the Inn

Back in 2018, on our final day on Fogo Island, my partner and I took a free, one-hour tour of Fogo Island Inn. As we waited for the tour to begin, our small group tentatively crowded around a table in the tea room, which was bedecked in a carefully curated selection of local, artisanal crafts. Although handmade vernacular furniture lined the walls, no one sat down. Among the literature fanned out on the surface of the table, I spotted the latest edition of a local literary magazine I hadn't yet read and began to rifle through it, but halfway through reading a short story I became aware of the fingerprints I'd left on the glossy page and hastily replaced it. The tour guide appeared and we received our instructions: photography was only permitted if no guests were in view, and we would only visit parts of the Inn that weren't currently in use.

As we followed the guide through the Inn's public meeting rooms, we learned about its energy-efficient design, locally-sourced building materials, and bespoke décor. We were given double-sided, glossy postcards designed to look like nutrition labels, which depicted the "Economic Nutrition" of the Inn – an outline of how profits from a nightly stay at the Inn are spent: 49% goes to labour, 12% to food and supplies, and so on. Through a window at the end of a hall of guest rooms, the guide pointed to an outbuilding known as "The Shed," an architectural gesture to the small waterside buildings that have traditionally served as work spaces for Newfoundland fishermen, and which in recent years have been used for socializing, drinking, and sometimes cooking rustic meals on woodstoves. For guests of the Inn, the tour guide said, the space is used for reading, eating, enjoying the scenery, and even doing yoga. I couldn't quite align her descriptions of The Shed's covered entranceway and mono-pitch roof with recollections of the sheds in which I spent much of my childhood. Sardonically, I imagined doing yoga on the oil-stained floor of my dad's shed, surrounded by particle board, paint cans,

and mouse traps. We proceeded on to the Inn's library and cinema, but stayed clear of the dining room, where guests were eating. Since the Inn was apparently at capacity, we were unable to get a glimpse of the guest rooms and, although the guide was willing to show us the rooftop hot tubs, the door was locked; the hot tubs were also currently in use. When the guide asked if anyone had any questions, no one responded. As the tour ended, one member of the group surreptitiously tossed his "Economic Nutrition" postcard in a nearby trash bin. Knowing that I would never be able to afford a stay at the Inn, I was tempted to do the same. I left feeling like an aspirational voyeur, as if I'd just read a supermarket tabloid.

Afterward, my partner and I discussed our impressions of the Inn and our experience of touring it. His enthusiasm contrasted with my cynicism. Whereas I criticized the way our group was kept separate from the guests, as if we were second-class citizens because we had not paid money, he saw the distance between our group and the paying guests as a way of making him feel invited into the "we" that exists behind the Inn's facade – as if he was being brought "in on" the Inn's seductive marketing strategies for the super-rich. Having spent his childhood in a small town on Newfoundland's west coast, he said, he was intrigued by the way the Inn capitalized on mainland views of Newfoundland. He even felt pride in seeing how the Inn profited from the traditions he grew up with, like "The Shed," and the way it used the funds to funnel money back into the community. Hearing his reaction, I was reminded of the kynicism of Tickle Head's residents in *The Grand Seduction*. Just as the movement of their assembled bodies became a kynical exercise, for my partner, moving collectively behind the scenes through the spaces of the Inn allowed our tour group to kynically confront the cynical mask worn by the Inn itself.

I remained unconvinced by my partner's argument until recently, when I was going through some photographs we took on Fogo Island. There were few photos from inside the Inn,

but I did take a few in the gallery, which we were permitted to freely explore after the structured portion of the tour had concluded and where there were a number of interactive and artistic exhibits about life on Fogo Island. One exhibit was about the children of the island; it included laminated photocopies of a project they had completed while at school. Part of the assignment asked the children to answer three questions: 1) What would you like to be when you grow up?; 2) Where is your favourite place on Fogo Island?; and 3) How do you see Fogo Island in 50 years? In light of the tour I'd just experienced, one response struck me as particularly perceptive; in it, the child imparted a hope that, in 50 years, the community would no longer continue to be "obsessed with trying to please the people coming for tourism." I laughed out loud and took a picture on my phone. The presence of this response in the gallery, there for guests and tour groups alike to peruse and critique, felt like a playful gesture of resistance against the capitalist ideologies masked by the Inn – a rejection of the cynical reason required in order for the Inn to flourish. For me, the child's response – hidden among dozens of others in one of the gallery's many exhibits – deconstructed both the strategies used by the Inn to seduce wealthy tourists as well as the cynical reason that allows the Inn to distance itself from its own capitalist and extractivist foundations. I felt as if I had quietly become party to what I interpreted as a subtle, cheeky act of defiance.

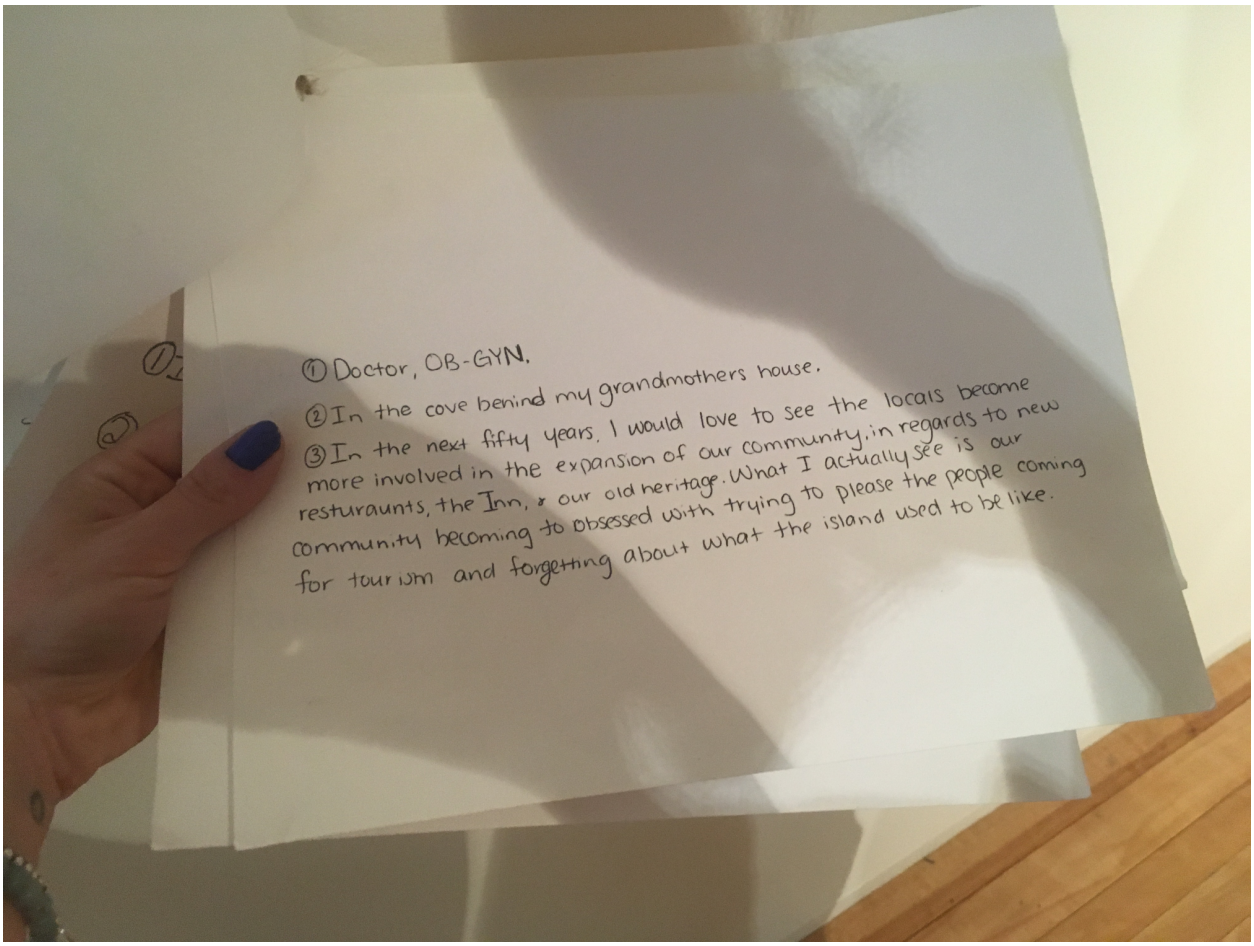

Fig 3. Heaney, Olivia. Child's assignment at Fogo Island Inn. 9 September 2018. Author's personal collection.

On Fogo Island, my partner and I experienced a nostalgia and romance much like that which was described by the aforementioned hedge fund manager, a guest at Fogo Island Inn. Our "baycation" was similarly full of the privilege and pleasure of "getting away from it all" – the salty sea breeze on an uninhabited coastal trail, a breakfast of cod cakes made from fresh local catch, and a private room in a charming saltbox house reminiscent of those once lived in by our grandparents. Yet, our tour of Fogo Island Inn offered another kind of pleasure, which came from seeing Fogo Island's potential to resist and undermine the systemic forces that currently sustain it – a pleasure unavailable to the Inn's actual guests. Unable to see ourselves in the Inn's

brand of Newfoundland nostalgia, our experience of the tour drew attention to and deconstructed the cynical reason behind the Inn's success, and behind our own delusion that it is possible, in the precarity of the 21st century, to truly "get away." Although, like the hedge fund manager, my partner and I are fully imbricated in the structures of extractivism and capital, the pleasure we experienced on Fogo Island went beyond the cruel optimism that renders it a place of respite from the anxieties of contemporary life; our enjoyment also came from kynically confronting the existence of the cynical mask that keeps us stuck in impasse. Like the characters and the local audience of *The Grand Seduction*, we were able to experience the collective and kinetic playfulness that make up kynicism's structure of feeling. Like the child whose assignment I read, we were able to imagine Fogo Island 50 years in the future. Probably, as a result of an overreliance on resource extraction, much of its coastline will be underwater and the region will be warmer and increasingly affected by extreme weather events. But perhaps it will also be a place where residents are indeed no longer "obsessed with trying to please people coming for tourism" – a place less focused on using the tools of capital for its own gain, where kynical modes of acting and being will have replaced the cynical reason that threatens the sustainability of its pleasures.

CHAPTER TWO

Hope, Fear, and Futurity: Climate Crisis and the Figure of the Child

Over the opening shots of "Petro-Mama," the voice of filmmaker and cultural theorist Sheena Wilson describes the context of her short film, a re-enactment of a freezing Alberta morning during which she rushed her young son, in the middle of a respiratory attack, to the doctor. Her memory of the morning is quite vivid, she says, as she'd just been away at a conference on petrocultures and the impact of oil and energy on the environment. The camera, in the passenger seat, follows Wilson and her son on their journey to the clinic. Bundled in hats and boots and puffy coats, they pull out of a two-car garage into a flat, industrial suburb; smoke from the stacks of oil refineries billows on the horizon beyond close-ups of Wilson's face, pale and bloodless in the cold. In between her soothing instructions to her son in the backseat, Wilson's narration details the conundrum she faces during the drive: should she turn on the heat in the car so that her son can breathe against the bitter cold, or should she leave it off to avoid drawing into the car the caustic chemical smell of burned gasoline and acrid exhaust emanating from Refinery Row? Wilson holds things together and manages to get to the clinic, but once her son is in the hands of a physician, her body reacts to the stress she's been under. As the doctor rattles off his diagnosis (asthma) and instructions for treatment (a prescribed series of medications and inhalers), she nods mechanically, her face dizzy and dazed. In a departure from its realist depiction of the scene, the camera mirrors Wilson's disorientation; the profile of her face in close-up blurs as the physician's sentences overlap and run together. It is as if we are seeing Wilson as she might see herself during an out-of-body experience. The film snaps back to realism with a jump cut to the doctor's face, which simultaneously snaps Wilson back to reality:

"Did you get that?" the physician asks. Wilson asks him to repeat what he's said before bundling up her son and heading to the pharmacy and home.

In the creative non-fiction piece that accompanies "Petro-Mama," Wilson gestures toward the fear, anxiety, and bewilderment that attend parenthood within climate change ("'Petro-Mama': Mothering in a Crude World"). Linking the Imperial Oil Strathcona and Suncor Energy refineries along the highway and the "polar vortex" in which the events of her film take place, her essay explains how, on the morning of her son's respiratory attack, Alberta was in the midst of a cold snap caused by a shift in the air currents above North America – a result of global warming: as the slowing jet stream interacts with polar winds in the Arctic, it pushes freezing air from the Arctic further south than ever before, creating dramatic and unseasonal fluctuations in temperature and extreme weather events that will increasingly become the new normal. Ironically, the "chemical cocktail of polyaromatic hydrocarbons and polycyclic aromatics and benzene and arsenic and formaldehyde and nitrogen oxides and carbon dioxide" emanating from the stacks along the highway, which made it so hard for Wilson's young son to breathe, are directly contributing to the extreme cold that make it even harder for him to breathe ("'Petro-Mama': Mothering in a Crude World" 309). Just as these chemicals diffuse into his lungs, the socio-political influences of a boom-bust economy seep into his life. Wilson describes how, as a parent, she anxiously tries to mitigate the future damage of such forces through increasingly high standards of domestic hygiene, appropriate consumer choices, and the "best organic nutrient-dense foods available for consumption" (314). Still, she suggests, despite social constructions of motherhood that suggest she is "either to blame for [her son's] health or that [she] can manage it," her meticulous practices of care are "feeble" and her child's future is "far beyond [her] control" (314). The anxiety and fear she imparts are common among those who care for children,

and those who are thinking of having children, in the contemporary Global North; concerns about children's futures within climate change include both fear of what will happen to them in cases of environmental catastrophe and worry about the extent to which having a child exacerbates the potential for future environmental catastrophe. Using the child figure as a cultural shorthand to represent the "not-yet," both Wilson's essay and her short film hint that the warming planet, and the fear and anxiety it causes, are suffocating children and those who care for them alike.

The use of the child figure in "Petro-Mama" follows a popular convention in contemporary environmentalism, which often mobilizes the child as a symbol to galvanize support for climate change activism. Given that the movement's primary focus is on advocating for the conditions needed to sustain an earthly future, it makes a kind of sense that the child figure is its central signifier. From Greenpeace Brazil's "Child Growing Ocean Rising" campaign, which depicted water-damaged photographs of young children to raise awareness about rising sea levels, to the UN's "Hopenhagen" movement, which used posters of children's faces to encourage citizen engagement in its COP15 Climate Change Conference, the child has served as shorthand in climate activism for the world that is to come (Out of the Woods). However, as Lee Edelman has argued, there are genuine political dangers to this use of the child as a figure of futurity. In the 2004 book *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Edelman uses queer negativity to suggest that queerness, as an anti-normative force, resists the normative images of family, futurity, reproduction, and their coalescence in the figure of the child. The child is an effective force of political mobilization, writes Edelman, because there is widespread social consensus that the call to act on behalf of children cannot justifiably be resisted; there are few values more "obviously unquestionable as that of the Child whose innocence solicits our

defence" (2). Such rhetorical use of "the Child," he argues, inevitably perpetuates reproductive futurity and the belief that any politics must be motivated by a desire to create a better future by "fighting for the children" (2).

Reproductive futurity fails queers in the present, Edelman suggests, by naturalizing gendered ideas about parenting and the family and sanctioning heterosexual sex via the "alibi" of social and biological reproduction (19). Such logic punishes queer sex and queer kinship relations because they do not contribute to reproductive futurity. It also risks implicitly reproducing social inequalities in the process of biological reproduction – an "endless propagation of the same" that shuts down alternative possibilities by generationally transmitting structural oppressions based on, for example, race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability (Hester 41). Edelman calls for a tactical embrace of queerness as a position against a social order in which "we are no more able to conceive of a politics without a fantasy of the future than we are able to conceive of a future without the figure of the Child" (11). Thus, he encourages readers to refuse the logic of reproductive futurity (and the child figure that stands in for it) by abandoning the rhetoric of hope and futurity. His anti-relational theory suggests that any activism which – like environmentalism and climate change movements – agitates on behalf of generations to come unwittingly participates in "the cult of the Child" by perpetuating heteronormative, exclusionary notions of whose futures have priority (19).

Edelman's critique of reproductive futurity is a useful tool for deconstructing how the child figure is mobilized in contemporary texts about climate change, which often reinscribe cruelly optimistic attachments to petro-friendly ideas of the "good life" that threaten our flourishing. Yet, in its determination to avoid perpetuating such attachments, *No Future* ironically also precludes the possibility of any intersectional politics that carries the potential to

make a future beyond heteronormativity. In *Cruising Utopia*, José Esteban Muñoz responds to *No Future* by attempting to reorient queer studies away from the anti-relational turn of Bersani and Edelman and toward the idea of queer utopianism. Defining "queerness" not as oppositional to the future, but rather as the futurity of the unrealized and emergent "not-yet," Muñoz critiques Edelman's vision of queerness "as a singular abstraction that can be subtracted and isolated from a larger cultural matrix" (64). For Muñoz, structural disparities in acts of violence that threaten queer youth of colour demonstrate that not all children are equally afforded the protection and status conferred to them by Edelman in his broad conceptualization of "the Child." He writes:

> It is important not to hand over futurity to normative white reproductive futurity. That dominant mode of futurity is indeed 'winning,' but that is all the more reason to call upon a utopian political imagination that will enable us to glimpse another time and place: a 'not-yet' where youths of colour actually get to grow up. (*Cruising Utopia* 96)

Muñoz suggests that *No Future*'s theory of queer temporality "fail[s] to factor in the relational relevance of race or class" and thus "merely reproduce[s] a crypto-universal white gay subject […] whose time is a restricted and restricting hollowed-out present free of the need for imagining a futurity that exists beyond the self or the here and now" (94). His critique provides a framework for thinking about how to combine the desire to refuse reproductive futurity with the desire for a better future; rather than following Edelman by abandoning the child figure and the hope it signifies, Muñoz suggests that the child figure can be invoked as part of an alternative mode of imagining futures that do not necessarily perpetuate normative values.

In this chapter, I use the Edelman-Muñoz debate to analyze the performance-based climate activism of Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg as well as settler Canadian Annabel Soutar's 2015 play *The Watershed*. These performances help us explore such questions as: How

can we reproduce without reproducing reproductive futurity? How can thinking about and practicing political solidarity and alternative modes of parenting and care help us work through anxiety about reproductive futurity within climate change? How can these alternative modes help us protect the future for all children without promoting restrictive notions about whose existence counts?

