Fighting Climate Change Inside the Academy: A Review of *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*

Jason Ludden

Like much that has been published in *Works and Days,* Naomi Klein's journalism has focused on the effects of globalization and how social action can give voice to the disenfranchised. She has developed a cultish following for her highly researched and carefully crafted books that expose the amoral underbelly of capitalism. Her first book, *No Logo,* explained how the rise of globalism coincided with corporations shifting from advertising to branding: instead of advertising the specifics of goods they then sold, corporations created brand identities that superseded their products. In her follow up book, *Shock Doctrine,* Klein traced the political rise of neoliberal economics, which she then used as a lens for critiquing how governments and corporations take advantage of contemporary crises, such as the second Iraq War and the Indonesian tsunami, to push their economic agendas. Her goal in both books was to call attention to the slow erasure of democratic values in order to incite her audience to action. In her 2014 book, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism Vs. the Climate*, Klein is even more deliberate with her calls for action—situating her narrative in the contemporary moment where climate change increasingly affects our local, regional, and global environments while people still deny its existence—and asks: "What is wrong with us?" (25).

This is not an easy question to answer, and Klein uses the remaining five hundred plus pages to pin down a series of possible explanations. Instead of beginning with a familiar case study or an extreme event, Klein opens with the mundane ways that climate change has begun to affect our everyday existence. She starts with an anecdote from 2012, explaining how a commercial passenger flight had its departure delayed out of Washington D.C. because the tarmac

had become so hot that "the wheels of the US Airways jet had sunk into the black pavement as if it were wet cement" (Klein 1). It is not just that glaciers are melting and storms are getting stronger. It is that our infrastructure can no longer handle the new environment that we have created. The book focuses on these moments that change our lived realities and how these changes are so often brushed off as coincidental; in each instance, Klein examines the effects of the former and the rationalization necessary for the later. This is not to say that Klein uses her bully pulpit to condemn the vast majority of us who believe in climate change but do little to challenge it. On the contrary, she acknowledges her own desire to overlook climate change evidence and wants to understand why we are so quick to avert our eyes from the reality of climate change in order to suggest how we might increase climate activism by re-addressing the problem in new ways.

There are, according to Klein, three reasons that climate change is not being appropriately addressed. The first is, simply, that we are being duped by an economy that runs on the extraction and consumption of minerals and oil. After tracing the interconnections among our global economy and environmental degradation, Klein argues that the second reason is our magical faith in science—instead of acknowledging that our actions and activities may be causing a problem, we believe that we can engineer our way out of climate change without having to make substantive life-style changes. Last, she offers examples of ways in which the public is being silenced and excluded from debates on environmental issues. Whether it is reframing energy as a national security priority in order to undermine environmental concerns or pitting a failing economy and stalling development against public health and community values, Klein offers multiple examples, from all around the world, of people having to fight to be heard, resist dominant discourses, and embody their politics by putting themselves in harm's way. In this article, I argue that scholars and practitioners of criticism and pedagogy can find value by both engaging in Klein's text and arguments while also reflecting on our role within our disciplines and institutions. In order to explain how Klein's text may be productively engaged, I will first review her major arguments and case studies before I identify opportunities for scholarly engagement.

The first section of the book, "Bad Timing," examines the construction of climate denialism and attempts to explain why it is so

effective. While the denial of climate change is not new to most readers, Klein's goal is to articulate the motivating factors of those who deny climate change. To do this, Klein tracks the funding for climate denial campaigns. This leads her to the Heartland Institute's Sixth International Conference on Climate Change, where ways to challenge and undermine climate science are discussed in order to limit government regulations. Participants at the conference seem less interested in the validity of the science than in the economic ramification of trying to stop climate change; or as Larry Bell, a speaker at the conference, has written, climate change "has little to do with the state of the environment and much to do with shackling capitalism and transforming the American way of life" (qtd. in Klein 33). It would be easy to write off crusaders of capitalism like Bell as single-handedly derailing actions to curb climate change, but Klein's point is much larger: she wants the reader to recognize that our desire for a growing economy is often incompatible with our environmental concerns. The discourse of climate change denialism is an extension of this tension.

