

Experiments in Energy Literacy: Engaging Publics through Graphic Narrative

Transition in Energy, Culture, Society (TECS)

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BACKGROUND

This project involves the production of two graphic narratives that address questions of **energy transition** qualitatively rather than quantitatively, mapping the connections between **lived personal experience** and large-scale forms of **energy infrastructure**. A wholesale energy transition crucially involves changes to the “structures of feeling” (R. Williams) – the habits, beliefs, and desires – that shape everyday life. The representational possibilities afforded by **graphic narrative** can enable new ways of imagining **energy futurity** and can circulate such **new perspectives** among **diverse publics**.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- Use qualitative methods of creative-critical practice to produce new ways of seeing and imagining **energy transition** and **energy futurity**
- Leverage the popularity and appeal of **graphic narrative** to engage **diverse publics**, reaching audiences missed by conventional scholarship
- Contribute to **energy literacy** while also driving home the urgency of energy transition today
- Make vivid an **understanding of energy** as not just brute input but also **social relation**: a matter of values, habits, practices, affects, and beliefs often seemingly unrelated to questions of energy
- Inspire conversation about **petroculture** – about energy as social relation – among researchers, research-creators, policy makers, and other constituencies interested and invested in energy transition

THE PETROCULTURES OF EVERYDAY LIFE

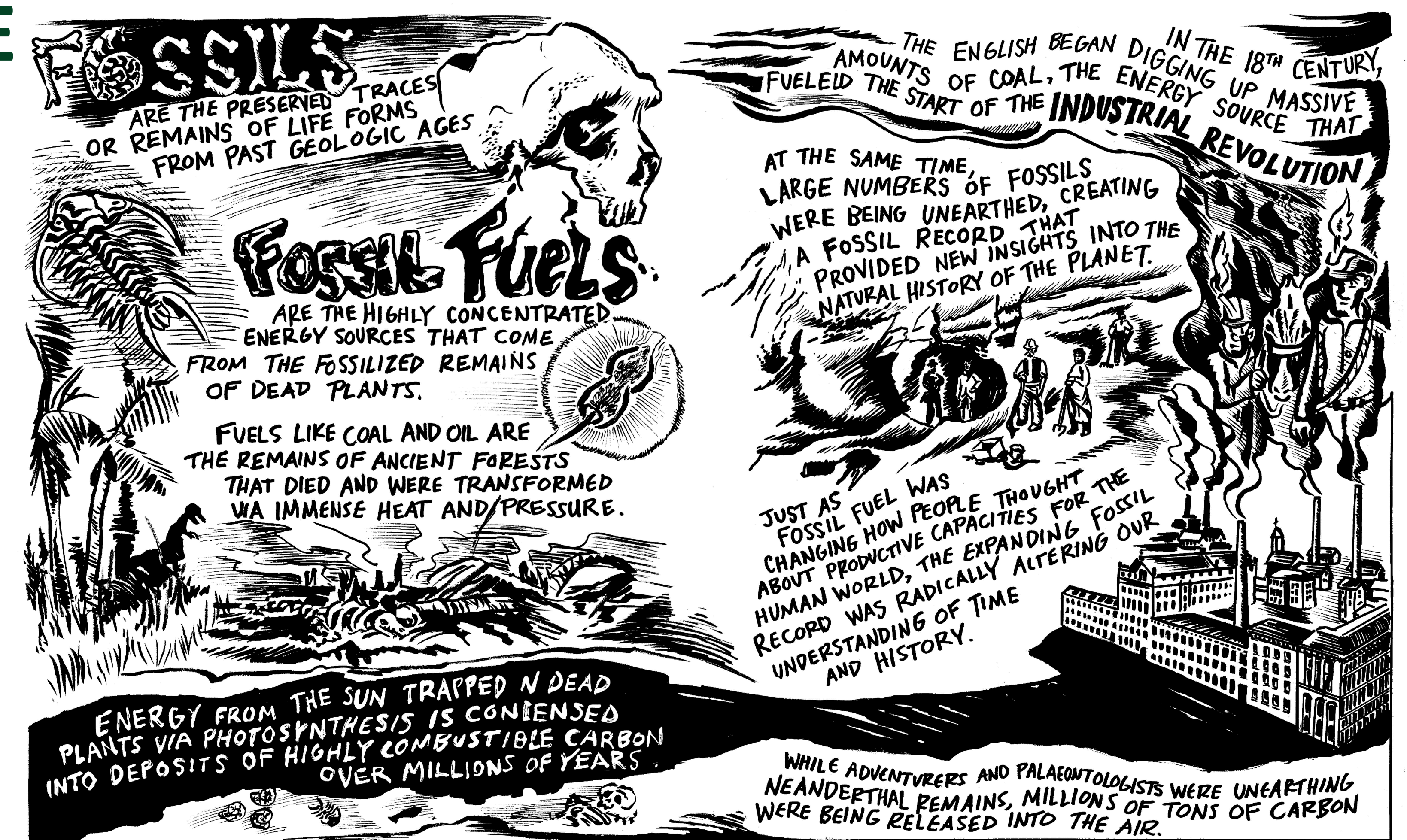
This book uses the accessible medium of comics to explore the ways reliance on fossil fuels crucially shapes the kinds of subjects we imagine ourselves to be and the kinds of relationships we form with

each other and our environments, even while simultaneously obscuring the extent and history of our entanglement with this energy form. Following the model used, with great success, for

the 2016 After Oil volume, we intend to print The Petrocultures of Everyday Life ourselves, thus speeding up the production process and allowing for wide distribution.



Nowhere Left to Stand, Simon Orpana, 2018.



The Petrocultures of Everyday Life, Simon Orpana, 2018.

NOWHERE LEFT TO STAND

This book combines literary and graphic strategies to critique the ways in which reliance on petroleum shapes subjectivities and relationships, leading into peoples' personal lives and disrupting desires for meaningful, sustainable

relationships with each other and the world. A series of illustrated verse poems describe a number of fictional characters whose lives are twisted out of shape by extractive energy regimes that cannot deliver on the promises of “the good life”

they purport to enable. We will seek to publish this book through an established graphic novel press, such as Continuum or Drawn and Quarterly, in order to reach a wide, popular audience.

FUTURE ENERGY SYSTEMS PROJECT OVERVIEW

T04-P02: Transition in Energy, Culture and Society (TECS)

Public discourse in Canada still positions energy as separate from the technical and social structures it fuels. By approaching energy from a **cultural and social perspective**, TECS seeks to develop knowledge and tools to **reconceive energy** as integrative and **socially practiced**. At stake is the multi-directional engagement necessary at every stage of energy transition, from imagining **new energy futures**, to creating technologies that respond to those imaginaries, to implementing those technologies and systems in ways that communities can embrace, to addressing the social and cultural changes that will necessarily accompany major changes to energy systems. Such research can inform the types of technologies produced, such that new sources and systems respond in more **socially equitable** ways to the needs of **intersectional communities**, reducing the **social disparity** produced by current energy sources and systems. Such research can also engage with communities about both the potential and limits of new technologies, creating greater **energy literacy** about the challenges and opportunities of **energy transition**.

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