As a point of departure, this chapter examines Greta Thunberg as a figure who both validates and disrupts Edelman's binarized logic between present and future. Following this analysis, the chapter's main case study explores Annabel Soutar's 2015 documentary theatre project *The Watershed*, which contains agential child figures who, like Thunberg, push beyond the heteronormativity of reproductive futurism. Through their exploration of modes of sociality and intimacy beyond the nuclear family, Thunberg and the children of *The Watershed* offer a glimpse of what the world might be like if such modes were adopted and applied within practices of environmental protection. In *The Watershed*, Soutar investigates Canadian water politics by bringing her husband, two daughters, and one of her daughter's friends on a road trip from Montreal, Quebec to Fort McMurray, Alberta. Over the course of the journey, the children become invested in learning about the role of the oil sands in the shutdown of Ontario's Experimental Lakes Area (ELA); at the same time, the playwright's responsibility for the children in her care begins to overlap with her feelings of responsibility toward the environment. Together, the Soutars transcend the confines of reproductive futurity by enacting modes of care that go beyond naturalized, inward-looking, and parochial family alliances, encouraging deeper responsibility and love towards all others and prioritizing new solidarities over the genetic family in a resource-depleted world. Foregrounding the child both as a figure that mobilizes the future-oriented affect of hope and as an actively engaged citizen, the chapter suggests that decoupling

the child from reproductive futurity animates its utopian performativity. Ultimately, the chapter argues that the feelings brought forth by the child figure, particularly fear and love, have the potential to help us imagine alternatives to the extractivism threatening our present and future.

Beyond Reproductive Futurity: Greta Thunberg, Green Girl

Though youth have been advocating on behalf of the environment for decades, since Greta Thunberg's first act of civil disobedience in 2018 – she began to skip school to demonstrate the importance of preventing climate change, standing alone each day on the steps of Swedish parliament – she has become the quintessential poster child for climate change mitigation. As a symbol, she represents the "green" environmental movement and the unformed, fresh "greenness" of youth. Her speeches, which have been compiled in a Penguin reader entitled *No One is Too Small to Make a Difference*, have addressed millions of people online as well as at the 2018 United Nation Climate Action Summit and Climate Change Conferences and the 2020 World Economic Forum. For Thunberg, it all began in 2011, when she was eight years old. She became depressed because she could not understand how it was possible that adults knew about the climate emergency, but were not panicked about it – that, in fact, they continued to carry on as usual, flying in airplanes and investing in companies that released fossil fuels into the atmosphere at such a dizzying pace that the damage would soon be irreversible. For Thunberg, this situation was so unthinkable that she stopped talking and eating. She insisted that her parents' carbon footprints were "stealing [her] future" (Chiorando). Desperate to help, Thunberg's parents adopted a number of lifestyle changes, which she says gave her the energy to continue to rally for climate change mitigation (Goodman, "School Strike for Climate"). In 2018, after being diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Thunberg went against the wishes

of her parents and teachers and began sitting alone outside the Swedish parliament buildings during school hours, carrying a sign with the words "Skolstreik för klimatet" ("School strike for the climate") and documenting her resistance on Instagram and Twitter. Amplified by other youth activists online, her message attracted attention both locally and internationally. Soon, other youth activists joined her strike, which gained international mainstream media coverage that inspired students across the globe to perform school strikes of their own. After the 2018 Swedish election, Thunberg went back to school but continued to strike on Fridays; students around the world joined her movement, which eventually became known as Fridays for Future (Goodman, "School Strike for Climate"). In December 2018, more than 20,000 students held strikes in over 270 cities worldwide; in 2019, parents and other activists joined students, and after two global strikes in March and May of that year, the Global Week for Future staged a series of 4500 strikes across 150 countries, focused around two Fridays in late September (Carrington). The largest climate gatherings in world history, the September strikes gathered approximately four million people, including schoolchildren who, inspired by Thunberg, skipped school to demonstrate (Laville and Watts).

Activism is performatively utopian in that it both critiques a present situation and instantiates a different mode of being in the world. In his analysis of Idle No More, a grassroots Indigenous movement that began in Canada in 2012, Stó:lō performance theorist Dylan Robinson explores what direct actions "'do' as politics, acts of history, and lawmaking" for the communities who perform them (212). He writes that

> [f]or Pacific Northwest First Nations […] songs can act as the equivalent to legal expressions of land title, enact forms of diplomacy between nations, and convey knowledge about the land; they are living documents of our history, affirm our own and

> other nations' sovereignty, and provide healing. As such, not only do these songs have an aesthetic aspect, they also operate similarly to what J. L. Austin calls speech acts, or what instead we might call "song acts" and "dance acts." (212)

Here, following the work of Austin, Robinson suggests that by performing upon lands to which Indigenous peoples have ultimate claim – whether through song and dance, or simply by taking up physical space – participants in Idle No More unsettled settler frameworks of land ownership and enacted Indigenous sovereignty, an alternative way of being in the world. While Robinson's theory becomes particularly germane to the final chapter of this dissertation, in which I make an argument for the utopian performativity of Indigenous activism, in this section I argue that Thunberg's activism is also performatively utopian; it functions in a similar way to Robinson's "song acts" and J. L. Austin's "speech acts." Through her protest, Thunberg critiques the institutional systems – namely capitalism and extractivism – that are currently contributing to climate change. At the same time, she enacts an alternative to the present; through her civil disobedience, she refuses the disenfranchisements typically associated with childhood and shows us what it looks like when those who cannot vote are able to make their voices heard across the globe. By enacting, in the present, the climate-centered thinking we require for the future, Thunberg anticipatorily illuminates an alternative mode of political mobilization – one in which disenfranchised groups, such as children, bring about the changes needed to build a world beyond extractivism.

While Thunberg's activism embodies utopian performativity for many of the same reasons as Idle No More, I argue that because of Thunberg's status as a child, her direct actions enact a particular kind of utopia in performance. Thunberg both validates and disrupts Edelman's binarized logic between present and future. As a neurodiverse, white child from one of the most

privileged societies in the world, Thunberg is often portrayed in media as a stand-in for the climate crisis – as representative of reproductive futurity according to Edelman's definition. Yet, as a living child who has come to stand side by side with world leaders to demand climate action and whose voice has been amplified to the public through world media, Thunberg works to disrupt her expected role in reproductive futurity. Unlike Edelman's child figure, for whom the present is sacrificed for an endlessly deferred future, Thunberg registers the problems of climate change in the present moment while also signaling their danger to the future. As an agential individual in the present, her activism goes beyond reproductive futurity's normative replications of sameness and gestures toward what Muñoz calls "the future in the present" (49). In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz disrupts Edelman's attempt to separate the future from the present. Following the work of C. L. R. James, who suggests that the future is contained in its negation (the present), Muñoz responds to Edelman's antirelationality by arguing that hope can exist beyond reproductive futurity, especially the way it sacrifices the present in favour of a fantasmatic future. For Muñoz, such hope can be found in performative moments of coterminous contact between present and future. He suggests that performances of minoritarian citizen-subjects who, like Thunberg, contest the majoritarian public sphere have the potential to "surpass relegation to one temporality" and thus come to coexist in both the future and the present (49). Such performances of "coterminous time" create new formations in both temporalities; as they resist and critique present-day normativities, they anticipatorily illuminate potential worlds (49). I argue that performances of coterminous time are performatively utopian, and that Thunberg's activism is an example of such utopian performativity.

While critic Masha Gessen rightly attributes Thunberg's rise in popularity to the political moment in which she came to the world stage – she is "a political leader for the age of Trump

because she is in every way his opposite," they write – her particular hold on the collective imagination also comes from her approach to the climate emergency ("Greta Thunberg is the Anti-Trump"). With simple, repetitive rhetoric and blunt clarity, Thunberg's speeches seem to indicate a childlike earnestness and pigtailed innocence that ensconce her within Edelman's definition of reproductive futurity. Moreover, much of her rhetoric focuses on making a better future for "our" children, for whom Thunberg stands in as signifier, as exemplified at the 2019 World Economic Forum in Davos:

> For the sake of your children, for the sake of your grandchildren. For the sake of life and this beautiful living planet. I ask you to stand on the right side of history. I ask you to pledge to do everything in your power to push your own business or government in line with a 1.5 degree world. (*Fridays for Future*)

Here, by indirectly privileging lines of genetic descent and cultural inheritance, Thunberg's speech perpetuates reproductive futurity's aforementioned "propagation of the same." Thunberg's appeals to the audience's responsibility for "their" children potentially create a counterproductive imaginary that, in its insular focus upon making the future better for our genetic lines, risks sacrificing the present for an endlessly deferred future and promoting exclusionary, restrictive notions about whose existence counts. What about the futures of those whose parents are not represented in audiences such as Davos, or those other forms of life that climate change will impact? Thunberg's message resonates in part because it reinscribes our normative attachments, whether to heteronormativity or to the "good life," which includes aspirational hopes for the future of the nuclear family – a mode of social organization that most often is allied with extractivist energy practices to flourish. Her speech's reliance upon environmentalist rhetoric that prioritizes "our" children not only has the potential for

reproductive narcissism; it also perpetuates policies and habits of consumption that rely on extractivism-friendly visions of the good life.

Yet, in spite of her validation of reproductive futurism, Thunberg resists her own symbolic associations with futurity and hope. In "The Passion of Greta Thunberg," Ben Ehrenreich recounts how, when he contacted Thunberg's media coordinator to arrange an interview, he was referred instead to youth climate activists from Uganda, Spain, and Chile. By pushing back against the media's tired game of "elevating a photogenic white savior" as the face of climate change activism, Thunberg frustrates the normativity of reproductive futurity, ceding her privileged platform to those who are often otherwise erased (Ehrenreich). Just as importantly, Thunberg disrupts the normative ideological baggage of the child figure by acting, rather than allowing others to act in her name. One of the central problems of "The Child" is that it underwrites politics that act in the name of a subject who does not speak, but is instead spoken for. But when Thunberg speaks, her words disrupt the reproductive futurity articulated by global capitalism, which presumes that the free market will solve the climate crisis – and thus, that to reproduce the future, one must empower corporations to pursue their market-oriented solutions. Thunberg's words dismantle this logic, while also disrupting Thunberg's own mobilization as a figure that justifies the status quo of current climate politics. The aformentioned Davos speech explicitly pushes back against those who would mobilize her as a representative of The Child:

> Adults keep saying we owe it to the young people to give them hope. But I don't want your hope, I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic, I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And I want you to act, I want you to act as if you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if the house is on fire, because it is. (*Fridays for Future*)

Here, Thunberg persuasively imparts the urgency of the climate crisis by emphasizing how, for her, panic and fear have replaced hope. Rather than performing the poses of childhood naivety, she uses an angry, blunt, and adult-like voice to engage in a jeremiad that comes from experience – not innocence. When she names the climate catastrophe, it isn't in the same way as the child in "The Emperor Wears No Clothes," where the child's innocence enables her to name what the adults can see but are afraid to acknowledge. Instead, full of rage and blame, Thunberg's Davos speech explicitly states its intention to instill panic and fear. It implicitly asks: How can adults be hopeful when a real-life child – who symbolically fulfills our collective need for hope – is actively using her own agency to prevent us from seeing her as a hopeful figure? It suggests that, although we purport to shield children from emotions like fear and panic, as neglectful stewards of the planet we have become the unwitting progenitors of these feelings. By deconstructing her own position as a symbol of hope, Thunberg suggests that the rhetorical use of the child figure, which helps us remain attached to the "good life," has led to our failure toward actual, living children.

Thunberg's exploration and encouragement of panic and fear – emotions which, as I explore later in the chapter, anticipate what is "not yet" – suggest that the utopian performativity of her direct actions rests not just in her critique of the hope she is meant to represent, but also in the way she uses unpleasant feelings to push us toward a more climate-centred future. In *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT-UP's Fight Against AIDS*, Deborah B. Gould explores how in the 1980s, AIDS activists framed the epidemic as genocidal, using slogans like "Silence = Death" to incite direct action against government negligence in the fight against AIDS (129). By intentionally deploying holocaust rhetoric with mobilization in mind, AIDS activists used panic and fear to convince the public that the epidemic was serious enough to demand immediate

ameliorative action: "If you believed that AIDS was a holocaust, then 'business as usual' in the political realm, which by then was clearly ineffective, was not much of a response" (Gould 170). Thunberg's fear and panic work in much the same way; the emotions are invoked heuristically, as a way to demonstrate why confrontational direct action is imperative in light of the climate emergency. When the real-life embodiment of the child figure, which stands in for humanity's hope for the future, refuses the hope assigned to her and calls instead for fear and panic, the climate crisis becomes amplified in a way that suggests that any response other than collective action is unreasonable. The effectiveness of Thunberg's activism is directly linked to its complex emotional structure, which uses this fear and panic to short circuit cruelly optimistic hope in order to demand action.

Thunberg's disruption of hope and reproductive futurity is also underlined by the attention she constantly draws to neurodiversity. She credits her single-minded determination (and her ability to negotiate the online vitriol she often receives from right-wing pundits) to her ASD diagnosis, which she calls her "superpower" (Goodman, "Climate Activist Greta Thunberg"). Thunberg suggests that her unique, neurodiverse perception of the world helps her zero in on and refuse the cognitive dissonance we consistently demonstrate in the face of climate change, and which keeps us attached to the "good life" in spite of our knowledge that this very attachment is preventing the possibility of sustaining the "good life" into the future. In an interview with Amy Goodman, Thunberg remarked:

> I think [ASD] was one of the reasons why I […] really reacted to the climate crisis […] I couldn't connect the dots – why people were just going along like before, and still saying climate change was important. I don't get that "double-moral" […] the difference

between what you know and what you say and what you do, how you act. (Goodman, "Climate Activist Greta Thunberg")

By drawing attention to her diagnosis, Thunberg emphasizes how "otherness" exists among living children, a segment of society that "the cult of the Child" tends to characterize as homogeneous. She also hints at the importance of collectivity across difference. In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz writes that although Edelman suggests that the child as futurity differs from the futures of actual children, the way in which *No Future* frames the child "accepts and reproduces the monolithic figure of the child" (95). "In the same way all queers are not the stealth-universal-white-gay-man invoked in queer antirelational formulations," writes Muñoz, "all children are not the privileged white babies to whom contemporary society caters […] Racialized kids, queer kids are not the sovereign princes of reproductive futurity" (94). Children who demonstrate neurological differences – and differing physical abilities, for that matter – likewise do not easily fit within the ranks of Edelman's "sovereign princes." For Muñoz, the differences that exist within the category of "child" (and which often leave certain children marginalized) are all the more reason to call on a utopian political imagination that will enable us to hope for a better future for those who do not fit within the privileged mold of "the Child" under reproductive futurity. By opening up possibilities for understanding different ways of being and interacting with the world, Thunberg's activism demonstrates that attending to such differences – which include the evolution of different forms of cognition – can help us deal with present-day crises without succumbing to the normativity of reproductive futurity or abandoning politics, hope, and the future.

The direct actions of Thunberg and her fellow youth activists are performatively utopian. Aware of society's tendency to mobilize her as the Child and that people will listen to her as

such, Thunberg pushes against reproductive futurity by using this position – which is often used to justify the status quo of capitalism and climate politics – and turning it against the logic that Edelman critiques. She and her fellow activists denounce our present-day attachments to petroculture, and the way these attachments sustain the hierarchical, normative, and unsustainable status quo, while prefiguring a collective alternative to these attachments. As figures, Thunberg and those who demonstrate with her are more than symbols or signifiers; by protesting climate change en masse, they have directly exerted pressure on world leaders and demanded political and social change, not only for future generations but also in the here and now. Such interventions in the present show that their political power goes beyond the future potential that they signify; imbricating present and future, they provide a moment of contact between temporalities, insisting on a dialectical relation between present and future. For the rest of this chapter, I trace how Annabel Soutar's 2015 verbatim play *The Watershed* also pushes beyond reproductive futurity by highlighting the capacity of children and their families to explore modes of living that challenge normative values of the "good life" and in turn enact environmental and cultural change. Like Thunberg, *The Watershed* suggests that when children demonstrate agency by advocating for the environment and enacting solidarity, they signify hope for a future that does not necessarily reproduce the cis-heteronormative values of reproductive futurity.

The Watershed

With its focus upon a white, middle-class family's anxiety about its children's future within climate change, *The Watershed* seems to affirm the values of individualistic, bourgeois, cis-heternormative life that thinkers like Edelman and Muñoz associate with and critique as part

of reproductive futurity. The future-oriented focus of Canadian playwright Annabel Soutar's 2015 verbatim production *The Watershed* is evident from the story of its inception. Commissioned by the arts and culture festival PANAMANIA to write a play about water as a natural resource, Soutar enlisted her two daughters, Ella (age ten) and Beatrice (age eight), as her research assistants. As a point of departure for her research and to teach her children about the environment, she began recording family conversations about water. Asked about this methodology, Soutar claimed that the topic's environmental implications made her think about the kind of world that resource extraction and climate change will leave behind for her daughters: "[F]or me, this show is about the future and their generation. I felt that it was somehow going to be about my generation having a bit of a reckoning and a confession to the next generation about where we've gone astray" (Morrow). She describes the play as an exploration of "legacy" and "the hope we have for the future"; such hope, she says, is best embodied through the symbol of the child ("Annabel Soutar"). The extent to which Soutar took her subject matter personally is revealed in her response to a question about her research process during an interview with the University of British Columbia's *Nineteen Questions*:

> I had an instinct that something about this play had to do with me, not only as an artist but as a mother and daughter. I wanted to make sure that when people left this play, they didn't just think about statistics and data surrounding why they care about water. I wanted them to walk out going, 'I am water. This is a story about me. The reason why water is in trouble is because we are in trouble.' ("Annabel Soutar")

Responses like this one suggest that *The Watershed*, a verbatim piece that uses dialogue edited from dozens of hours of interviews and conversations to tell the self-reflexive story of the Soutar

family's research for the PANAMANIA water play, is meant to resonate with audiences by appealing to homogenizing ideas of essentialism and sameness within humanity. It also suggests the extent to which the play leans into reproductive futurity, using the figure of the Child – represented onstage through characters who speak the verbatim words of Soutar's actual daughters – to suggest that the hope offered by the energy and water politics it explores is motivated by a desire to make a better future for our children.

The storyline of *The Watershed*, about a cross-country journey in search of answers to questions about water politics in Canada, creates a forward-facing trajectory that chimes with Soutar's methodological and philosophical orientation toward reproductive futurity. When the Soutar family learns that the Canadian government – led, at the time, by Stephen Harper's Conservative Party – has decided to defund the Experimental Lakes Area (ELA), one of the foremost centres for freshwater research in the world, they take a cross-country road trip from Montreal to Fort McMurray by Winnebago, in pursuit of responses from government representatives and information about the facility's transfer to the private sector. Soutar, characterized as Annabel, conducts a series of interviews along the way. When she speaks with Diane Orihel, a PhD candidate in ecology who has formed a coalition to keep the ELA in the public sector, Annabel learns that there may be a link between the government's decision to defund the research centre and the ELA's research on the effects of bitumen extraction on fresh water systems. Diane suggests that the ELA's research has the potential to hinder development in the Alberta oil sands, which not only require enormous quantities of water but also create toxic tailings ponds that leak into groundwater and eventually permeate entire watersheds. In conversations with Annabel, Diane implies that if the results of ELA monitoring indicate that conventional drilling methods are causing extreme adverse environmental effects, corporations

may have to deal with regulations that might threaten extraction activities in Fort McMurray. Now that the ELA is being transferred to a private operator, a think tank called the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), the aim of the Soutars' journey is to find out if there is any truth behind the claims of ELA activists, who have warned the public that the think tank's "private sector donors may represent the very […] industries whose environmental impact on […] water ELA is supposed to be monitoring" (Soutar 87). Unfortunately, the family's attempts to interview government and corporate representatives – and therefore learn the other side of the story – are thwarted; meetings are cancelled and people refuse to talk. Annabel winds up turning to her father, an investment banker and card-carrying member of the Conservative Party, for answers to help create a full-picture view of the ELA's defunding and its connection to the oil sands. By the end of the play, the Soutars have learned a great deal about environmental protection, but they have not received any clear or official answers. *The Watershed* concludes without coming to any definitive conclusions, hinting at the need for further future investigation of Canada's water politics.