The conflict between the environment and the economy has been exacerbated by globalization, which prioritizes free trade over local political priorities. Klein argues that global economies are driven by oil and mineral extraction and bolstered by free trade, which uses the World Trade Organization (WTO) to help protect corporate assets and investments. While international treaties and meetings, like the Rio Earth Summit of 1992, attempt to tackle climate change globally, Klein points out that they cannot undo "commitments made under trade agreements," when "failure to comply could land governments in trade court, often facing harsh penalties" (77). Instead of protecting the health of the environment and the ability of its citizens to enjoy nature now and in the future, Klein argues that governments are required to protect the rights of corporations to produce and trade. Even if a government wants to prioritize green energy production—which Ontario, Canada attempted to do by subsidizing solar panel production locally in order to bolster regional economic growth and facilitate solar panel adoption—they must do so without infringing upon the rights of foreign corporations to compete or they will be challenged by the WTO (Klein 68). This is but one of the many examples Klein lists where corporate rights have trumped local concerns and ignored environmental considerations.

Klein also points out that globalization not only makes it possible for corporations to sell their goods in unrestricted international mar-

kets, it also enables them to "scour the globe in search of the cheapest and most exploitable labor force" (81). Economic growth, she says, depends on corporations having access to abundant, readily extractible minerals, the ability to exploit cheap labor, and freedom from the costs of environmental degradation. Klein shows that this has led to an exportation of manufacturing jobs to less developed countries, removing the obvious impacts of industrialism from our vision. However, unlike Ulrich Beck's observation decades earlier that environmental and health risks would become easily exported to the most at risk communities while economic growth primarily benefits those at the top, the production of CO_2 and other greenhouse gases in lands far away *do* affect our environment and put us at risk. Klein argues that climate change affects us all and transcends national boundaries, but trade agreements restrict our ability to stop it at home or abroad.

This dire situation notwithstanding, Klein points out where there are opportunities where the economy can be used to solve climate change. She highlights Obama's stress on green jobs as a way of restructuring the American labor market away from oil and manufacturing. She cites a movement in Germany that asks cities to use only renewable energy. As Klein explains, the most important factor in such efforts is the presence of actively engaged people, exemplified by "the fact that in hundreds of cities and towns . . . citizens have voted to take their energy grids back from private corporations" in order to rely on green energy sources instead of fossil fuels (97). This buy-back of energy grids enables municipalities to set their own objectives for power creation and pricing, allowing environmental concerns to be valued over profits. While it becomes obvious that climate change poses a huge risk to economic structures, there appear to be ways that people can control their local situation and reclaim their economy.

If the relation between corporate profits and climate change organized the first part of the book, the second part addresses our unwillingness to alter our daily lives to decrease our carbon footprint. Klein titles this section "Magical Thinking," a term she uses to describe blind faith in technology as a way of avoiding problems in the present. It is a narrative "that assures us that, however bad things get, we are going to be saved at the last minute—whether by the market, by philanthropic billionaires, or by technological wizards" (Klein 186). Instead of changing our modes of living, an inconvenience to say

the least, we rely on science to fix the problem for us. The apprehension Klein has with this way of thinking is twofold: 1) it disregards any action plans to stop the problem before it arises; and 2) its solution comes with uncertain, and potentially dangerous, side effects. The belief that science can join economic structures to fix a problem like climate change is convenient because it relies on very little actual action by the average citizen. If we can geo-engineer the climate, use the economic tools of capitalism like cap and trade, or design more efficient cars and houses that decrease our carbon footprints, then climate change is reversed simply by a change in consumer consumption: support science and technology, pay for a taxation of carbon, and drive a hybrid. As a representative example of such thinking, Klein examines Richard Branson's Virgin Earth Challenge, which pledged $3 billion to develop alternative fuel sources and other technologies designed to battle climate change (231). But the burning of alternative fuel sources does not necessarily decrease the production of CO_2, so Branson turned his attention to the development mechanical carbon offset technologies intended to absorb the impact of his fleet of commercial airliners. Even if these efforts came from a sincere desire to curb climate change, as Klein believes Branson's do, she contends that the use of a profit motive to solve such a complex problem was bound to fail because "the demands of building a successful empire trumped the climate imperative" (251-52). Magical thinking is, in part, believing that the systems that have created a problem can solve it: Branson's plan was not a new way of doing things, simply a new way to turn a profit.

