



# Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil

*Timothy Mitchell*

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## **Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil** Timothy Mitchell

Does oil wealth lead to political poverty? It often looks that way, but *Carbon Democracy* tells a more complex story. In this magisterial study, Timothy Mitchell rethinks the history of energy, bringing into his grasp as he does so environmental politics, the struggle for democracy, and the place of the Middle East in the modern world.

With the rise of coal power, the producers who oversaw its production acquired the ability to shut down energy systems, a threat they used to build the first mass democracies. Oil offered the West an alternative, and with it came a new form of politics. Oil created a denatured political life whose central object – the economy – appeared capable of infinite growth. What followed was a Western democracy dependent on an undemocratic Middle East. We now live with the consequences: an impoverished political practice, incapable of addressing the crises that threaten to end the age of carbon democracy – namely, the disappearance of cheap energy and the carbon-fueled collapse of the ecological order.

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