The modes through which Greta Thunberg and the child characters of *The Watershed* perform utopia are different from, yet related to, one another. As aforementioned, Thunberg enacts utopian performativity through a dialectical relation between present and future; she both critiques our present-day attachments to petroculture and prefigures an alternative to the systems of privilege and capital that sustain these attachments, performing what Muñoz would call "coterminous time" (49). In this chapter, I argue that while child characters in *The Watershed* also use temporality to critique our attachments and instantiate alternatives to them, they do so by enacting slowness and delay; in the performative space of the theatre, the suspension created by stretching time in such a way creates a time-space in which the audience can reimagine

alternatives to the good life and our attachments to it. I suggest that such exploration of slowness and delay is part of the way *The Watershed* enacts utopian performativity. Through its use of the nuclear family and the child figure to create alternative time-spaces that challenge the cognitive dissonance of adults as well as to complicate affective economies of fear, *The Watershed* labours toward a post-extractivist future that transcends the bounds of reproductive futurism and the inequalities it perpetuates.

Time-Spaces

As aforementioned, the child characters of *The Watershed* perform utopia differently from Greta Thunberg. While Thunberg's utopian performativity is enacted through coterminous time, a dialectical relation she draws between present and future, *The Watershed*'s child characters stretch time through narrative delay and aesthetic slowness. In turn, they create a time-space that gestures toward the long, dilated timescales of nature. In *Readings in Performance and Ecology*, theatre and performance scholars Wendy Arons and Theresa J. May discuss the challenges that ecological stories pose to their own dramatic and theatrical representation; because they often take place on timescales that go far beyond the life of any one human, and which are therefore often outside of human perception, it is difficult to tell such stories effectively, particularly in the contained time-spaces of theatrical performances (4). How to tell the story of a glacier or a river, which unfolds over millennia, or the story of climate change, which has been generations in the making? I argue that *The Watershed*'s gestures towards nature's slower timescales encourage both performers and audiences to look beyond habitual ways of seeing the world in order to develop an outward gaze that is ecologically-oriented. As the play's time-space pushes us to match our consciousness to the slower pace of the natural

world, we are better able to understand its stories and put pressure on common conceptions of and attitudes towards the climate crisis. In this time-space, we are encouraged to examine our current extractivist attachments to the good life, so that we can imagine alternatives that will lead us into a post-extractivist future.

The time-spaces created by slowness and temporal delay in *The Watershed* are examples of what performance theorist Nick Salvato calls "slow time" (96). In *Obstruction*, Salvato differentiates between two ways of experiencing a "slow time" aesthetic: first, there is the artistic experience that involves an unusually long duration (for example, Andy Warhol's *Empire*, which consists of eight hours of footage of the exact same view of the Empire State Building); second, there is the stretched or dilated experience that makes time feel slowed in a piece of any duration (96, 109). *The Watershed* experiments with both of these slow-time aesthetics. When I first saw the play, in 2015, it clocked in at just under three hours, including a 20-minute intermission; but the piece *felt* even longer. As I will explore later in this section, the play constantly delays its own narrative thrust. At the same time, in the 2015 production, a recurring affective motif made it feel as if both the actors and the audience had been suspended underwater; actors' speech and movements became protracted, their words echoing alongside a soundtrack of water gurgling and dripping. By slowing down the reception of the thinking spectator in such ways, *The Watershed* generates a time-space in which to contemplate the natural world and its resources and to open ourselves up to alternatives to the systems that have contributed to its destruction.

In *The Watershed*, narrative delay and aesthetic slowness become associated with the child figure, so that as time expands and dilates for the spectator, its utopian potential emerges in tandem with that of the child figure itself. Salvato suggests that, as a methodology, slowness has the potential to reorient focus and attention from normative preoccupations with

productivity, speed, and optimization. He posits that temporal and behavioural modes that are characteristics of slowness (delay, digression, suspension) that are often interpreted as an obstruction to work and value can actually help us to conceive of alternatives to the kind of habits and routines that capitalism tends to reward; thus, slowness provides paths toward creativity and unexpected insight. Furthermore, the potential for reorientation within this time-space is intensified through its association with the child figure. In *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century*, Kathryn Bond Stockton critiques how childhood has been conceived of as "growing up" in a constant thrust through forward time, and instead posits that children grow "sideways" – that is, through slow gradations, reorientations, and significant periods of delay, which are often managed by the adults around them (62). Stockton hints at the utopian potential of the child figure by arguing that childhood involves constant reorientation away from the kind of teleological movement associated with normative modes of being and growing. For example, she suggests that the growth and maturation of children is managed by delaying their access to certain legal rights, and that such periods of delay provide space and time for children to reorient themselves in directions that run counter to normative modes of being. In *The Watershed,* as I will show, child characters reorient themselves in such ways through performances of delay and slowness, creating a time-space in which spectators, too, can reorient our focus and attention toward a post-extractivist world.

While *The Watershed*'s narrative development feels linear – the family's road trip across Canada is the main focus of the play – it also engages in the kind of "sideways" movements theorized by Stockton. In her research journey, Soutar meanders, loops, and backtracks, following new leads as they present themselves and adjusting research trajectories based on new information and findings about the ELA. Her children, who are key parts of her research team,

contribute to this sense of sideways movement; they constantly delay the progression of the play's narrative by interrupting the research being conducted around them and diverting lines of questioning during interviews. While I will parse out some examples of the way the children's actions of delay re-orient the adults' approach to issues of sustainability and climate change, it's worth noting that their mundane interruptions occur from the very beginning. In the first interview depicted, during the play's second scene, Beatrice is introduced through such an interruption; right after being introduced to the plumber her mother is interviewing, she changes the subject entirely: "Mama, I'm hungry. Can I have a Fruit Roll-Up?" (Soutar 6). Immediately, her older sister, Ella, jumps on board: "Oh, me too!" (6). Such interruptions and delays are welcomed by Annabel and her husband Alex, who embrace them not only as part of the research process but as opportunities that open up lines of questioning they might not have previously thought of and which provide teachable moments for their kids. When, near the play's beginning, Alex explains to Ella and Beatrice why Annabel has recruited them to help with her research on *The Watershed*, he makes clear that she "*wants* to be interrupted" (13, emphasis in original). The Soutars have chosen to approach the play's creation by nurturing and overseeing the kids' interruptions and diversions, which become spaces of delay that give the family time to ruminate upon and integrate the new information they are learning.

Drawing attention to the ways in which the adults in the play demonstrate cognitive dissonance, the childrens' interruptions and delays often directly change the behaviours and derail the designs of the adults around them. For example, at two different points during the play, the children interrupt the flow of its narrative by expressing concerns about how the road trip – which, for them, is about learning about water politics and the climate crisis – is, ironically, contributing to their carbon footprints. Near the beginning of their journey, Beatrice interrupts

one of Annabel lessons by asking her mother whether they will "be polluting a lot on [the] trip"; Annabel responds that, yes, they will be, but that they will "offset [their] fuel consumption by planting trees" (133). In the lines that follow, she asks Alex to Google how to program the Winnebago's carbon offset mode (134). Later in the play, Ella interrupts one of her mother's lectures about "the highly instensive fossil-fuel burning lifestyle choices [the children] make every day," retorting that such choices are ones that Annabel, in fact, makes: "We're minors," she rejoinds (182). Annabel attempts to argue back – "That's true. And yet, you were pretty psyched about this Winnebago" – but this time is challenged by Beatrice, who cheekily replies, "But you're the one who caved to our demands" (182). Chastened, Annabel finally admits that the children are right; it is her adult choices that perpetuate the fossil-fuel burning lifestyle to which the children have become accustomed. By acting against their parents, refusing to be spoken for, and engaging in their own self-representation, in these scenes Ella and Beatrice demonstrate agency in much the same way as Greta Thunberg. The spaces of delay created by their interruptions give Annabel pause and encourage her to shift her patterns of behaviour and thought. In turn, they demonstrate how actual, living children resist reproductive futurity's endless propagation of the status quo and help usher in the environmental- and climate-centred protection that will make a better future.

The children's interruptions also delay the audience's understanding of the story, intensifying our anticipation to find out what is going to happen next and thus contributing to its potentiality. Stockton compares the periods of delay within childhood to Derrida's notion of delay as an effect of reading along a chain of words. She argues that, as we go forward in a text by bringing that which we have already seen or read with us but not yet knowing what lies ahead, meaning becomes postponed, "hung in suspense," in much the same way that meaning is

deferred through the periods of delay presented by childhood (4). One such period of narrative delay occurs in the second half of the play; between two scenes that propel the investigative journey (in one, Annabel writes an email to a Member of Parliament and in the other she dialogues with activist Maude Barlow), Soutar stages a scene that contains only dialogue between the children. As they sit around a campfire discussing what they have learned so far on their journey, they demonstrate a simplified and childlike understanding of the issues that Annabel is researching. Ella and Hazel (the daughter of *The Watershed*'s director and the Soutar daughters' best friend, who has accompanied the family on their journey) explain to Beatrice that "nobody knows […] what's really bad for the water" because the government is not "giving money to the ELA," and "also Stephen Harper only really cares about money" (145). Beatrice, who has clearly been listening to her grandfather, replies that "Stephen Harper […] really wants to help the ELA but it's way too expensive for him […] do you know how much cheques he's giving to people every day? Do you know what the debt of Canada is […] Six thousand hundred billion dollars" (145-46). Interpolated between two scenes that bring the audience and Annabel closer to understanding the connection between the oil sands and the decommissioning of the ELA, this entertaining conversation between the children delays the progression of the play's narrative trajectory, creating a sense of suspension and anticipation as we are forced to wait to find out what is going to happen next.

I argue that there is utopian potential within the suspension and anticipation created by this campfire scene and others like it within the play. Writing in response to Berlant's notion of the impasse, Salvato suggests that slowness (and the delay, digression, and suspension with which is it associated) is a kind of obstruction, which allows for the creation of new modes of thinking about and seeing the world. In embracing such obstructions, he writes, we are forced to

grapple with that which is obstructing us; we "scale the wall [that is the obstruction] not in order to surmount it but to *cling* to it" so that the obstruction itself can "change, perhaps move, precisely because of the clinging and the more granularly textured feeling of, up, and against the wall that the clinging enables" (4; emphasis in original). While the campfire scene is an "obstruction" to the play's narrative thrust (in viewing it, the audience is forced to reorient itself away from the forward-facing trajectory of the play's narrative), I argue that the process of allowing ourselves to be entertained by it gives us the opportunity to appreciate the different ways the children think about and understand the situations that are unfolding around them. More specifically, it helps us to see that, while the children's interpretations of oil and water politics are simplified, they aren't wrong. Ella and Hazel sum up quite effectively what *The Watershed* ultimately suggests: "[N]obody knows [that oil is] what's really bad for the water" because the ELA's research was decommissioned by the Harper government – at the centre of which was, in fact, "money" (145). Furthermore, the scene's demonstration of how Beatrice has adopted her grandfather's perspective on the Harper government sheds light on the insidious ways in which conservative doctrine often becomes absorbed by the most vulnerable. Thus, the delay presented by this scene forces us to grapple with the political issues that drive the play's narrative trajectory. By embracing this delay, we give ourselves the time and space to build an understanding of that which is "obstructing" us – which, as this scene suggests, is not only the narrative delay presented, but also the political values that keep us from engaging in environmental protection.

By embracing delay and slowness within its narrative, *The Watershed* creates a time-space in which audiences are able to cling to temporal modes outside of capital's insistence on speed, and in turn to explore the potential of how this delay and slowness, and our embrace of it,

can move and change the way we think about the earth. At the 2015 performance I attended at Toronto's Berkeley Street Theatre, director Chris Abraham staged several scenes as if they were actually occurring in water. Dappled blue lighting softly rippled across the stage in tandem with the slow dance of actors' bodies, which moved as if through water to a soundtrack of splashing, dripping, and gurgling. In the play's final scene, the actors playing Annabel, Alex, Ella, and Beatrice dove into Brome Lake as weather forecaster Janice Dean announced a hurricane on the news. Their slow movements through the water of the lake gestured toward the slow timescales of nature, anticipatorily illuminating possibilities for interacting with the natural world in ways that go beyond extractivism – both in the present and in the future. As we watched the actors' bodies become immersed and suspended in "water," we too became immersed and suspended – in the slowness of their movements, in contemplation of the play's content, and in the potential that becomes magnified through deferral and delay. Rather than clinging to delay, in this final scene we allowed ourselves to be *clung to* – saturated by – the scene and its slowness. In such a time-space, there was room to reorient ourselves, to attend to the splashes and drips and gurgles, and to become immersed in the imaginary water pressing up against the actors' bodies. Lingering together in such a time-space created a sense that, in the immersion and saturation, we might somehow think further and better; we might generate modes of attending to the natural world from within the theatre. Matching our own sense of time to the timescales of nature rather than forcing nature to sync up with the timescales of capital, in that time-space of the theatre, we were able to rehearse a slowed-down view of the world – to imagine and put into practice a future less focused on speed, capital, and extraction.

The Child and Familial Love in Fear's Affective Economy

The anticipatory ending of *The Watershed* both contributes to and reflects the play's overall affective structure of potentiality. In *Literary Essays*, Ernst Bloch examines hope and fear as emotions which, since they come from anticipation and indeterminacy, are related to potentiality – a sense of what is "not-yet" (341). Such hope and fear are both evident in *The Watershed*'s final scene. As the Soutar children move through the water of Brome Lake, they anticipate a collective and climate-centred future and thus signify hope. And yet, the scene is also punctuated by Janice Dean's weather forecast, which urgently warns listeners to prepare for an impending hurricane – the kind of violent storm that has become more prevalent as the earth has begun to warm. Dean's warning suggests that, as in Wilson's "Petro-Mama," the anticipatory and potentialized child figure of *The Watershed* can create anxiety and fear about the future, even as it also signifies hope.

In both "Petro-Mama" and *The Watershed*, families fearfully negotiate parenthood within extractivism, where the natural resources they depend on to care for their children – for example, for transportation and work – ironically contribute to the climate change that threatens their children. In *The Watershed*, though, this fear becomes reoriented through feelings of anxiety about how climate change will affect the future of Soutar's children, and in turn through the feelings of love and hope she has for her children. This reorientation of fear through such anxiety, love, and hope suggests that, when redirected, climate fear can be used as a tool for critically and performatively deconstructing extractivist practices and rhetoric, for helping us see and feel beyond the present, and for finding the means to make a better future. For the rest of this chapter, I tease out Sara Ahmed's interpretation of fear as an emotional response to external entities, which she calls "objects"; these objects work as signifiers within "affective economies"

that allow fear to be circulated and exchanged between and among other objects (117). Interestingly, Ahmed describes fear using adjectives that connote oil's material qualities: for her, fear is "sticky" (it easily attaches to various objects) and also "slippery" (it is easily released from these objects and passed onto others). While Ahmed theorizes fear as an emotion that creates borders between bodies as well as alliances with other bodies, in *The Watershed* fear creates an anxious response that catalyzes a more loving approach to the boundary between self and other. Annabel's climate fears slide so easily between and stick so easily to objects that, as she anxiously attempts to mediate them by turning toward home and family, the objects of her fear begin to overlap with the objects of her love. Thus, her fear's stickiness and slipperiness force her to turn toward the objects of her fear rather than away from them. Even though she begins her research journey by ostensibly turning inward and seeking answers to questions that will affect the future of her own children, by the end of the process, fear's stickiness and slipperiness lead her to an understanding of why the future must be made better for *all* children. *The Watershed* demonstrates the potential in our present unease about what is not-yet, especially how this fear can be an engine for better relations in the future, both between humans and between humans and the non-human.

In "Affective Economies," Ahmed criticizes theories that characterize anxiety as an emotional reaction to a vague threat and fear as an emotional reaction to a threat that is objectively identifiable (124). She suggests that fear cannot merely be understood in terms of whether or not an emotional reaction has an object onto which a subject attaches its intensity. Rather than residing in an object, writes Ahmed, fear is linked to the potential of its object to "pass by" – the possibility that the object that causes fear might not ever actually arrive (125). To illustrate, consider Climate Central's prediction, mentioned in Chapter One, that many of Fogo

Island's coastlines will be underwater by 2050. This prediction comes from an online screening tool, which allows users to zoom in on specific coastal locations in order to determine whether they are at risk of flooding in the next 30 years. Using this tool instilled a great deal of fear in me. After exploring how coastal flooding could one day affect Fogo's coastlines, I explored other coastal areas on the island of Newfoundland – places I'd visited, popular coastal hiking trails, the towns where my parents grew up – many of which are very much at risk of flooding in the near future. And yet, there is also a possibility that such flooding may not come to fruition; the tool, after all, is a prediction of risk, not a magical crystal ball that shows the future exactly as it will unfold. While future coastal flooding is unavoidable, there is of course a chance that not *all* of these areas will be underwater by 2050. There is a possibility that the object of my fear (the flooding of my favourite campground, or of a small peninsula on the southwest coast that houses hundreds of people, or of the headland where my dad lives) might not ever actually arrive. There is a possibility, though perhaps just a small one, that at least one of these areas might not end up underwater – that the predicted flood will "pass by." According to Ahmed, this uncertainty heightens my fear. Based on the tool's predictions, I necessarily have to assume the worst-case scenario, which is that all of these places will flood. Thus, if and when in 2050 only two of the three locations are underwater (and one has been "passed by"), I will still have spent 27 years living in fear of the flooding of all three.

For Ahmed, fear – like other emotions/affects – operates via *circulation*; its power comes from its mobility between bodies, as opposed to its fixed stasis on any one body. Thus, fear's "stickiness" is always momentary and provisional. Simultaneously sticky and slippery, it sticks to bodies readily, but just as easily slips away. Fear, for Ahmed, is also related to that which is not yet spatially or temporally in the present; the "not yet" makes it possible that the object of

fear, rather than approaching, might pass us by. The passing by of the object of fear does not mean that the fear will be overcome, though; rather, it intensifies the fear. Fear is thus produced by an object's *potential* approach. At the same time, writes Ahmed, this potentiality can cause an anxious *approach* to the object of fear. Thus, she suggests, fear and anxiety go hand-in-hand; they can easily attach and stick together, but they can just as easily release from one another. The potential "passing by" of the object creates the conditions for such stickiness and slipperiness (125).