Klein believes that rather than being inventive and creative, magical thinking is constrictive and unoriginal. It requires one to think inside the box without ever challenging the rational of containment. According to Klein, a problem like climate change will be distorted in order to make it match solutions producible by pre-existing economic systems, social structures, and technologies. To illustrate the role of science in magical thinking, Klein reports on her visit to a geo-engineering conference where advisors and scientists discussed the possibility of using particulates injected into the stratosphere to block out the sun (258). As crazy as such schemes may seem, Klein notes that these ideas are not merely theoretical—rogue researchers have already experimented with dumping iron sulphates into the ocean in order to increase the reflectivity of the ocean's surface (268). The problem with such solutions is that the effects of such a massive

project are difficult to predict due to the number of variables involved. At the very least, scientists have recognized that theoretical geo-engineering projects will have winners and losers; lowering the temperature and solar radiation in one region will expose another to harsher climactic conditions. The problem with geo-engineering is that it presumes we cannot correct our CO_2 emissions and stop climate change before it is exacerbated. We have yet to try rolling back carbon emissions and protecting our carbon sinks, nevertheless we are now talking about what to do when catastrophe hits. It is no surprise that Klein finds that "many of the most aggressive advocates of geoengineering research are associated with planet-hacking start-ups, or hold patents on various methods" (263). Given that technological innovations in mining and refining have benefited the public by lowering the costs of energy and goods, it also needs to be noted that these technologies have accelerated climate change and environmental degradation; Klein finds it troubling that we should trust these same engineers and scientists to find a solution to a problem to which they contributed. In the end, Klein has little faith that the distribution of catastrophe would be equitable, undoubtedly punishing those regions that contributed the least to climate change in order to protect those who created the problem.

Instead of waiting for a solution to magically appear, the book's last section, titled "Starting Anyway," has Klein proposing that direct, community activism is needed. She labels moments and places where such action is occurring as "Blockadia," which she describes as "a roving transnational conflict zone that is cropping up with increasing frequency and intensity wherever extractive projects are attempting to dig and drill" (294–295). This conflict zone consists of local events that follow similar patterns with "people at the forefront—packing local council meetings, marching in capital cities, being hauled off in police vans, even putting their bodies between the earth-movers and the earth" (Klein 295). Each Blockadia site is not a stance against climate change or corporate greed, but is a local situation where a community protects its environment from destruction. In the Greek village of Ierissos, Klein found a proposed gold mine in the Skouries forest "transformed into a battle zone, with rubber bullets reportedly fired and tear gas so thick it caused older residents to collapse" (297). Framed as an economic necessity by the government of Greece in order to overcome austerity, the mine was made an official interest of the state despite the protests of local resident. Feeling that their

fears of an industrial accident or damage to their waterways by heavy equipment were being ignored, the protesters had to find new ways to be heard. They torched mining vehicles, held rallies, and local volunteer forces protected their communities from invading riot police sent to defend the interests of the mine and government. Klein argues that these place-based stands are not only stopping climate change, but after seeing their successes, "as well as the failures of top-down environmentalism, many young people concerned about climate change are taking a pass on the slick green groups and the big U.N. summits. Instead, they are flocking to the barricades of Blockadia" (295). Using additional examples from Romania, Canada, and the U.S., Klein shows that these individual examples reflect a movement that is becoming global: to stop climate change, we must stop it wherever we can, no matter how small the battle.

And it is a battle. Recollecting the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Nigerian playwright who fought against the environmental degradation caused by Shell in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, by his own government on trumped-up charges, Klein draws attention to not only the stakes but also the costs of physically confronting corporations and governments (307). Saro-Wiwa led the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) to not only fight to protect the health and safety of his people, but also to protect the environment of the region from being permanently destroyed by Shell's "ecological wars" (Klein 306). This reframing of Shell as against not just people but nature returns to a pre-Baconian relation of humans to their environment. While Bacon, as Klein summarizes, argued that humans should view themselves as nature's "dungeon master," MOSOP saw humans as protectors of nature (170). Klein wants us to recognize that too often our dominant discourse places humans in opposition to nature rather than a part of it.

To illustrate her point, near the end of her book, Klein ruminates on how people talk about their connection to the land and her own path to motherhood. In Greece, a mother who is battling against a mine tells Klein that, "I am a part of the land. I respect it, I love it and don't treat it as a useless object . . . I want to live here this year, and next year, and to hand it down to the generations to come," before continuing that the mines "want to devour the land, plunder it, to what is most precious for themselves" (342). Being a part of the land means recognizing that it is not ours alone, and that our actions must account for all others who depend on it for life. A land ethic

that is built on respect and love requires a personal commitment to the land and its communities. In addition, Klein believes that a land ethic based on lived experiences with the land allows communities to understand environmental changes that may go unnoticed, or be undetectable, by outsiders.