For Ahmed, the affect of fear is sustained through displacement between objects, which works to link those objects together. These linkages are not created by fear, but rather through histories and social imaginaries that create sideways movement and associations between objects, so that objects stick together as signs of threat (126). Contrary to earlier theories that associate fear with specific objects, writes Ahmed, the sliding of fear between signs occurs because it does *not* reside in a particular object; rather, it slides across objects and sticks to each object temporarily. In this way, she writes, fear is economic; it circulates and becomes distributed between signifiers (119). Following Marx's theory of commodity exchange, which suggests that through circulation money acquires more value, Ahmed writes that when emotions like fear move between signs through systems of circulation and exchange, they become intensified (120). Ahmed uses the example of 9/11 to show how objects of fear slide and stick together, creating chains of substitutions between objects. After 9/11, she suggests, there was an unrelenting assault on immigrants in America, which facilitated a grouping together of anybody who appeared to be Arab, Muslim, Middle Eastern, or South Asian and then an association of these bodies with the word "terrorist," which signifies fear (131). As the word "terrorist" began to stick to the bodies of immigrants and asylum seekers, fear worked to create borders between

certain bodies and alignments between others. Within the chain of association (terrorist→Muslim→Arab→Middle Eastern or South Asian→immigrant or asylum seeker), anybody who came to stand in as a signifier for the word "terrorist" became a body from which the fearful "turn[ed] away," enacting a border between subject (the fearful person) and object (the body of a person perceived to be associated with terrorism) (130).

According to Ahmed's model of fear's affective economy – which suggests that anxiety is fear of, about, and in the future – the creation of such borders is a result of an anxious response by the fearful subject to the object of fear that may or may not ever arrive. Fear's potentiality shapes the subject's anxious approach to the approaching object of fear. For example, in the months following 9/11, the fear of terrorism created an anxious response in many Americans, who "turn[ed] away" from the potential threat of terrorism by "turning toward" home (129-131). Fear slid quickly into anxiety, which caused Americans to align themselves with the nation as being under attack; such alignments clearly delineated the border between the fearful subject (the American state, "home") and the fearsome object (signified by any body within the chain of substitution described above). Ahmed writes that, during this time, the mediation of fear through anxious alignment became visible through widespread displays of American flags outside domestic homes. Fear, and the anxious response to it, became lived as a patriotic declaration of love through the display of the American flag, which allowed home to be mobilized as a defence against terror (129). Yet, as Ahmed suggests, love demonstrated by such displays is predicated on "likeness" and "withness" whereby one is "with others" and "against other others" (130). Flags, Ahmed writes, are "sticky" signs; displayed outside the domestic home after 9/11, they gave the impression of coherence – of a nation literally "sticking together," aligning "like" subjects against "unlike" ones in order to legitimize the response to terror – in the protection of

loved others (those who are aligned with us and like us) at the expense of other others (129-30). Ahmed suggests that, when anxious responses to fear mobilize love that is based on likeness and withness – for example, when our dimensions of concern are gendered, racialized, or delineated by culture, politics, or ideology – we create borders between bodies.

The Watershed both illustrates and complicates Ahmed's model of the affective economy of fear. Viewed through the lens of Ahmed's theory, the play's primary fear "object" is climate change and its adverse effects upon the future lives of Annabel's young children. As a potential threat that has not yet come to full fruition in the spatial or temporal present (though signs of its approach are peppered throughout the play, mostly in the form of violent hurricanes), the Soutars' fear of climate change is linked to the possibility that it might "pass by" the parent generation, even as it threatens the children's generation. In spite of decades of research proving that climate change is approaching and in many ways already upon us, mainstream culture's denial of climate change science has created the conditions for the Soutars' fear; so, too, has the perceived slowness of climate change's effects, such as polar ice melt and global warming. Both climate change denial and this perceived slowness create an overall anticipatory feeling that climate change is "not yet." While denial has long served as a mode of coping with the threat of climate change, if we follow Ahmed's theory, the inherent "not yet" within denial's structure of feeling actually intensifies the fear of climate change. For the Soutars, this "not yet"– what Ahmed might call the "potentiality" of climate change to "pass by" – also creates an anxious approach toward climate change, and the issues ("objects") that come to be associated with it, so that fear and anxiety slide between one another throughout the text. As the following paragraphs explore, playwright/protagonist Annabel's fear of climate change brings about her anxious approach to it, expressed in the play through an obsession with finding out what really happened

at the ELA, which she shares with her kids in the hope that they will come to understand the urgency of environmental protection. Such fears, while understandable, motivate Annabel (the protagonist) to turn inward and align herself with certain bodies (and against other bodies) in a manner that relies on reproductive futurity.

Viewed through the lens of Ahmed's analysis, *The Watershed* approaches fear by creating a signifying chain in which objects, such as inclement weather and the forces of extractivism, come to stand in for climate change as entities to be feared. The Soutars' fear of climate change becomes circulated and distributed between signifiers, much in the same way fear objects became linked after 9/11. As the Soutars' fear slides across various objects and sticks to them temporarily, the emotion – already intensified because climate change has yet to "pass by" – becomes even more intensified. For example, right from the beginning of the play, Annabel's fear about climate change becomes linked with her fear of inclement weather; two impending hurricanes bookend the play's narrative, and throughout the play, warnings from weather presenter Janice Dean about potentially dangerous weather events interrupt family discussions about the future of water and other natural resources. These weather events – feared because of their potential to pass by – become associated with the climate crisis; Annabel's fear slides from one object (climate change) to temporarily stick to another (the hurricanes). Similarly, the fossil fuels companies that have largely contributed to the climate crisis come to stand in for climate change as objects to be feared; once Annabel learns from activist Diane Orihel that the privatization of the ELA may affect environmental monitoring in Fort McMurray, her fear of climate change becomes associated with a fear of the extractivist practices that contribute to it. As a result, she becomes determined to find out how the privatization is linked to the capitalistic, growth-without-limits agenda of fossil fuels companies, and the attempts of these companies to

lobby for decreased environmental regulation. But rather than following Diane, who like Thunberg uses fear and panic to try to incite radical change, Annabel's fear causes her to anxiously turn toward her own family and home. Her need to find answers to questions about the ELA's privatization overlaps with her anxiety about the future of her children, and she becomes increasingly concerned about educating her daughters about the crises of water and climate. In order to try to achieve both ends, she ironically turns toward the systems of capitalism and extractivism that undergird the very issues she is investigating. She requests funding from her theatre company's board of directors so that she can plan a family road trip to Fort McMurray in a gas-guzzling Winnebago; she turns to her conservative father to try and understand why Harper defunded the ELA.

As Annabel turns away from her fears by turning toward the normative systems that sustain her experience of the "good life," borders become erected between Annabel's family and the "others" that stand in for her fear. For example, after the Soutars' Montreal home is damaged by the hurricane that opens the play, their fear of climate change (and hurricanes) creates an anxious response; the family "turns away" from their fear of future inclement weather by replacing all their pipes. The new pipes become a way of keeping the fearful weather outside from getting into the safety of their house – a border that allows them to "turn away" and keep themselves separate from such weather (and the fear of climate change associated with it) by turning toward and fortifying their home. Both the slipperiness between objects of fear in *The Watershed* and the characters' anxious responses to this fear raise questions about climate change's potential to create borders between certain bodies and alliances between others, and about the capacity of climate fear to render us more insular and focused on propertarian kinship – guarding, investing in, and prioritizing those who are our "own." Such questions become

emphasized through Annabel's research process, which creates borders between her and important "others" whose worldviews would have been instrumental to her research and investigation. In her anxious determination to find answers about the privatization of the ELA and to educate and protect her family, her interviews become limited to a handful of individuals who work within institutions that sustain the extractivist systems that are the objects of her fear: senior civil servants; politicians (mostly from the federal Liberal and Conservative Parties); university professors; and her own father – a object of Annabel's love, whose conservatism also makes him an object of her fear. Even the activists who represent the supposed "opposing" side of these views, Maude Barlow (Chair of the Council for Canadians) and Diane Orihel (a PhD student), are enmeshed within systems of educational and white settler privilege. Thus, in her investigation of "both sides" of the issue ELA privatization, Annabel still "turns toward" those who work within the systems that she knows well. As a result, her research leaves out important viewpoints that would have shed light on the climate dilemma that is at the heart of the play.

This limitation becomes clear when Annabel's own children call her out for not including Indigenous viewpoints in her roster of interviews. Near the end of the play, while driving through Ontario in their rented Winnebago, Annabel's husband Alex uses the film *Tipping Point: The End of Oil* to teach their children about the importance of interviewing Indigenous people when doing research about human interaction with energy resources. Alex points out that *Tipping Point*'s interviews with First Nations people like Chief Allan Adam of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation are notable because Indigenous peoples "have an actual relationship to the land that is deeper than ours" (151). His disapproval of Annabel's failure to include interviews with Indigenous peoples as part of the family's own research process is clear from the caveat to his lecture: "[W]e, unfortunately, are not going to learn about [the views of Indigenous

peoples] on this trip," he says, "[b]ecause mummy says we don't have time" (151-152). Alex's lesson immediately spurs the kids to pressure their mother to stop the Winnebago so they can interview Indigenous people instead of watching a movie about them; when she responds that they should ask her board of directors why they don't have time to stop, one of her kids cheekily replies, "But you're the president of your board" (152). Still, Annabel refuses.

In pressing Annabel to listen to voices she excludes for the sake of "efficiency," the children attempt to disrupt their mother's linear progress model, further signalling their alternative temporality and emphasizing how capitalist time precludes encounters with truly radical alternatives to extractivism. Rather than finding a way to include Indigenous viewpoints in her research, Annabel turns away from such perspectives, choosing instead to turn toward capitalist productivity and time (which, ironically, align with the forces behind extractivism – objects of her fear). Thus, by clinging to the normativities of the "good life" she knows well, Annabel enacts a border between herself and the Indigenous people she might have interviewed, in order to maintain her "stuckness" to the figures of settler colonial authority.

However, even though the *character* Annabel has an anxious response to her fear of climate change, which causes her to turn toward capitalist time instead of toward Indigenous viewpoints, in the time between research and writing, there is evidence that the *playwright* Soutar has spent some time thinking about her children's response to her choices. Because writing verbatim theatre involves taking hours and hours of recorded dialogue, selecting certain portions, and recombining them to create a story, playwrights are able to juxtapose scenes that did not occur in the same order during the research process; this re-combination and re-contextualization allows them to emphasize particular scenes and draw attention to particular elements within them. I argue that Soutar stages the *Tipping Point* scene in a way that highlights

how, even though the children did not change her actions *during* the research journey, they reoriented her thinking about seeking alternative – and radical – viewpoints *after* the research journey was complete – that is, when she began writing about it. In the scene directly before *Tipping Point*, Annabel debates with activist Maude Barlow. She insists that Maude's contention that "we have got to stop *believing* in unlimited growth" is too "radical" and that "most Canadians support Harper's economic [interests]" (148, emphasis in original). Maude instantly shuts down these arguments, retorting:

> Most Canadians? Stephen Harper doesn't care about being prime minister for most of us – he wants to be prime minister of the 30 percent of people who would agree with the dismantling of protections for our fresh water. Right now most Canadians are struggling economically. (148)

She goes on to advise Annabel to "think about what [she's] doing" in engaging so many "hard core right-wing people" as part of her research: "[T]hey're ideologues, Annabel! People who strongly believe that what they're doing is the only way it should be done" (148-49). Annabel defends her strategy, insisting that "by that definition [Maude is] an ideologue too" (149). But Maude's arguments ultimately win out when her final words conclude the scene. Annabel contends that "the inevitable outcome of hard line ideology is violence. It's the end of dialogue. It's war"; Maude bluntly replies, "No, it's *revolution*" (149, emphasis in original). By staging the *Tipping Point* scene – in which Annabel's children make a case for attending to the truly radical viewpoints of Indigenous people – directly after this scene, in which so-called "radical" activist Maude Barlow has the last word, Soutar subtlely suggests that her writing journey has caused her to consider that which was left out of her research. The order of the scenes hints that perhaps the

Indigenous viewpoints that the children have set their sights on could be a starting point for the kind of revolution for which Maude advocates.

While Annabel's interview choices raise concerns about climate fear's creation of borders between the subject and the myriad objects that come to stand in for the original object of fear, the responses of her children complicate the economy of fear theorized by Ahmed. By demanding that their mother answer for her choice not to interview Indigenous people (even though she has the power and financial clout to do so), they put into practice Thunberg's refusal of cognitive dissonance, exposing and deconstructing how their family's class privilege intersects with their participation in the colonial attitudes and systems that marginalize Canada's Indigenous populations and exploit the land upon which they live. The children also disrupt Annabel's linear progress model and the fear economy when Hazel becomes sick. Hazel's illness leads Annabel to adopt an alternative relation of care that is not limited to one's biological children; it also allows her to explore how, rather than erecting borders between self and other and making us turn away in fear of that which we do not know, climate fear can actually turn us toward others and forge new connections across difference. For Hazel, the Soutars become a sort of substitute, surrogate family; at the same time, she becomes an integral part of the Soutar family unit, subverting Annabel's notions of propertarian, hereditary parentage in favour of non-genetic investments in the well-being of all children.

In *Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Futurity*, Sophie Lewis explores how alternative modes of parenting can resist reproductive futurity by counteracting the normativity of biological parenthood. She contrasts reproduction with parenting; whereas the former is focused on extending one's DNA into the future, the latter is about "caring for generations, one's own or not" (158). According to Lewis, "full surrogacy" (not to be confused with commercial

surrogacy, which she calls "Surrogacy™") is about taking collective responsibility for all children, rather than only caring for the ones with whom we share DNA (29); it is considering that every child belongs to everyone and no one and that "it is not nature but love […] that is the real source of stability to which all children have a right" (121). Harkening back to feminist theorist Donna Haraway's call to "make kin not babies" – to synthesize new solidarities rather than privileging biological reproduction in a world where resources are quickly becoming depleted (161) – Lewis's concept of full surrogacy is a useful tool in thinking both about how to agitate on behalf of the climate without relying on rhetoric that prioritizes "our" children.

The Soutars' practice of full surrogacy is illuminated in one of *The Watershed*'s final scenes, in which Alex, Annabel, Ella, Beatrice, and Hazel pile into a helicopter for an aerial tour of the Athabasca oilfield as part of their research into the effects of oil extraction on fresh water. Annabel wants the children to experience the sublime enormity of the oil sands; though the kids wonder why they can't just go in and "walk around," Annabel insists that the oil fields are "too big to see from the ground" (183). The tour is meant to be an important source of information for the play, as well as an educational opportunity for the entire family. Annabel makes sure Alex films the experience and throughout the tour encourages the kids to ask questions about the research they have been doing, telling them to "stay open" – to question their guide in an unbiased, journalistic way (188). When Hazel begins to exhibit signs of motion sickness during the kids' informal interview of the tour guide, Annabel instructs Ella not to worry; not wanting one kid's illness to ruin the educational opportunity for the others, she tells Ella three times to "keep going" with her questions (189-190). Soon, though, Hazel becomes increasingly ill; when she vomits a second time, Alex tells Annabel that they need to conclude the tour early. Still, Annabel is not convinced and continues to insist that they allow Ella to finish her line of

questioning. Alex is persistent, though, and asks the pilot to turn back because "one of [their] kids is very, very sick" (191). In spite of Annabel's reluctance, in the end they sacrifice an educational opportunity for their biological children in order to ensure the physical well-being of the non-biological child in their care. By prioritizing Hazel's health over Ella's interview they demonstrate the importance of showing care towards others even when doing so isn't to our immediate advantage or benefit – essentially, the opposite of the values perpetuated by the culture of extractivism that the family is critically investigating. The Soutars' enactment of a kind of parenthood that runs alternative to the genetic, nuclear family emphasizes collective responsibility for and equality of all children and, given their research subject, by extension suggests such responsibility towards all forms of life. Through the Soutars' care for Hazel, *The Watershed* suggests how formations of socially reproductive "kin" units in the present can serve as a kind of rehearsal for how we might transform the exploitative habits and practices of extractivism into more sustainable, life-giving, and renewable relations between humans and non-human others.

In *The Watershed*, love for children reorients the affective economy of fear about the future of these children and thus animates the utopian performativity of both children and the child figure. Rather than perpetuating the inequalities of the present through reproductive futurism and the fearful formation of borders between self and other in an era of climate fear, in *The Watershed* children open up possibilities for more loving and respectful relations between humans and the non-human world – relations that do not depend on the short-term benefit of some and the exploitation of others. *The Watershed* demonstrates that, as a signifier of anticipatory hope for the future – and as both figure and as living performer – children allow us to perceive and even make contact with an affective vision of how the world might be better, and

how we might transform extractive and exploitative habits into more renewable and loving relations. The potentialized, anticipatory feelings of fear, love, and hope brought forth by the child figure give a sense that what is not-yet-conscious is somehow knowable, which allows us to see beyond the present and imagine radical alternatives to it.

Children like Greta Thunberg and Ella, Beatrice, and Hazel of *The Watershed* represent various crosshatchings of class and ability; they navigate non-normative family structures and are agents of environmental change in the present. Their performance-based acts of climate justice provide glimpses of a non-extractive future that already exists, at least in part, in the present. At the same time, the children embody affective possibilities that gesture toward a post-extractivist future in which fear, hope, and love encourage responsibility and care for all others. They demonstrate that, rather than driving us apart and turning us inward, climate fear's stickiness and slipperiness can be harnessed to instead turn us outward, as part of publicly rehearsing and enacting the possibilities of a future beyond extractivism that starts right now.

CHAPTER THREE

Performing Renewable Relations: Idle No More and Make Muskrat Right

On September 28 and 29, 2018, I attended a public symposium about the Muskrat Falls Project, which has involved the construction of an 824-megawatt hydroelectric power-generating facility as part of an ongoing hydroelectric megaproject that aims to develop Labrador's Lower Churchill River. Held at Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, and organized by settler scholars, the symposium included about 20 speakers, some settler and some Indigenous, of which only a handful were academics; most were activists, writers, and artists. A major topic of discussion was the role of the media in shaping how citizens have responded to the issues surrounding Muskrat Falls. While the event celebrated the role of alternative, independent media, mainstream media was criticized, particularly for not covering the 2016 direct actions of the Labrador Land Protectors (as *The Independent*'s Justin Brake did) after the group broke the lock of the gate to the Muskrat Falls construction site in order to occupy it. One speaker, a settler scholar, implied that the mainstream media justified not covering the direct actions by using the journalistic premise that reporters must remain politically neutral, and that the laws of private property trump Indigenous ownership of the land of North America. To those members of the mainstream media who chose not to follow Brake and the Land Protectors past the work site's main gate, she emphatically proclaimed: "The failure to present dissenting perspectives does not constitute neutrality or objectivity" (Whitaker).

Perhaps unbeknownst to the panel, one such member of the mainstream media was in the fifth row of the lecture theatre. During the question-and-answer session at the end of the panel, with her voice breaking and speech pausing between sobs, the white settler reporter shared the story of her coverage of Muskrat Falls, which she claimed included harassment that left her so

afraid of public criticism that in the weeks prior to the symposium she chose to attend and report on the Muskrat Falls Inquiry rather than taking time off to spend with her dying grandmother. For three minutes, as she cried and attempted to justify her actions during the occupation of the Muskrat Falls worksite, the room was supercharged with anticipation. There was no longer noise from bodies changing positions in chairs, pens clicking, or papers rustling. The people in the first several rows all turned around in their seats; those near the back craned their necks so they could see where the reporter was sitting. I don't know if anyone exchanged nervous glances because I myself was too rapt to take note, though when I re-watched the live stream of the event, I saw that the camera – angled such that only the panel at the front of the room is visible – captured the speakers sitting stock still. When the reporter finished speaking and the intensity of the moment passed, I felt lightheaded and realized I must have been holding my breath. Since the panel had been the final one of the weekend, an organizer introduced Inuk activist Cole Kippenhuck of the Labrador Land Protectors to close the symposium by singing "The Water Song," a traditional song popular among Mi'kmaq youth that has become the anthem within the decade-long movement against the megaproject at Muskrat Falls.

Before Kippenhuck said a word, their demeanor and dress spoke to the ceremony they were about to lead. Carrying a drum and decked out in a traditional fringed vest, they stepped into the aisle from one of the front rows; but rather than singing "The Water Song" at the front of the room, they walked to the row where the reporter was still sitting and asked the audience to stand. Acknowledging the reporter by her first name, they began to speak: "Before I start," they said, "[this individual] has sat in sharing circles with myself and the Land Protectors […] All of us are on healing paths and [this individual] right now is at a very critical point in her healing path" (Muskrat Falls Symposium). As the audience watched, Kippenhuck ritualistically gifted

the reporter with a medicine bundle they had gathered from the land in Labrador. Afterward, they said: "I'd like us to take a moment to think on our own healing, 'cause we're all in this together, remember, today – humans. So we're going to hold a moment of silence for all those who are healing, all those who have been lost" (Muskrat Falls Symposium). Following that long and powerful moment, Kippenhuck began to sing "The Water Song." The other Indigenous members of the audience joined in, followed by those settlers who knew the song from previously having been part of the Labrador Land Protectors' movement. More and more voices tentatively joined in, and soon even members of the audience who had never heard the song before had mastered its simple but mighty melody. We sang over and over, repeating the same verses and choruses for what seemed like an eternity; each time the energy of song began to ebb, someone would keep singing and we would collectively begin anew, each time with greater force and intensity and volume. Soon the song became a loud and reverberating chant, an enactment of embodied solidarity for those joined in their opposition to the extractivist worldviews justifying the development of the Muskrat Falls megaproject. At the social that followed, I spoke with other members of the audience and ascertained that goosebumps had formed on the arms of Indigenous and settler participants alike as we honoured the water using the same song that has been sung by generations of the Mi'kmaq, who lived on our North Atlantic shores long before the land received the names we use today and long before white settlers came to make a life here.

Kippenhuck's ceremony moved me profoundly and I've spent a considerable amount of time trying to figure out why. Was it because I didn't expect Kippenhuck's loving and impromptu response to the reporter in light of the Labrador Land Protectors' anger, grief, and fear, with which I had become intimately aware through my support of their dissent against the megaproject? Or was it because I, along with the many of the other settler members of the

audience, identified with the reporter, whose tears mirrored our own shame and white fragility? I suspect that the reason the ceremony has implanted itself in my heart and mind is related to each of these questions. Most importantly, though, Kippenhuck's response to the white settler reporter's tears resonates because it is a perfect example of how Indigenous action generates its politics through *doing* (Simpson). What occurred during the symposium was the articulation of competing claims: activist demand for more and better coverage of Indigenous protest versus the white reporter's emotional grappling with the professional demands of her job. Kippenhuck's performance answered this conflict – not by trying to adjudicate between these demands, but by leading the group in a performance of collective, embodied affect that commemorates Indigenous knowledge and thus displaces settler forms of political debate.

After the symposium, which largely addressed itself to settler feelings, I compared my impressions of it to those of the other Muskrat Falls events I had been part of, which did not address themselves to settler feelings but rather to the Indigenous populations leading the movement. I began to ask new questions: How do the structures of feeling created by such events and performances contrast with those generated by the symposium, where directional address is often oriented toward institutions and the general public? What happens to structures of feeling when direct actions are self-addressed – when, as Dylan Robinson puts it, they are not addressed toward an institution or a public, but rather "back toward those who participated [in the direct action], through felt forms of accumulation" (224)? This chapter seeks to answer such questions by examining the direct actions around two contemporary Indigenous movements: Idle No More, a mass Indigenous uprising that began across Canada in 2012, and Make Muskrat Right, a movement that advocated for the rights and safe living conditions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous inhabitants around Muskrat Falls, which began in Labrador in 2011 and then gained

traction following the momentum of Idle No More.

In this chapter, I aim to take up Robinson's call for settlers to attune themselves to Indigenous forms of direct action. I consider how these actions maintain the singularity of Indigenous sovereignty "in ways that ask non-Indigenous audiences to consider the issues [Indigenous] bodies stand for, sing for, and dance for" (230). I argue that, through the structures and rhythms of their self-addressed performances, Indigenous sustainable energy initiatives and Indigenous paradigms about social action unsettle settler assumptions about how to express dissent, build community, and mobilize. I also aim to contribute to what settler Canadian performance theorist Heather Davis-Fisch "tentatively terms a settler methodology" by positing that a lack of settler attunement to Indigenous perspectives hinders the potential of critical frameworks about social movements from within studies of affect, communications, and performance (70). Exploring Indigenous perspectives alongside such frameworks inflects and gives potential to social movement theory and practice, particularly that which applies to mobilization against extractivism in favour of sustainable energy use.

In this final chapter, I continue to study objects as performances that generate affect in relation to climate change; however, the relation of these objects to Indigeneity shifts the grounds of their utopian performativity. In this chapter, I explore the idea of Indigeneity as it is defined by Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, who suggests that Indigeneity is the practice of activating land-based and ancestral knowledges through "[k]inetics, the act of doing" (*As We Have Always Done* 20). Lived and performed Indigenous knowledge creates change in the present and for the future:

> Indigenous intelligence systems set up, maintain, and regenerate the neuropathways for Indigenous living both inside our bodies and the web of connections that structure our

> nationhood outside our bodies. Engagement [with these systems] changes us because it constructs a different world within which we live […] If we want to create a different future, we need to live a different present, so that present can fully marinate, influence, and create different futurities. (Simpson, *As We Have Always Done* 19-20)

By activating Indigenous knowledges *in practice*, Simpson continually reasserts herself in relation to "the network of living relationships that give[s] [her] meaning" (182). This network includes her ancestors, the land, and generations to come; thus, it integrates past, present, and future. This chapter examines how such lived practices of Indigenous knowledge and epistemologies are transformative and, so, filled with utopic possibility.

In the preceding chapters of this dissertation, I have explored examples of what I call crude utopia by building on Dolan's ideas; I analyze objects that are evidently "theatrical" or "performative" in their forms and in their relation to culture industries – and which mostly address themselves to a public that is non-Indigenous – by conceiving of utopian performatives as affective experiences that create relations to a better time and place. When I have analyzed the temporality of these relations, it has mostly been in terms of present feelings that imagine and suggest a better future. However, in this final chapter, I examine how Indigenous activism changes previous frameworks of utopian performativity. For example, in contrast with the objects previously studied in this dissertation, Indigenous direct actions are often self-addressed rather than addressed to a general public. Furthermore, rather than following Enlightenment legacies that separate "aesthetic" activities from "political" ones, Indigenous practices such as singing and Round Dance are both aestheticized and constitutive political actions; their aesthetics can be studied as songs and dances, but they are also political events that have the power to enact claims to the land. Lastly, through their invocations of the past, Indigenous movements, events,

and practices suggest that memory and spirit are crucial for the transformations that activate present and future utopian realities.

In this chapter, I study events from Idle No More and Make Muskrat Right that invoke the past in order to create utopia in the present and imagine utopia in the future. I conceive of these events as performances because the Indigenous philosophies I draw upon – particularly those of Robinson and Simpson – assert that such actions call upon ancestral knowledge that lives in (and is activated by) the body. Moreover, they affirm that any Indigenous movements and events that take place on ancestral land enact, constitute, and realize actual politics. I am grateful for the work of Cree scholar Billy-Ray Belcourt, who highlights how the ways in which Indigenous peoples have triumphed over violent oppression foregrounds the "fact" of their utopian modes of being ("How Do You Write about Joy in a State of Emergency?") In *A History of My Brief Body*, Belcourt writes that he aims to "shore up [a] kind of emotional atmosphere, one in which the museum that governs NDN[1] life, that makes [Indigenous] bodies into vessels for a vengeful past and nothing else, is emptied of its political wrath" (8). He calls this emotional atmosphere joy. Joy, writes Belcourt, is a "durational performance of emotion, one that is caught up in an ancestral art of world-making in the most asphyxiating of conditions"; it is how "a people who have been subject to some of the country's most programmatic and legal forms of oppression continue to gather on the side of life" (8-9). Belcourt suggests that memory and ancestral knowledge are the material of joy, which "reschematizes time, space, and feeling" (161). Integrating the present and future with the past, joy propels Indigenous peoples "not in the

[1] Belcourt begins *NDN Coping Mechanisms* by defining NDN as "internet shorthand used by Indigenous peoples in North America to refer to ourselves. It is also sometimes an acronym meaning 'Not Dead Native'" (1).

direction of the dead future that state violence anticipates but instead toward a time and place gushing with all that this violence can't extinguish" (111). For Belcourt, joy creates the conditions of what he calls "red utopia" (10), in which the present and future become filled with possibilities for the relational and decolonized communities of care that Indigenous peoples have nurtured for centuries. These ideas are crucial to my conception of Idle No More and Make Muskrat Right as crudely utopic.

With this chapter, I aim to study how the concept of crude utopia is changed by Belcourt's vision of a "red utopia." While, previously, I've studied how feelings of utopia are catalyzed by and through performances that somehow help us envision a world that prioritizes the environment, in this chapter I aim to trace ways in which Indigenous resurgence (and the feelings it involves) *shares substance with* utopia. I demonstrate how, while the utopian performative is an act, red utopia is an "is." Belcourt writes that, as an "ancestral art of world-making" that seems "something of an impossible desire" in the present conditions of Indigenous life, "joy *is* art *is* an ethics of resistance" (*A History of My Brief Body* 8-9, emphasis mine). Similar to Simpson's contention that Indigenous radical resurgence is a form of resistance, Belcourt suggests that Indigenous joy shares a common essence with performativity, art, and direct action. Such joy ushers in a time and place beyond the violence of the settler state: "With hints of a world-to-come everywhere we are and have been, a red utopia is on the horizon!" (8-10). For the rest of this chapter, I analyze examples of joy alongside emotions like melancholia within acts of Indigenous resistance in order to show how, by actually instantiating utopia in the present, "red utopia" illuminates the concept of crude utopia in a way that the other examples studied within this dissertation do not.

Because all natural resource extraction in Canada takes place on traditional Indigenous territories, the nation's energy megaprojects are inextricable from legacies of empire and colonialism. In the land we now call Canada, the organization and management of wealth – most of which comes from natural resources – has largely been in the hands of settlers since the 1400s. Today, extracting the land's resources (mostly oil and hydropower) for modern energy involves a structure of power that is continuous with a colonial model of land ownership. The same northern boreal forests that were logged for centuries have now been industrially cleared to make way for the open-pit mining of heavy crude oil. The same rivers that were overtaken by early European settlers for fur trading are now being dammed to create new continental networks of electricity. Like colonialism, extractivism reduces complex ecosystems into a resource for capital accumulation.

In 2012, Idle No More became a convergence point for multiple issues that have existed in some form or another since the European settlement of the land we now call Canada. The movement grew out of a long history of Indigenous actions in response to treaty violations, racism, land theft, and acts of violence by the Canadian state and became the biggest and most sustained demonstration of Indigenous identity and cultural determination in Canadian history. The term "Idle No More" was coined by three Indigenous woman and one non-Indigenous woman – Sylvia McAdam, Jess Gordon, Nina Wilson, and Sheelah McLean – at a teach-in they organized in Saskatchewan in late November 2012 in the wake of a series of omnibus bills proposed by the government of then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper. The bills, drafted without consultation with Indigenous communities and which included changes to the Indian Act, the Fisheries Act, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, and the Navigable Water Act, would remove federal environmental protections and make it easier for the government to lease

Indigenous land. Idle No More was a direct response to the colonial and extractivist mindset signified by these proposed legislative changes, against which the organizers of the teach-in promised to be, as they put it on Twitter, "#IdleNoMore." On December 10, 2012, a National Day of Action was called for by Idle No More organizers, to which they received widespread international response. That day, thousands of Indigenous people and allies gathered across Canada and around the world to protest, fast, conduct teach-ins, block roads, and engage in Round Dance. Harper's Bill C-45, passed through Senate on December 14, 2012, galvanized even more support for Idle No More; since then, there have been thousands of events across Canada, North America, and the world, which continue to work to mitigate the extractive effects of these legislative "reforms."

In addition to its resistance to Harper's omnibus bills, Idle No More addressed a multitude of other issues that stem from colonialism, such as the ongoing epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women, the skyrocketing Indigenous youth suicide rate, and lack of basic resources such as drinking water in northern Aboriginal communities like Attawapiskat First Nation. From the perspective of the Kino-nda-niimi Collective, the group of Indigenous writers, artists, curators and allies behind *The Winter We Danced*, Idle No More converged around three main objectives, which include the needs for repealing sections of the Canadian federal government's omnibus legislation (Bills C-38 and C-45), particularly those parts relating to the exploitation of the environment, water, and First Nations territories; stabilizing and collaborative action in response to emergency situations in First Nations communities, such as the lack of clean running water in Attawapiskat; and committing to a mutually beneficial nation-to-nation relationship among Canada, First Nations (status and non-status), Inuit, and Métis

communities that includes an end to the unilateral legislative and policy process Canadian governments have pursued as they amended the Indian Act (22).

Idle No More's organizers have promoted decentralized leadership in which no individual takes on the role of spokesperson of the movement; this collective approach has allowed it to encompass a multitude of issues and perspectives and lead to broader social and cultural mobilization among Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. In *The Winter We Danced*, descriptions of Idle No More's consensual and volitional pooling of Indigenous energy and resources underlines how the movement's collectively-agreed-upon use of human energy contrasts with extractivism, through which destructive methods of extracting non-human resources are imposed upon the land and capitalist methods of "consultation" are imposed upon the Indigenous peoples who have developed intimate relationships with that land. One member of the collective, Siku Allooloo, describes Idle As More as a time to "breath[e] life into [Indigenous peoples'] collective sense of being" and for "pooling [Indigenous] energy and resources" in order to assert "vitality as Indigenous peoples" (195). As Allooloo's words emphasize, Idle No More has ultimately been about publicly reviving and asserting Indigeneity, as well as affirming the potential for a better life for Indigenous peoples in the future, on Indigenous terms. Although settlers were invited to participate, the movement was directed not at them, but rather back toward the Indigenous people at the heart of it. It has used grassroots mobilizing that has not required elaborate infrastructure or extensive amounts of capital investment. Ceremonies have been about giving thanks to the land, rather than taking from it. Warren Cariou calls this approach "energy intimacy," in which every community member develops direct and personal relationships with the non-human resources that sustain them, prioritizing kinship, respect, and responsibility rather than mastery or objectification (18). Within

energy intimacy, humans use only the resources that are necessary for survival, allowing the land to renew itself through the Nishnaabeg concept of mino bimaadiziwinn, translated by Anishinaabekwe activist and author Winona LaDuke as "continuous rebirth" (132). Such protection of the land not only allows its resources to sustain and renew themselves; it creates the conditions whereby the relations between humans and non-humans are constantly reborn and renewed.

The revival of Indigenous ways of being through the renewable relations of Indigenous resistance is part of what Simpson calls "radical resurgence," a project through which the revival of Indigenous land-based culture and knowledge, such as that which occurred during Idle No More and Make Muskrat Right, creates alternatives to the logic of the settler-colonial state. As a performance of Indigeneity, radical resurgence likewise addresses itself back toward the Indigenous performer(s). Radical resurgence suggests that embodying Indigeneity by actively "resurg[ing]" Indigenous ceremony, stories, language, legal and political systems, foodways, and ritual – all of which are intimately tied to the cycles of nature and its resources – counters the efforts of the state and corporations to harvest the land, and in turn to mine Indigenous peoples, cultures, and knowledge (Simpson, *As We Have Always Done* 19). In contrast with extractivist refinement, extraction, and exploitation, where the future is sacrificed for the present and the well-being of the many is given less priority than the profit of a few, radical resurgence has a renewable, sustainable relation to futurity. This utopic potential of Indigenous land-based relations is the through line of this chapter, which explores the conceptual, methodological, and affective potential of Indigenous resistance as they are incarnated through performances of radical resurgence.

Although it sometimes seeks certain reformist ends, Indigenous radical resurgence does not *reform* relations to extractivism; rather, it *replaces* them with renewable relations toward both humans and non-humans (Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*). This renewable mode of being and relating is fundamentally different from the extractivist status quo. Indigenous resistance positions itself not primarily toward reformist amelioration of the system as it is currently constituted, but rather toward alternative modes of being that disrupt business-as-usual without sketching a clearly defined alternative social order that would replace the current one. Such performances of Indigeneity within Indigenous resistance instantiate this refusal to conform to the terms of extractivism; at the same time, they enact alternatives to these terms (Robinson, "Enchantment's Irreconcilable Connection"). For the rest of this chapter, I examine the resurgent actions that constituted Idle No More and Make Muskrat Right, such as Round Dances, social media posts, a land occupation, and direct action that took the form of a memorial service. While both movements were directed at least in part toward reformist ends, I contend that through their self-addressed performances of Indigeneity, horizontal leadership, and the ways in which they collapse temporality, they establish themselves as efficacious structures of utopian possibility that reimagine and enact sustainable energy futures by incarnating relations to environmental "resources" that are fundamentally incommensurate with those of extractivism-as-usual.

Idle No More: Maple-Sugaring and Round Dance

Anishinaabe performance theorist Jill Carter claims that, because of extractivism, there is an "ever-intensifying" alarm ringing for Indigenous peoples, urging them to take action "before the final harvest – before all lands; water; resources; Indigenous knowledge, bodies, stories, and even Indigenous pain have been utterly consumed" ("Indigenous Rage Incarnate"). The alarm is,

of course, rushing at Indigenous peoples and settlers alike; the cruel optimism of remaining attached to unsustainable forms of energy, which will ultimately prevent humankind from flourishing, cuts across nation and race. But whereas in settler society, the desperation of this alarm often leads to the affective work of enduring in ways that erode the very resources that enable us to do so, thinkers like Simpson and Cariou spy transformative potential within embodied Indigenous land-based knowledge and practice; the future becomes livable through the radical resurgence of energy intimacy.