In contrast to a community land ethic approach that focuses on changes over time, the way environmental issues are often reported nationally or globally spotlights the spectacular. The media has no problem covering massive environmental events, like the BP oil spill, but cannot draw attention to the slow shifts of long term environmental decline. Klein illustrates this by recalling that, sometime after the BP oil spill, after the news crews had left, there was very little coverage when "baby dolphins start[ed] dying en masse" (432). First reported in 2011, by 2014 thousands of dolphin bodies had been found and there was evidence of increases in still births and infant mortality. The loss of fertility of the dolphins in the Gulf is due to the search for cheap oil, its effects on climate, and the destruction of livable environments for this species. These ripple effects are often only noticed by those who stay behind and live with the ecological repercussion after the spectacle has ended.

More and more, Klein argues, it is not just the disasters that are affecting animal populations, it is the slow degradation of environmental systems over time that we must worry about. She began to notice "that a great many species besides ours are bashing up against their own infertility walls, finding it harder and harder to successfully reproduce and harder still to protect their young from the harsh new stresses of a changing climate" (424). The stress of successfully reproducing is something Klein can relate too: she candidly discusses her own struggles with infertility and how the anxiety of the situation led her to give up on the possibility of having children (though she would later become a mother). Her reflection on her experience, and that of the dolphins, leads Klein to the words of writer and educator Leanne Simpson, who believes that "our systems are designed to promote more life" (442). If one of nature's ecological systems is damaged or compromised (say, by oil), then a species' (like dolphins) ability to regenerate will be compromised. In contrast to ecological systems that promote life, it appears that our oil dependent economic systems are designed to destroy it.

By the end of the book, Klein makes it obvious that to believe that the economic systems and structures that created and continue

to exacerbate the problem of climate change can solve it is more than foolhardy—it is dangerous. Similarly, to turn to the corporations and government representatives that rely on the profits created by extractive practices is equally naive. Klein develops her argument by critiquing how globalized political structures ignore environmental concerns in favor of economic growth. Additionally, she examines how magical thinking is used to keep us from calling for political reforms that could address climate change. She calls for the readers of the book to make a stand, to resist actions that lead to environmental degradation, and to protest governments and corporations that threaten our ecosystems. The path Klein suggests for stopping climate change requires a refocusing of efforts. As she states at the beginning of her book, we are all aware of climate change and its effects on local and global ecosystems, but the sheer magnitude of the problem makes it difficult to comprehend. Instead of thinking of the global, our efforts should focus on the local: stopping the construction of new oil fields, pipelines, or mines. When necessary, this means physically blocking the development of mines, buildings, or any operation that can exacerbate climate change.

Beyond a review of Klein's book and an outline of her central claims, I would like to argue that those of us who are critics and teachers of discourse, such as the authors in this issue, will likely find engagement with Klein's arguments fruitful. While climate change scholarship is not new, Klein's text offers an archive of interconnected discourses—both personal and public, environmental and economic, technical and non-expert, as well as legal findings and media reports, from all around the world—that scholars can use to further understand the relations among environments, communities, and political economic structures. In addition, Klein offers a critique of science and technology's role in public policy discourse, which can challenge and undermine democratic values and principles. Lastly, *This Changes Everything* is an accessible book for most students and can be used to model critical thinking and teach democratic values in the classroom.

Naomi Klein is not a rhetorician by training, but she is doing the leg work of creating an archive that enables rhetorical criticism. It seems somewhat selfish to diminish the value of the book simply because it does not include the scholarship and language of our disciplines when the practices of rhetorical criticism are evident in the case studies presented. Examining the discourse of the Heartland In-

stitute in order to explain the connection between free-market capitalism and climate change denial is the kind of work argued for by such well known rhetoricians as Leah Ceccarelli, John Sloop, Kent Ono, and Raymie McKerrow. These scholars call for critiquing discourse in order to understand ideologies, yet their names are nowhere to be found in these pages. Klein works as a journalist traveling the globe, listening and connecting different discourses and communities to one another until the underlying incommensurability of the differing world views becomes painfully obvious. Klein, building on the scholarship of historians of science Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway, demonstrate that it is not legitimate scientific doubt that causes the Heartland Institute and its followers to resist climate change, but rather the Institute's economic and political motives. For scholars interested in ideology and the political economy, environmental communication and public policy, or the relationship between science and society, *This Changes Everything* is an archive of texts that can inform your research or suggest new avenues of study on contemporary discursive practices.