For Simpson, Indigenous relations with the land involve performance-based, embodied processes of active doing, which allow for the continual renewal and regeneration of Indigenous ways of seeing and understanding the world. Within Nishnaabeg culture, where intelligence is about "the commingling of emotional and intellectual knowledge combined in motion or movement" (*As We Have Always Done* 21), living Indigenous knowledge and teachings in order to understand them is "the crucial intellectual mode for generating knowledge" (20):

> […] *how* we live, *how* we organize, *how* we engage in the world – the process – not only frames the outcome, it is the transformation […] The *how* changes us. *How* is the theoretical intervention. (19; emphasis in original)

Here, Simpson's attention to the *how* of Indigeneity as transformative recalls LaDuke's translation of mino bimaadiziwinn, "continuous rebirth," the crux of Nishnaabeg thought and action. Both Simpson's *how* and LaDuke's mino bimaadiziwinn are process-oriented and name generative activity.

The perpetual rearticulation of mino bimaadiziwin's commencement is part of its generative and emergent potential. An effective framework for understanding mino

bimaadiziwinn's continual rearticulation is Simpson's explanation of how Indigenous knowledge and practice transcend settler ideas about temporality. In Nishnaabeg thought "there is an organization of time and space that's different from the colonial world's"; Nishnaabeg "stories have always talked about the future and the past at the same time (*As We Have Always Done* 201). Using the concept of biidaabin, commonly translated as "dawn," Simpson describes how within Nishnaabeg thought, temporalities collide:

> The prefix *bii* means the future is coming at you; it also means the full anticipation of the future, that you can see the whole picture. *Daa* is the verb for living in a certain place or the present. *Ban* or *ba* is a verb used for when something doesn't exist anymore or someone who has passed on. Biidaabin, then, is the verb for when day breaks, the actual moment daylight appears at dawn, not as a prolonged event but the very moment. (*As We Have Always Done* 193)

Biidaabin's simultaneous containment of past, present, and future sheds light on how, in Nishnaabeg thought, past and present and future exist at the same time, constantly shifting and passing back and forth into one another. This collapsing of temporality suggests that present actions contain all the wisdom of past actions. At the same time, present actions become an embodied script that is constantly being renewed and rewritten in its performance, upon which future actions will draw. Embodied Indigenous knowledge exists in *doing*.

For Simpson, the present not only contains the past and the future; it also contains all her past and future relations' ways of seeing and knowing. Her retelling of the Nishnaabeg Seven Fires creation story, in which the Creator/Great Spirit Gzhwe Mnidoo makes the world and instills all knowledge within Original Man, effectively illustrates how she understands her own embodiment of the knowledge of her ancestors. Her narrative choice to embed herself within her

telling of the story, as if it directly happened to her, rather than to her ancestor, Original Man, posits that she and Original Man are one and the same; they embody one another. She writes that during the Seventh Fire of creation, Gzhwe Mnidoo created Original Man by "putt[ing] her/his right hand to [Simpson's] forehead" and "transferr[ing] all of Gzhwe Mnidoo's thoughts into [Simpson]":

> There were so many, that the thoughts couldn't just stay in my head; they spilled into every part of my being and filled up my whole body. Gzhwe Mnidoo's knowledge was so immense from creating the world that it took all of my being to embody it. (*Dancing On Our Turtle's Back* 42)

Simpson's story, which suggests that she physically embodies the same knowledge with which her ancestors would have been imbued during the Seventh Fire of creation, echoes Kuna and Rappahannock Nations performance theorist Monique Mojica's idea of "blood memory." Mojica describes blood memory as a relational process through which the knowledge and experiences of her Indigenous ancestors have been passed on and encoded within her DNA; although she may not have not have personally endured the events her ancestors did, she is able to feel, embody, and act on them because they are a part of her ("Stories from the Body"). Simpson's descriptions of the way Gzhwe Mnidoo created her/Original Man corroborate this worldview, and suggest that the embodiment of her ancestors is an important part of reclaiming Indigenous ways of being and knowing – of asserting that Indigenous "reality is inclusive of worlds that are both seen and unseen" (Mojica, "Stories from the Body"). Simpson's words also suggest that the knowledge and experiences of her ancestors are so vast they create in her body an ever-intensifying excess that "spill[s]" over "into every part of [her] being" (*Dancing On Our Turtle's*

Back 42). As she and her past and future relations continually build on this knowledge and experience, it is transferred across temporalities, renewed and replenished and intensified.

Simpson embodies the knowledge contained within the land in much the same way as she embodies the knowledge of her ancestors. In *The Embodied Politics of Relational Indigenous Dramaturgies*, Algonquin Anishinaabe performance theorist Lindsay Lachance explains that Indigenous embodiment participates in "all my relations" philosophies, which emphasize "the relationships that Indigenous peoples have with all living entities: other humans, land, water, spiritual beings, and cultural figures" (72). For Simpson and Lachance, non-humans are thus storied and potentialized in the same way as ancestors are; land and water contain the sacred beliefs, teachings, and knowledge of past and present. Interactions with the land and water allow for the enactment of such ancestral and land-based knowledge. In "Tiny Sparks Everywhere: Birchbark-Biting as Land-Based Dramaturgies," Lachance refers to such enactment as "presencing," or "a practice of activation" that allows her dramaturgies to maintain relationality and stay "inclusive of the people, places, ancestors, and other beings involved in the work" (56). Activated by the body in relation to the land, presencing regenerates ancestral and land-based knowledge in order to create new modes of being in the present.

The kinetics and movement required for human-land relations is part of renewing and replenishing this knowledge through mino bimaadiziwinn. Because Indigenous land-based knowledge is embodied, when the resources of the land are mined and harvested through extractivism, so too are the physical bodies and cultural practices of the Indigenous people who live and work on the land. For Simpson, extractivism isn't only about mining, drilling, and exploiting the resources of the land; "it's a mindset – it's an approach to nature, to ideas, to people":

> Extraction and assimilation go together. Colonialism and capitalism are based on extracting and assimilating. My land is seen as a resource. My relatives in the plant and animal worlds are seen as resources. My culture and knowledge is a resource. My body is a resource […]" (qtd. in Klein, "Dancing the World Into Being")

Embodied enactments of Indigenous land-based knowledge are alternative to extractivism and, for Simpson, they are modes of resisting it.

During the initial years of Idle No More, Simpson resisted extractivism by maple-sugaring with her children. For Simpson, maple-sugaring is ceremonial and a mode of self-address; the act is performed for herself, her ancestors, and her children, who have learned from watching her what it means to have intimate relations with the land. Maple-sugaring involves energy intimacy; the harvester develops a direct and personal relationship with the tree and only takes what is needed, invoking the continuous rebirth of mino bimaadiziwinn. Maple-sugaring also allows Simpson to practice and replenish land-based knowledge, which is continuously recycled and renewed as it is performed for her children. In *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back*, Simpson tells a story about Elder Brother, who teaches Gdigaa bzhiwag (translated as "bobcats") how to make ziiwaagmide (translated as "maple syrup"); Elder Brother brings Gdigaa bzhiwag to the south side of a maple tree, puts tobacco down to thank the tree, and shows them how to tap it to collect its ziisbaakdwaboo (translated as "sap") (80-83). Simpson's retelling of the story, which she recounts to her children every spring when they go to the "sugar bush" to help their friends make maple syrup, describes Elder Brother's teaching as a gift:

> […] every year, no matter how hard it is, [Gdigaa bzhiwag] make sure their lips taste the sweetness of ziisbaakdwaboo, even if it is just once. Even if it is not enough to make ziiwaagmide. They take their kids. They tell the story of Elder Brother […] They cherish

> the gift given to their Ancestors long ago; and in their heart knowledge, hidden away in the most precious parts of their beings, they know that ziiwaagmide wasn't the real gift. They know that the real gift was in the making […] (82)

Through her storytelling Simpson hints that, at the same time that it allows mino bimidiziwinn for the land, maple-sugaring continuously transforms embodied land-based knowledge itself into a renewable, sustainable resource; when she is maple-sugaring with her children upon the land of her ancestors, building fires and tapping trees with the children who will carry the knowledge of the Seventh Fire into the future, she invokes biidaaban, creating a living history fed by generations of tradition that lay groundwork for what is to come. These deep and stretched-out temporalities are an alternative to the shallow and immediate ones imagined by extraction culture, which focuses only on the present.

As enactments of radical resurgence, performances of energy intimacy like maple-sugaring have the potential to create flight paths out of extractivism. Maple-sugaring is time-consuming, physically-demanding work that involves direct, tactile relations between humans and trees that contrasts starkly with other modes of extracting energy. The sugaring process described by Simpson involves not only tapping dozens of trees but also collecting dead wood, chopping it into firewood, making a fire, and concentrating the sap over the fire; by the end, all the buckets of sap become concentrated down to only one bucket of maple sugar (*Dancing On Our Turtle's Back* 78; *This Accident of Being Lost* 5). Compared to more extractivist practices of harvesting, which use industrial equipment, traditional Nishnaabeg maple-sugaring yields such a small volume that it cannot be monetized in a large-scale way. Furthermore, the labour-intensiveness of Nishnaabeg maple-sugaring does not destroy the land. A group of Indigenous tree-tappers can only cover a limited amount of terrain and harvest from a limited number of

trees; if they are careful, the tree will continue to produce sap again the following year. Dolan writes that "[t]he affective and ideological 'doings' we see and feel demonstrated in utopian performatives [...] critically rehearse *civic* engagement that could be effective in the wider public and political realm" (7, emphasis mine). I argue that acts of energy intimacy like maple-sugaring also rehearse *resource* engagement that can help create more sustainable relations between humans and the land. Through the labour-intensive activity required for only a small yield, we learn to appreciate the energy that must be expended in order to harvest the resources that sustain us.

Although different from Simpson's quiet acts of radical resurgence in the sugar bush, flash-mob Round Dances held in shopping malls also became an important mode of resisting extractivism through Indigenous radical resurgence during the early years of Idle No More. According to the Kino-nda-niimi Collective, Round Dance is believed to have originated in Cree First Nations on the Western Plains before it spread to other Indigenous peoples. Its healing potential has been celebrated by multiple North American Indigenous groups, and it is often performed ceremonially in the winter months to honour accomplishments, birthdays, and anniversaries. While the form of Round Dance varies from community to community, typically dancers join hands to form a circle, usually with the palm of the left hand facing up and the palm of the right hand facing down; dancers usually move in a clockwise direction by stepping the left foot to the left, with the right foot then sliding over to meet it. During Idle No More, gathering together in public places and performing Round Dance became a way of invoking Indigenous protocol in important spaces of settler capitalist exchange built on Indigenous land in order to, as Dene theorist Glen Coulthard writes, "physically say 'no'" to extractivist degradation of communities and exploitation of the land (169). According to Rebecca Walker, the political

resistance of flash-mobs lies in their exposure of the "rules that govern our daily behavior—rules that we rarely acknowledge, let alone question" (319). Indigenous performances of flash-mob Round Dances in shopping malls and other public spaces expose the colonialism inherent in settler "rules" of private property and resist the capitalist extraction of Indigenous land and waterways. They demonstrate that the land is, and always has been, Indigenous.

Dancer and theorist Mique'l Dangeli of Tsimshian Nation, Alaska, describes the Round Dance as an act of "dancing sovereignty"; its performance affirms hereditary privileges, including the ancestral histories and associated ownership of the Round Dance itself as well as the territorial rights to the lands and waterways where the Round Dance is performed (75-76). Robinson explains that by using protocol foundational to Indigenous nationhood and governance, performances of dancing sovereignty are Indigenous equivalents to settler definitions of legality, which also resist the colonialism and extractivism within those definitions. For Robinson, the flash-mob Round Dances of Idle No More are an affirmation of sovereignty that assert title to the land on which it was performed. Robinson further argues that the presence of dancers and drummers engaging in urban Round Dance "challenge[s] the felt fact that underpins settlers' civic entitlement: that the land upon which the city stands has no memory" (228). Like maple-sugaring, Round Dance becomes a conduit for the land's embodied memory of Indigenous protection – a sort of mnemonic device that enacts an intimate relationality between humans and the land.

During Idle No More, flash-mob Round Dance affirmed Indigeneity by addressing itself back toward the Indigenous performers of the Dance, rather than to the settlers who participated. Although any ally has been permitted to join in, the events have tended to have an internal, unspoken organization that situates settler participants and observers as welcome guests on

unceded territory. Settler Canadian performance scholar Stefanie Miller writes that, during her own participation at an Eaton Centre flash-mob Round Dance in Toronto in December 2017, even the initial march down Yonge Street to Dundas Square contained an unspoken protocol wherein Indigenous youth led the way and non-Indigenous supporters brought up the rear (115). Once inside the Eaton Centre, as the Round Dance got underway, she drew upon her past experience as a participant in Montreal's Maple Spring and Black Lives Matter, instinctively moving to the periphery of the crowd (115). The unconscious situation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous bodies in Round Dance enacts an alternative way of being in the world; it is one way in which Idle No More has danced new "world[s] into being" (Klein, "Dancing the World Into Being"). First, it creates ideal conditions for the feelings of joy and love that come from self-address. As part of the inner circle in Round Dance, Indigenous participants have the best view of the other Indigenous participants making up the inner circle; at all times, they simultaneously perform and watch others perform, so that during the Dance, Indigeneity is continuously asserted and in turn reflected back towards them. The feelings of joy and love that come from such self-address have been recounted by Round Dancers from the Kino-Nda-Nimi Collective, as well as Simpson, who claims that the transformative potential of Round Dance instilled in her the kind of "grounded love" she feels for the land and her children (Klein, "Dancing the World Into Being"). Additionally, by literally centering Indigenous bodies while settler allies mobilize on the periphery of the circle, ready and willing to join the movement when we are wanted or needed, Round Dance also centers Indigenous values, such as energy intimacy and mino bimaadiziwinn, which are crucial to a sustainable future.

The circular shape and movement of Round Dance itself enacts mino bimaadiziwinn. As the Dance continues round and round, mimicking the regenerative and renewing cycles of nature,

its perpetual rearticulation through time becomes a living performance of "continuous rebirth," repeatedly reaffirming the Indigenous practices and embodied knowledge that the Dance represents, and in turn the joy and love that the Dance instils within participants. For political philosopher Hannah Arendt, the repetition of group political activity over time contributes to its intensity, particularly when the acts are performed collectively (*The Human Condition* 223). This idea is also gestured toward in Robinson's descriptions of his own participation in the flash-mob Round Dances of Idle No More; he writes of the Dance's "affirmative politics through self-address, back towards those who participated, through felt forms of accumulation" (223). Reading Arendt in tandem with Robinson, Round Dance can be interpreted as a political event that continually builds on and replenishes itself, creating an "atmosphere of accumulative fullness" that underlines its potentiality (Robinson 223-24). This potentiality is physically enacted as more and more participants join the circle, which Robinson describes as "ever-expanding," so that the sense of possibility is continuously intensified (Robinson 223). Round Dance's continuously intensifying possibility is redoubled by its repetition over and over throughout the course of its performance. The act of moving around and around the circle builds upon and continuously rebirths its affirmative politics, demonstrating the accumulative potential of self-addressed Indigeneity.

In much the same way as Simpson's acts of maple-sugaring, the flash-mob Round Dances of Idle No More radically resurged embodied Indigenous land-based knowledge. Furthermore, both maple-sugaring and Round Dance show how "self-oriented" performances are essential to Indigenous approaches to land and community. In contrast with the instrumentalized actions of extractivism (where what is important is the *end* of that action), the self-addressed actions of Idle No More were about the *means* – the "how," in Simpson's terms. Thus, the

political performances of Indigenous direct action cannot be understood as traditional "protests" (although they often function that way, too – as actions which have an intended policy goal). Rather, they are ends-in-themselves, and as such, they offer different modes of being. In addition to saying "no," writes Coulthard, Round Dances "have ingrained within them a resounding 'yes': they are the affirmative enactment of […] a different way of relating to and with the world" (169). Mino bimaadiziwinn, as enacted both through maple-sugaring and through the "song acts" and "dance acts" of the flash-mob Round Dance, is in every way extractivism's opposite: where extractivism destroys life, mino bimaadiziwinn promotes and replenishes it; where extractivism occurs on a global scale and takes from the earth without rebuilding it, mino bimaadiziwinn can only exist on a local level, where relations with the land are reciprocal. By invoking mino bimaadiziwinn and thus continuously rearticulating Indigenous embodied land-based knowledge and affirmative politics, the radical resurgence of Indigenous actions enact and renew the collectivity and joy that results from self-address. They also model practices of relationality between humans and the land (and other human-nonhuman relations) that will fuel Idle No More's resistance into the future.

Horizontal Networks in Make Muskrat Right

Like other contemporary social movements, Idle No More has gained much of its momentum through online networks like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. As means of facilitating interpersonal relations across distance, these forms of social media allowed events like flash-mob Round Dances to be mobilized with tweets and demonstrations to be fully organized via Facebook; they also connected various groups and individuals from Vancouver to Nunavut to Happy Valley-Goose Bay to St. John's and all over the world, linking remote and

rural settlements to dense, urban cities. The reach, speed, and mobilizing power of the #IdleNoMore hashtag was evident from its inception, when co-founder Jessica Gordon first tweeted with it on November 4, 2012; by December of that year it was being used in over 20,000 tweets per day (Kino-Nda-Niimi Collective 295). Simpson writes that social media allowed organizers of Idle No More to self-represent their interests to the Canadian public rather than to the government, while also facilitating instant contact with fellow supporters, which meant they didn't have to rely solely on mainstream media to build the movement (*As We Have Always Done* 220). In this section, I argue that Idle No More's refusal of hierarchical leadership, as demonstrated by the movement's proliferation on social media, has permitted its growth around the world and sustained its impact into the present, through similar movements such as Make Muskrat Right. Of course, social media engagement differs greatly from the local and embodied forms of political engagement discussed earlier; furthermore, the intensive use of water to cool the servers needed to power social media is in conflict with land and water protection environmentalism. Still, during these movements social media engagement rehearsed sustainable relations between humans and the land by enacting a form of horizontal organization and leadership that is incommensurate with the hierarchical structures of power behind extractivism.

At the same time that Idle No More has resisted state and capitalist extractivism with its message, it has also done so through the technology used to disseminate it. As a movement, it has adopted an organizational structure in which no individual takes on the role of spokesperson; those who "founded" the movement and who have become key organizers within it in have been explicit about not wanting to be seen as leaders, but rather as part of a larger collective that aims to mobilize change. Such decentralized leadership became a driving force for the movement's growth, because it allowed members of rural Indigenous communities far away from Idle No

More's "founders" to organize and rally for change. As organizers across the country and even around the world began to lead protest events under the #IdleNoMore banner, they were able to amplify and remain connected to the greater movement while also galvanizing support for other, more localized Indigenous issues. Such practices of decentralized leadership bring to mind the Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's exploration of the swarming multitude, where patterns emerge not from a position of central control, but rather from assemblages of localized interactions and decisions. Amorphous and constantly in flux, like mino bimaadiziwinn the multitude is continuously renewed, "its external boundaries […] open[ed] such that new nodes and relationships can be added" (vx). In contrast with the mainstream media's coverage of social movements, which tends to focus on symbolic figureheads and place undue emphasis on vertical channels of power, Idle No More's proliferation through the interactive and participatory character of Twitter and Facebook gave rise to complex and "liquid" (Bauman, Zygmunt) forms of leadership that used "transversal," horizontal strategies "aimed at penetrating society from side to side" (Pousadela 695). As a result of this open, collective approach, Idle No More has encompassed a multitude of issues and perspectives and led to broader social and cultural mobilization among Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. In its wake, numerous events have sprung up as offshoots of the movement; loosely tied to the broader agenda of Idle No More, many such movements affirm Indigenous rights as they advocate for environmental protections that are more local in scope.

One of these offshoot movements began in Labrador on December 10, 2012, when Riverkeepers and Indigenous groups banded together as the Labrador Land Protectors to use the steam from Idle to More's National Day of Action to fuel awareness of their own urgent regional environmental concern – namely, the government of Newfoundland and Labrador's development

of a massive hydroelectric dam at Muskrat Falls. Part of the Churchill River, which bisects Labrador from the west and runs south for 800 kilometres before it empties into the 3000-square-kilometre saltwater estuary of Lake Melville, Muskrat Falls is a naturally-occurring waterfall situated on the river's southern portion, also known as the Lower Churchill, near where the river empties into Lake Melville. Located about twenty-five kilometres west of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, the Muskrat Falls hydroelectric generating station was proposed as part of an ambitious project to revitalize Newfoundland and Labrador's boom-and-bust economy. In 2012, the megadam had just been sanctioned by the province and its chief Crown corporation, Nalcor, but citizens were already concerned about its environmental and cultural implications. In particular, Indigenous groups around Lake Melville demanded answers about how the dam would affect the movement and wildlife of the Churchill River, known to Inuit and settler Labradorians as the Grand River and to the Labrador Innu as Mistashipu, as well as the ancestral fishing grounds of Lake Melville, which have been a central source of food and spiritual well-being for the area's Indigenous populations for hundreds of years (Kippenhuck 2019). When, during the early days of Idle No More, thousands of people across Canada gathered in their own communities to support the movement's National Day of Action, Labradorians used the hype and the hashtag #IdleNoMore to gain support for their own decolonial and anti-extractivist agenda. Their event, which eventually became part of a larger movement called Make Muskrat Right, highlights how the decentralized model of Idle No More has allowed the movement to support multiple Indigenous voices and concerns, which continue to resonate today. In the spirit of Simpson's radical resurgence, events like Make Muskrat Right continue to renew, build upon, and sustain the values of Idle No More.

Make Muskrat Right's direct actions, which included highway and transmission camp blockades, work site occupations, and other forms of protest, continued from 2012 to 2018, at which point the movement changed tacks; convinced that nothing would be done to "make Muskrat right," the Land Protectors began to use the hashtag #ShutMuskratDown rather than #MakeMuskratRight. In November 2015, the movement became an international flashpoint for Indigenous rights following the release of a Harvard study on methylmercury contamination in Lake Melville. To create a reservoir for the dam, forty-one square kilometres of land were flooded, which exposed mercury-containing topsoil to decomposing organic materials such as trees and leaf litter; under such conditions, microbes convert mercury into methylmercury, a powerful neurotoxin that bioaccumulates as it makes its way up the food chain. As the contaminated water is released into the falls and river from the reservoir, it travels downstream and threatens flora and fauna, as well as the health and safety of local residents; the effects of methylmercury in humans include developmental delays, lower IQs, language acquisition issues in children, and dexterity issues and cardiovascular damage in adults (Callanan). In response to the study's findings, the provincial government's mitigation plan focused on monitoring the toxicity levels in Lake Melville and finding ways to compensate local populations, rather than clearing the soil as the study recommended. As a result, Make Muskrat Right insisted on full reservoir clearing to mitigate contamination at the flooding stage. Action reached a boiling point in October 2016, when Inuk sculptor Billy Gauthier took a video of himself eating salmon caught in Lake Melville; posting the video to social media, he stated that it would be his last meal until Nalcor fully committed to clearing the Muskrat Falls reservoir. At the same time, a group of about sixty self-identified Labrador Land Protectors, both settler and Indigenous, broke through the security gates of the Muskrat Falls work camp and began a peaceful four-day occupation, in

spite of a court injunction established by Nalcor that prohibited them from being on the property. During the occupation, the Land Protectors' activities included singing songs, doing ceremony, and sharing food with workers on-site. The group included children, Elders, and Justin Brake, a journalist who identifies as a settler with Mi'kmaw ancestry, as part of his reportage for the non-profit media corporation *The Independent,* live-streamed video of the event to the corporation's website and posted updates to his social media accounts.

The occupation of the Muskrat Falls work site, which constituted a breach of the injunction, resulted in the arrests of nine Land Protectors as well as Brake, who became the first Canadian journalist to face both criminal and civil charges for reporting on a public interest issue (Meyer). But while the charges against Brake were eventually dropped, establishing a legal precedent across Canada that permitted additional legal protections for the journalists who covered recent Indigenous-led, anti-extractivist actions (such as those that occurred on Wet'suwet'en territory in 2020 and at the Fairy Creek Watershed in 2021), no similar legal protections have been afforded to Indigenous peoples during such occupations. Frameworks of Canadian courts uphold settler rules of law that do not make adequate allowance for Indigenous worldviews. In fact, Indigenous-led direct actions pertaining to land issues are commonly disrupted by court injunctions like Nalcor's, which are upheld by colonial laws of private property. In her paper "Journalism, Democracy, and Access to Information" at the 2018 Muskrat Falls Symposium, settler anthropologist Robin Whitaker suggested that the criminalization of Brake's journalism indicated how profoundly the Labrador Land Protectors' struggle challenged settler laws of private property. Indeed, many of Make Muskrat Right's Land Protectors contend that cutting the lock of Nalcor's security gate was not an "unlawful" act; the laws of private property that deem it so are byproducts of ongoing colonialism and extractivism that deny

Indigenous territorial rights. When Inuk Land Protector Beatrice Hunter was arrested for refusing to obey Nalcor's injunction, she responded: "[This is] my way of defying laws that my ancestors had no part in writing" (Breen). At a talk I attended during the summer of 2017, Hunter similarly denounced Nalcor's assertion that it is in the public interest to consider its claims to private property as sacrosanct; in response to a question about whether she would continue to block access to the Muskrat Falls work site, she proclaimed: "The judge says I have to follow the law, but I say that's a fucked-up law" (Femfest 2.0). Hunter's words speak to the way Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous-led anti-extractivist actions redefine the legal and philosophical frameworks that continue to colonize Indigenous peoples by *doing*. By defying the laws of private property and physically demonstrating Indigenous protection of the land around Muskrat Falls, the Labrador Land Protectors enacted the changes demanded by their activism.

The Labrador Land Protectors' acts of civil disobedience in October 2016 challenged the Global North's definitions of legality and democracy. In his book *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil,* settler political theorist Timothy Mitchell suggests two different meanings for the word "democracy": on the one hand, it refers to ways of "making effective claims for a more just and egalitarian world"; on the other hand, it refers to modes of governance such as those used in the Global North, which employ "popular consent as a means of limiting claims for greater equality and justice by dividing up the common world" into, for example, a private sphere that is governed by the rules of property, a natural world that is governed by the laws of nature, and a free market that is governed by the rules of economics (9). Such divisions, says Mitchell, cause democratic struggles to become centered upon the boundaries between the dividing spheres (9). For example, when the Labrador Land Protectors ignored Nalcor's injunction by occupying the company's work site, their actions moved into public contestation

that which has been designated "legal" and "private" and therefore nonpolitical – namely, the ownership of the Muskrat Falls work site (Whitaker). I argue, however, that the Land Protectors' occupation was more than a struggle to keep the issue of Nalcor's ownership of Muskrat Falls up for public debate; rather, it was an act of civil disobedience against the very modes of governance and law that adhere to the second meaning of the word "democracy," as outlined by Mitchell. In her 1970 article "Reflections: Civil Disobedience," Hannah Arendt writes in response to John Rawls's contention that civil disobedience "addresses the sense of justice of the majority" (Rawls 49); Arendt asserts instead that "civil disobedients are in fact organized minorities, bound together by their decision to take a stand against the assumed majority" ("Reflections Civil Disobedience" 78). The Labrador Land Protectors took such a stand when they occupied the Muskrat Falls work site. The occupation resisted the rules that have been established by the common sense and popular consent of the "majority" – which, in Canada, ultimately means that of its settler population. The Land Protectors' actions, which asserted title to the land on which it was performed in much the same way as flash-mob Round Dance affirmed sovereignty during Idle No More, employed Indigenous rules of conduct rather than the colonial rules of Canadian law. It therefore became an expression of First Nations politics and law, which are incommensurate with both the principles of democracy and the settler laws of private property that resulted in the Land Protectors' arrest and criminalization. Through its use of protocol foundational to Indigenous nationhood, the occupation became an act of governance and lawmaking that, unlike the principles of democracy outlined in Mitchell's second definition, makes a claim for the interconnections between various elements of the lifeworld.

Make Muskrat Right also made such a claim through its employment of the same decentralized leadership model and horizontal networks as Idle No More, which allowed the

movement's intensity to progressively build upon itself. From 2012 to the present, the hashtag #MakeMuskratRight became a place for folks around the world to demonstrate support for the movement; it also allowed organizers to share information about events under the hashtags #MakeMuskratRight and #IdleNoMore. At these events, live footage, photos, and comments on Twitter and Facebook almost always depicted the crowd rather than individuals. While a common criticism of online activism is that it allows participants in social movements to demonstrate support without doing the in-person, physical work needed to make change, I argue that, rather than substituting collective embodied experience with an individualized virtual one, online networks in Make Muskrat Right allowed those who could not be physically present, due to distance or differential mobilities, to participate in real time by engaging online. In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt suggests that, since public space is constituted through the process of gathering – it is wherever people "are together in the manner of speech or action" (198-99) – it does not have to be made of the material architecture of a venue. During Make Muskrat Right, the social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter became such public spaces. Through the #MakeMuskratRight hashtag, Indigenous activists and land protectors around the world gathered together to share information and support for the movement, and their engagement inspired in-person assembly in other parts of the province and country. Media theorist Paolo Gerbaudo uses the term "choreography of assembly" to suggest that social media practices prepare the terrain and set the scene for people to come together in public space by scripting the later physical assembly of participants (40). Facebook and Twitter played such a role in Make Muskrat Right, creating a contagious sense of anticipation that sustained public participation in the movements from 2012 to 2018.

Central to Make Muskrat Right's horizontal leadership was its inclusivity. From the movement's inception in the early 2010s, organizers agreed that because the population of Newfoundland and Labrador is small, and because it encompasses multiple Indigenous groups (the Innu, Inuit, and Qalipu Nations) as well as settlers, Make Muskrat Right would be best served by including as many members of all these groups as possible. The resultant networked assemblies can be likened to Hardt and Negri's concept of the multitude, which describes an emergent sense of social subjectivity created in and through difference; it is comprised of innumerable internal differences – race, culture, sexuality, gender, forms of labour, ways of seeing and living – that cannot be reduced to a unity or a single identity (xiv). In contrast with the "people" or the "common," understood as a homogenized entity, the internal differences of the multitude reconfigure and challenge the common's need for unified communication and action. In *Notes Towards a Performative Theory of Assembly*, political philosopher Judith Butler suggests that when people assemble, they embody a plural form reminiscent of Hardt and Negri's multitude (72). Because of the internal differences of the multitude, when it comes together in assembly, it enacts an ethics of responsibility that does not come from reciprocity or familiarity; rather it "demands not only responsibility to others but *responsiveness* to the Other" (108, my emphasis). Responsiveness does not necessarily mean finding common or middle ground; rather, it is exploration of differing viewpoints that legitimately seeks to understand the foundations upon which those differing viewpoints are formed. Make Muskrat Right demonstrated such responsiveness to the internal differences of the multitude through the way it conducted assembly, in person but perhaps especially online. Even as differences arose, whether within the Facebook groups of the Labrador Land Protectors and Make Muskrat Right, or through Twitter posts using the hashtag #MakeMuskratRight, organizers and participants used

responsiveness to ensure that the focus remained on the importance of protecting the environment at and around Muskrat Falls.

As a space that allows users to communicate to those beyond their usual coalitional networks, Twitter (unlike Facebook, where networks are often insular and curated according to one's social, political, and familial groups) permitted organizers of and participants within Make Muskrat Right to demonstrate responsiveness to their "Others." Publicly using the hashtag #MakeMuskratRight in a tweet became an invitation to engage others with whom one might not typically interact because of social, economic, geographical, and political differences. Throughout the course of Make Muskrat Right, organizers and participants who used this hashtag, or who used Twitter more generally to show support for the movement, often found themselves involved in public and private online discussions with those who criticized the Labrador Land Protectors and Justin Brake; such instances became opportunities to demonstrate responsiveness. For example, in March 2018, while teaching an Indigenous text in an introductory English course at Memorial University, I attempted to engage students and demonstrate public support for Brake and the Labrador Land Protectors by posting a news article about the criminal charges against Brake with the caption: "is it just me or do all the legal justifications here ('intended to address matters of public interest') sound like textbook neocolonialism #engl1080" (@OliviaLHeaney). A few minutes later, I received a direct message from a local writer I'd heard of but never met outside of the Internet, who said that the charges against Brake had nothing to do with neocolonialism; the issue, he contended, was that Brake broke a court injunction and should be subject to the same laws as the rest of us. I responded that the court injunction itself was wrapped up in neocolonialism because of the way in which Nalcor procured the land around Muskrat Falls in the first place; the injunction that resulted in Brake's

arrest was meant to preserve the neocolonial status quo by keeping Indigenous peoples away from the land. The writer came back and said that he agreed that the Muskrat Falls project was the product of colonialism, but that in order for my argument to have practical value, we would have to dismantle the whole court system, which wouldn't be realistic because we need the courts to help direct societal behaviours. I returned his message by positing that the case of Justin Brake, then, might be a way for us to imagine how the courts could be recalibrated (if not dismantled and rebuilt) in order to move away from neocolonial attitudes and create more equality between settlers and Indigenous peoples. The writer responded that, as a 60-year-old man who had seen too many people in power *not* do the right thing, this did not sound practical to him but that it was a "lofty and laudable goal." The conversation ended when the writer "liked" my response – that it may not be possible to flick a switch and change the entire court system, but that this fact does not take away from work of the dedicated people currently working toward the "lofty" goal of revolutionizing it.

While the local writer and I are both white settlers from the same local arts community and therefore not "Othered" in the same way as many of those who have engaged with one another on Twitter as part of Make Muskrat Right, our exchange demonstrated responsiveness in spite of differences in sex, age, economic privilege, and political opinion, which themselves constitute borders that create "Otherness." This responsiveness was evident right from the writer's choice to engage through direct messages, which suggested an interest in having a generative discussion away from the posturing that comes from tweeting publicly. While his first message initially made me angry and reluctant to respond, I swallowed my judgment and attempted to demonstrate a willingness to hear his point of view. Even though I had to censor my responses to him (I believe that the courts probably *should* be dismantled and rebuilt, not simply

recalibrated) I felt as if we reached a level of agreement that may not have been attained had I taken a more aggressive approach; in the end, he wound up listening to and even "liking" what I had to say. Such responsiveness toward one's "Others" was essential to the way Make Muskrat Right continued to grow.

Make Muskrat Right became potentialized through its use of horizontal networks and decentralized leadership, which created the conditions for responsiveness to the "Others" who dissented against it, as well as to the internal differences of the multitude. As settlers and Land Protectors assembled in person and online, they gave the movement its momentum and built its intensity; it became a rehearsal of a type of engagement that has the potential to create more sustainable relations between humans and the land, as well as between humans and other humans. Butler suggests that the mere act of assembling performs and stands in for something even before its action begins, or before the reason for assembly becomes apparent, since the act itself gestures toward future responsiveness to the different others who are gathered; assembly "signifies in excess of what is said […] prior to and apart from any particular demands" (8). Assembly, as theorized by Butler, becomes itself through its duration; it exemplifies its potential through the course of its performative action, gesturing towards its own horizons and outer limits (59). I argue that the assembled multitudes of Make Muskrat Right demonstrated such potential. Whereas acts like Simpson's maple-sugaring during Idle No More rehearsed the energy intimacy needed to ensure the future of the planet by performing relations between the human and the non-human, Make Muskrat Right performed responsiveness within the multitude to rehearse the kind of relations between humans that are needed to build a future beyond extractivism.

In Loving Memory of Muskrat Falls

May 8, 2018. St. John's, Newfoundland. It's a cold and sunny morning as I walk to Harbourside Park, where I've learned from Facebook that the Labrador Land Protectors have organized a mock memorial service called "In Loving Memory" as part of the National Day of Action Against Muskrat Falls. The event was supposed to be yesterday, but it was postponed due to rain. Similar events did go ahead on May 7 in Happy Valley-Goose Bay (Labrador), Mississauga, Winnipeg, Halifax, and Ottawa, where Elders and Land Protectors James Learning, Eldred Davis, and Marjorie Flowers led a rally on Parliament Hill. With about a dozen other Land Protectors, they tried to enter the House of Commons to leave photographs of people from Labrador who have been affected by the megadam on the desks of MPs. They were detained and denied access to Parliament Hill for 90 days.

I can hear a drum echoing like a heartbeat several blocks before I see a small crowd gathered in a circle, around an Inuk musician and a miniature black coffin. There are some Indigenous Land Protectors, but many of those who have gathered are, like myself, settler Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The drumming stops, and someone in the crowd acknowledges the territory on which we gather as the ancestral homeland of the Beothuk, an extinct Indigenous group from the island of Newfoundland, whose culture has been erased forever as a result of colonialism. The organizer also acknowledges the island of Ktaqmkuk (Newfoundland) as the unceded, traditional territory of the Beothuk and the Mi'kmaq, and Labrador as the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Innu of Nitassinan, the Inuit of Nunatsiavut, and the Inuit of NunatuKavut. She recognizes all the First Peoples who were here before us, those who love with us now, and the seven generations to come, and thanks us for showing up in solidarity with peaceful protestors across the country. Next, another organizer

reads a "lament" about the future loss of sacred land and water at Muskrat Falls. Afterwards, a few people share stories about those affected by the dam, read condolences, and offer messages of respect for the land and water. The sombre mood becomes less heavy when we speak of the land and waters that will be left behind for future generations. Finally, an organizer passes out pieces of notepaper and asks everyone in attendance to write down their own "laments" – the things that we mourn about Muskrat Falls and the things we are willing to stand up for – so that they can be placed inside the coffin, which will be delivered to the government of Newfoundland and Labrador. We approach the coffin one by one, silently placing the laments inside, then disperse. Some folks help the organizer carry the coffin to her car, parked down the street.

The event "In Loving Memory of Muskrat Falls" occurred approximately two years after the aforementioned actions of 2016, at a point when the impacts of the dam at Muskrat Falls were already being felt. The land and water around Muskrat Falls had already been damaged by the development of the massive dam, thousands of Indigenous artifacts had already been destroyed, and the Labrador Land Protectors were getting tired. When I arrived at Harbourside Park, the atmosphere was sad and reverent, echoing the description on the event's Facebook page: "What will become of our province, and our varied cultures, if we all must abandon this place where so many of us have deep and abiding roots?" (Barker et al.). "In Loving Memory," in the form of a funeral, appeared to be a performance of mourning for something that was lost. Yet, rather than firmly fixing the water, culture, and land of Muskrat Falls in the lost past, the event's funereal signifiers (the coffin, the laments) led to a focus on what is being left behind for the children of future generations; such attention to preserving what has been lost, rather than laying it to rest, rendered the event an expression of melancholia (Eng and Kazanjian 3). Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands writes that in contexts that lack adequate cultural relations to

acknowledge the loss of a specific person or object – such as in the situation around Muskrat Falls, where governmental, colonial, and capitalist powers continue to place value on economic gain rather than on human health and cultural and environmental preservation – melancholia allows for a lost object's preservation in the present and future (333). The staging of "In Loving Memory" as part of the National Day of Action Against Muskrat Fall suggests the lack of resolution and closure that is characteristic of melancholia; for organizers and participants who continue to resist the development of Muskrat Falls, the loss of land and culture at Muskrat Falls has decidedly not been "laid to rest." At the event, melancholia disrupted the usual settler patterns of debate around Muskrat Falls, which tend to focus on the megaproject's economics, and became a politicized way of preserving lost lands in a culture that has failed to recognize their significance. By allowing organizers and participants to collectively experience melancholia, the event foregrounded the kind of energy intimacy needed to usher in a post-extractivist future.

Melancholia is an emotion that collapses temporality; it refuses closure and brings the past into the present and future. At "In Loving Memory," organizers used descriptions that allowed past, present, and future to collide in such a way, implying that the land and culture that have been destroyed at Muskrat Falls have been reconstituted in the present and will continue to inform ways of seeing and being in the future. When organizers asked participants to write laments about "the things we *will* miss *if* Muskrat Falls causes the death of us and our lands" (Barker et al., emphasis mine), these eulogy-like, formal expressions of mourning (a backward-looking emotion) for something that has not yet been fully lost blurred the lines between past, present, and future. Such fluid temporal boundaries chime with Indigenous conceptions of time, such as Simpson's aforementioned description of biidaabin, which suggests that the past, present,

and future all contain one another; therefore, we must show the same respect for past and future generations that we show for those in the present. At "In Loving Memory," collapsing temporalities in such a way encouraged participants to enter into direct and personal relationship with that which has come before us and that which will come after us, both human and non-human. Moreover, the continuous and open relationships between these temporalities acted as intensifiers. As we lamented not only the loss of the Grand River's past, but also its present and its future, we experienced melancholia for multiple temporalities simultaneously, which deepened the feelings of sadness and loss.

At "In Loving Memory," our collective melancholia highlighted the mino bimaadiziwinn of Muskrat Falls and the Grand River. Foregrounding Indigenous ways of seeing and interacting with the land and water, we considered the Grand River's energy in terms of reciprocity rather than through the lenses of ownership and commodification, which set the stage for intimate and respectful relations between us and the natural world as well as between each other. For instance, our collective and sustained "mourning without end" included thanking the land on which we gathered, lamenting the Grand River and Muskrat Falls of the past and offering gratitude for their land and waters, and respectfully engaging with and listening to one another. We thereby enacted responsive ways of being in relationship that, like all Indigenous land-based practices, are alternative to extractivism. Phones were tucked away and space was given for each person to speak, so that the event's tone of reverence for the Grand River and Muskrat Falls became mirrored by our quiet respect for one another. Through such intimacy with one another as well as with the resources that have sustained us, we enacted in the present a future in which Indigenous sovereignty, environmental protection, and settler responsibility "take place" in Newfoundland and Labrador. Borne of Indigenous radical resurgence, this present-day rehearsal and future

vision of renewable relations is another gift of the Grand River. It is a gift that, thanks to our melancholia, will always be brought forth into the present. It is a gift that, in the spirit of mino bimaadiziwinn, will continuously renew itself.

Resistance as Joy

The effects of our melancholia from the "In Loving Memory" event were still being felt four months later at the Muskrat Falls Symposium, which was attended by many of the same individuals from that cold spring day in Harbourside Park. It was this melancholia that compelled me to sing along when Cole Kippenhuck and the other Land Protectors invited everyone to join as they chanted "The Water Song" as the symposium concluded. As Kippenhuck closed their eyes and began to sing, and as more and more of us added our voices to their song, I inhabited the same feelings of sadness I'd felt at our memorial service for Muskrat Falls. But as the chant continued on and on, getting louder with each repetition, I felt the sadness give way to something else; upon opening my eyes, I saw smiles and tears of joy all around. In *A History of My Brief Body*, Belcourt suggests that Indigenous life becomes directed toward utopia through such durational performances of joy. At the end of the Muskrat Falls Symposium, we settlers were invited to temporarily inhabit such an Indigenous utopia. As "The Water Song" built upon itself durationally and sonically, and as we continually renewed its melody, our collective performance created "felt forms of accumulation" like those produced by the Round Dances of Idle No More (Robinson 224). Mino bimaadiziwinn transformed our melancholia from "In Loving Memory" into a relational practice of joy-making. As we sang toward a time and place bursting with all the life that extractivism has not been able to extinguish, "The Water

Fig 4. Heaney, Olivia. A coffin filled with laments at the National Day of Action Against Muskrat Falls, St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, 8 May 2018. Author's personal collection.

Song" gestured toward utopia in much the same way as the other performances of radical resurgence that I explore throughout this chapter. These acts, as Belcourt writes, "illuminate the dead end to which the settler state hurls" (9). Furthermore, they incarnate the renewable relations of care and responsibility that can and must replace extractivism in order to ensure the future of the earth. In spite of the anxiety and fear and melancholia that often precipitate such acts of radical resurgence, through moments like "The Water Song," they remind us that even as the settler state hurtles towards death, Indigenous anti-extractivist resistance continuously renews

life. They also remind us that wherever there is Indigenous art and resistance, there is joy, and where there is Indigenous joy, there is utopia.

CONCLUSION

Countering Petroturfing's Counterattack

In this dissertation, I have shown how the impasse is actualized and potentialized by and in performance. By examining the affective dimensions of the energy impasse (cynicism, melancholia, and fear) as they are represented in Canadian performance and in Indigenous responses to petrocultures that are performance-based, my readings demonstrate the latent potential of the impasse as it is activated by and in these performances. Through utopian performativity, these performances seek to imagine a future without oil.

Recent events have demonstrated that petroculture is eager to use the forms and modalities of such performances within its own crude designs. To encourage citizens to "take action in support of our vital natural resources sector," oil advocacy organizations like Canada Action – a self-described "grassroots" group – have begun using performance-based strategies co-opted from leftist movements, including pledges, petitions, and social media campaigns (Kinder 177). For example, after the legalization of same-sex marriage in the United States, photo filters became a popular way of showing support for a cause using one's Facebook profile picture. In the wake of this trend, in 2020 Canada Action designed and popularized its own filter with the words "I 🖤 🍁 Oil & Gas" to allow Facebook users to show support of Canada's oil industry.

On September 16, 2020, hundreds of oil and gas workers and their supporters gathered outside Confederation Building, the seat of Newfoundland and Labrador's provincial legislature, to rally for government support of the province's oil and gas sector. At the time, the province's only oil refinery had closed its doors and the four offshore rigs off the island's coast had stalled.

Organized by Unifor Local 2121, the province's union for offshore workers, with support from Newfoundland Offshore Industries Association (NOIA, now known as EnergyNL, an advocacy group for the province's oil and gas), the event was reminiscent of previous rallies I'd attended on the very same steps in the previous twelve months; these included a Black Lives Matter demonstration and, ironically, the final stop on the annual Fridays for Future climate march. The event demonstrated all the hallmarks of grassroots direct action: it opened with a call-and-response ("What do we want? Political support! When do we want it? Now!"); contained all the props and regalia of protest, including signs and t-shirts emblazoned with the Newfoundland and Labrador flag and the tagline "I 🖤 NL Oil & Gas"; and featured impassioned speeches. In her speech, NOIA/EnergyNL President and CEO Charlene Johnson lamented that she was "having a hard time being optimistic about the future of the offshore, but also about the future of Newfoundland and Labrador." Soon after, Premier Andrew Furey took to the podium and followed Johnson's lead, proclaiming that "there is no future for Newfoundland and Labrador without a strong oil and gas industry."

Rallies like this one, which co-opt and exploit strategies of protest that have been developed and refined by leftist activists and organizations, are becoming more and more common among Canada's political right. While the "Freedom Convoy" protests and blockades against COVID-19 vaccine mandates in early 2022 are the most recent and perhaps wide-reaching of such endeavours, the tradition through which the Canadian right absorbs and incorporates progressive grassroots approaches for their own ends can be traced back (at least) to 2010, when Ezra Levant launched his book *Ethical Oil: The Case for Canada's Oil Sands.* His was a direct response to the successes of the 2008-09 "dirty oil" campaign, a collective effort through which environmental non-governmental organizations and Indigenous groups branded

Alberta's Athabasca oil sands as the source of some of the world's most carbon-intensive fossil fuels. *Ethical Oil* suggests that because Canada is one of the only oil-producing parliamentary democracies in the world, there is a moral imperative to expand its oil industry. The book was circulated alongside the self-declared "grassroots" multimedia campaign "Ethical Oil," which from 2010 to 2014 used the EthicalOil.org homepage and created content for traditional news media and popular social media platforms to promote Canada's oil as socially and environmentally responsible. Since "Ethical Oil," numerous groups and organizations have followed Levant's lead, promoting Canadian oil from self-described positions of distance from the oil and gas industry by mirroring the strategies and structures of progressive environmental and non-governmental organizations.

In his article "From Dirty Oil to Ethical Oil: Petroturfing and the Cultural Politics of Canadian Oil After Social Media," Jordan Kinder characterizes such efforts as "petroturfing." Derived from "astroturfing," Kinder's neologism describes how corporations fund groups who use grassroots strategies to promote their industry funders, which often leads to a public perception of authenticity that the industry does not otherwise have (168). Distinct from but related to greenwashing, through which organizations disseminate disinformation to present an environmentally responsible public image, petroturfing advances the agendas of pro-oil organizations; it mobilizes grassroots strategies and contemporary media forms to legitimize and naturalize their operations. Kinder traces some of these petroturfing strategies by examining two Canadian pledge-based online campaigns that have proliferated in the wake of "Ethical Oil," ultimately arguing that such campaigns exploit the perceived characteristics of social media as democratic and participatory spaces in order to imbue Canadian oil with these same values and thus generate support for Canadian petro-capital (170). Concluding the article, he cites events

like the 2019 “United We Roll” convoy, during which pick-up trucks and transport trucks travelled from Grande Prairie, Alberta to Ottawa, Ontario to draw attention to the ways government regulations have negatively impacted the Canadian oil industry, as evidence that a second, more aggressive, wave of Canadian oil advocacy has moved petroturfing from traditional and social media and onto Canadian streets and highways (178-79).

The September 2020 rally in St. John’s is an example of how petroturfing, having transitioned from online advocacy, has co-opted the on-the-ground strategies of Indigenous groups and progressive environmental non-governmental organizations in order to mobilize against them and their interests. Such on-the-ground action uses the same strategies of environmental and land-back campaigns from movements like Fridays for Future and Idle No More in order to directly counter the latter groups’ messaging. At the same time, they distance themselves from the very oil and gas for which they advocate. As Danine Farquharson points out, the signs and t-shirts at the St. John’s rally adapted the logos and promotional images of Canada Action, a group founded in 2013 that uses nationalist rhetoric to generate support for Canadian oil and gas (148). Like Canada Action, which brands itself as “an entirely volunteer-led grassroots movement encouraging Canadians to take action and work together in support of our vital natural resources sector” (Kinder 177), many of the signs used at the St. John’s rally deliberately shifted focus away from general support for the oil and gas industry and onto support for the province’s offshore workers. While, as aforementioned, many protestors wore t-shirts and held signs with the tagline “I 🖤 NL Oil & Gas,” many signs adapted this messaging by including an outline of the province’s geographical boundaries and changing the tagline to “We 🖤 Offshore Workers.” As Farquharson writes, this adaptation is important for several reasons: first, it eliminates the words “oil and gas” altogether, shifting focus from the industry to

the people (148). This shift mirrors the event's organizational and advertising strategies; while the rally was largely dominated by messaging from and advocacy by NOIA/EnergyNL, the press release and social media advertisements for it came from Unifor Local 2121. Secondly, the message "We 🖤 Offshore Workers" adapts the "I" of "I 🖤 NL Oil & Gas" into the collective "we" – an attempt to articulate a province-wide effort to assert regional identity by coming together to support community, rather than industry (Farquharson 148). The presence of Premier Andrew Furey, who since taking office in 2020 has touted the "cleanliness" of the province's offshore oil, suggests that the Newfoundland and Labrador government is complicit in this articulation. Such efforts to distance the rally from the oil and gas at its centre are part of a strategy by industry groups and government to "green" oil narratives – for example, by changing the name "Newfoundland Offshore Industries Association" to "EnergyNL." This greenwashing is itself part of the larger petroturfing countermovement.

Like all examples of petroturfing, the September 2020 oil and gas rally in St. John's was a reminder of the continued efforts of dominant political actors and corporations to foreclose possibilities of a future beyond oil. Adapting Mark Fisher's concept of "capitalist realism," which theorizes that the reach of neoliberalism is attributable to its insistence that there are no viable alternatives to capitalism, Kinder poses the idea of "petro-capitalist realism." Petro-capitalist realism forecloses alternatives to oil futures, "relegating the possibilities of economic and energy transition to the realm of fantasy" (Kinder 170). By strategically framing oil as the only viable source for meeting society's energy needs, petro-capitalist realism becomes a motor for petroturfing. For example, when at the St. John's rally Premier Andrew Furey affirmed that there is "no future" for the province of Newfoundland and Labrador beyond oil and gas, he used

petro-capitalist realism to rhetorically shut down possibilities for transitioning to a renewable energy regime.

While crude utopia is an important response to petro-capitalism's conviction that no alternative to oil is possible, through strategies like petroturfing, industry and government have countered – and will continue to counter – rhetorical and performative attempts to illuminate alternatives for futures beyond oil. By absorbing the very strategies that have been used to advocate for and illuminate such alternatives, oil advocacy groups like NOIA/EnergyNL incorporate "the most effective critiques of capitalist structures into a defence of that structure itself" (Farquharson 149). When, in 2020, the St. John's rally shifted focus onto offshore workers – some of whom have, admittedly, been temporarily disadvantaged by changes to the sector – while at the same time employing the same structures and language of progressive grassroots actions, it framed the (dominant) oil and gas industry as socially, politically, and economically marginalized. By co-opting and exploiting the strategies of *actually* marginalized populations, such as the Indigenous groups who for decades have been tirelessly advocating for sustainable alternatives to the petro-capitalist oil and gas extraction that is destroying their traditional ways of life and the natural environment, the event mounted a defence of petro-capital in an attempt to gain (more) support for fossil fuels. In this way, Canadian petro-capital continues to demonstrate a determination to extract as much as possible from wherever it can – the oil sands, offshore, and the very organizations and populations it has already left marginalized. Such extraction and absorption is effectively theorized by Andrew Shmuely:

> [A] dominant formation's most successful strategy regarding those who would question or threaten its dominance can be found in the attempt to incorporate their views and practices in a manner that effectively defuses them of their revolutionary potential: a

> perverse 'negation of negation' that allows the reigning relations of power to remain fundamentally unaltered. (219)

At this point, our existence as a petroculture is a "mobilizing *doxa* leveraged both by the oil and gas industry and its supporters […] and those who recognize the necessity for [energy] transition" (Kinder 173; emphasis in original). Industry's cynical deployment of progressive messaging intended to mobilize energy transitions has established cultural conditions of advocacy around oil and gas, the further expansion of which has become broadly legitimized as a result, even as this expansion furthers injustices to the environment and Indigenous populations.

In this conclusion, I've chosen to bring examples of petroturfing to light not to detract from the utopian possibilities explored throughout this dissertation, but rather to draw attention towards and reflect upon the ways in which petro-capital routinely co-opts and exploits our bodies and practices even as they perform in ways that feel progressive and radical, such as when they illuminate alternatives to oil. Petro-capital, which would have us think that it is an inevitable natural order, shapes the material conditions of social life such that we are predisposed to create boundaries around the future, rather than opening up its possibilities. In many ways, the very visibility of progressive action, and those who make it happen, renders us vulnerable to attack. However, as I hope this dissertation has demonstrated, the continued attempts of petro-capital to depoliticize populations have been counteracted again and again in the twenty-first century by artists and activists who refuse to accept petro-capital's insistence on their powerlessness. Following Victor Turner, I contend that we can understand our present moment as the crisis phase in a social drama. The contemporary practice of petroturfing indicates that there has been a breach in the norms of petro-capital, which has produced a "turning point in the relations" between those on the side of oil and those who wish to transition toward sustainable energy

(Turner 150). Turner writes that, in this crisis phase, "seeming peace becomes overt conflict and overt antagonisms become visible" as "sides are taken, factions are formed" (150). Unless the central conflict can be sealed off quickly, "there is a tendency for the breach to widen and spread" (150). Considering the belief of Lefebvre and Williams, advanced by Andrew Schmuely, that hegemonic practices (like petroturfing) can never be fully quieted, I posit that the coming years will give rise to the widening and spreading of that breach, as actions from the left themselves counter the counterattack that petroturfing performs. This "counter-counterattack" will be, in part, made manifest in further attempts to illuminate and realize the utopian possibilities of sustainable energy practices.

The fact that the petroleum industry finds it necessary to use its boundless cultural and economic resources to co-opt the strategies of grassroots organizations and groups that resist its dominance demonstrates its implicit awareness that not only do alternatives to oil exist; they have the potential to overthrow petro-capital's reigning relations of power, which makes them a threat to be feared, stamped out, and erased. In this dissertation, I have explored various performance-based responses to the energy impasse, including kynicism, the role of the child, and Indigenous radical resurgence. I have proposed that these enact crude utopia – a form of utopian performativity that allows us to transcend the "stuckness" of the energy impasse by affectively and critically working through, imagining, and revealing horizons beyond fossil fuels in Canada. There remains much critical room to broaden this geographic scope by considering how performance-based and other artistic and literary texts from other oil-rich parts of world, such as the Middle East, the Niger Delta, and the United States, further illuminate such utopian possibility. It is my hope that this dissertation can contribute to future theory and research related to artists and activists whose work continues to perform the crisis phase in Turner's social drama,

countering petro-capital's counterattack by taking back the revolutionary potential that practices like petroturfing attempt to negate. The work of Indigenous scholars, artists, and activists, who resist petro-capital through performativities and traditions of anticolonial thought informed by lived histories of colonialism, will be fundamental to this "taking back" and to this critical research. I imagine that such work will result in a counter-counterattack that is less antithetical and more informed by Indigenous joy – and the radical resurgence that is a consonant to utopian performativity – than that which I describe here. It will be a reminder that utopia's focus on what "should be" will continue to stand against petro-capital's endless insistence upon dictating what "will be," and that the possibilities engendered by utopia are vital to our transitions away from oil.

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