In addition to her archive, Klein also offers scholars a new rhetorical lens through which to critique discourse: magical thinking. Instead of discussing possible solutions to a social or political problem, magical thinking acts as a trope that enables the public to imagine a technological solution that will enable pre-existing social structure and systems to remain intact. The technological *telos* of the magical thinking trope dismisses the necessity of public debate because the trope reframes problems as no longer political and public, but rather technical. However, since magical thinking as a trope relies on the public's faith in science as an institution, it is different than differentiating between a technical and public sphere argument. Both Thomas Goodnight and Carolyn Miller have shown how the technocrats can reframe complex problems as purely technical in order to avoid public debate, but magical thinking is quite the opposite. Unlike experts debating a public problem, magical thinking is the public ignoring the problem, actively abdicating their agency in a discourse, in the hopes that the experts will solve it for them. Magical thinking as a trope doesn't just rely on expert opinion, it is an appeal for technical *ethos* to displace public discourse: when we rely on geo-engineers to solve complex problems instead of discussing ways we could curtail our CO_2 emissions, the public agrees to sacrifice their right to debate in exchange for a solution.

The political ramifications of the magical thinking trope is a willful erosion of the public sphere. For Klein, the public sphere is both *agora* and transparent governance: the former being the space necessary for people to be heard and the latter enables the public to see decisions being made. Klein fears magical thinking as a trope because, first, the public abandons its ability to express its opinions, and, secondly, technical decisions are being made outside of the public's view. Furthermore, the global nature of climate change and the complexity of the problem along with the inability of any individual nation state to take meaningful political action to fight it has made public discourse in relation to climate change equally ephemeral. While Klein argues that "Blockadia," reinvigorating public discourse by concentrating on local issues that can have local solutions, is the best course of action, there is also work that can be done in the academy. Identifying the ways that magical thinking disrupts the public's ability to participate in a productive and engaged democracy is also necessary.

Another way scholars can take actions that will resuscitate the public sphere is with their pedagogy. As teachers, if we view the classroom, in keeping with James Berlin and many others, as a space for developing critical thinking skills and cultivating democratic values in order to "encourage students to resist and to negotiate [cultural] codes—these hegemonic discourses—in order to bring about more democratic and personally humane economic, social, and political arrangements" (Berlin 27), then *This Changes Everything* is required for all incoming freshman. Klein's book is designed to foster cross-disciplinary discussions and raises as many questions for the reader as it answers. Climate change may be the greatest challenge facing college students today, and understanding the political and economic causes and implications is an ethical imperative. The narratives and examples Klein presents enable students to engage with the writing by comparing it to their own lived experiences.

The multiple examples and in-depth research presented to support the central arguments of the book make this an ideal companion text for a composition classroom. The majority of Americans now believe in climate change and most believe it is caused by humans (Leiserowitz et al. 3). At the same time, the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication found that "Few Americans are optimistic that humans will reduce global warming" (Leiserowitz 4). This suggests that Americans trust the scientific evidence, but feel helpless to address the problem. In addition to explaining where this helplessness

comes from, Klein's call for local engagement compels students to think about their role as citizens. Asking students how they can work, within their community, to reverse climate change requires them to be self-reflective about how they are imbricated in the systems driving climate change forward. Students are required to recognize that the book is not debating the validity of climate science; it is asking its readers what are they going to do about it. This enables the class to approach the problem of climate change inter-disciplinarily: what can the medical profession do, and how can it respond? What can businesses do? How will teachers respond? And science?

Furthermore, teachers can use the case studies in Klein in order to exemplify the importance of critical thinking in a functioning democracy. As an example, pairing Klein's chapter on geo-engineering with a discussion on how risk is calculated and distributed illustrates the importance of public engagement with technical debates. Students begin to understand that questioning the proposals of a scientific report is not necessarily the same as questioning the science that created it. While Klein recognizes the role science can creatively play in addressing climate change, an in-class critique of science can function as a constructive form of criticism that avoids essentializing the discourse into a binary. Students will understand that criticism is designed not to demolish the beliefs and practices of institutions like science, but to sharpen the language, tools, and practices of disciplines and institutions and to push them to do and be better. Such lessons demonstrate how students can actively follow and participate in public sphere discourse instead of only passively observing it. Furthermore, one hopes that students understand such participation is necessary in a functioning democracy.

Above, I have illustrated a few ways that Klein's book can be useful to academia. My goal in this article was not only to review *This Changes Everything,* but to make clear that climate change demands that academics and scholars, whether in the humanities or sciences, move beyond scholarship and make activism, inside the classroom and outside of our institutions, a moral imperative. Klein's original question has changed by the end of the book—she is no longer asking what is wrong with us, but how can we help? This is an appropriate question, and one that reflects the spirit of *Works and Days*. The journal, through decades of publication and circulation, challenges academics to understand the connection between activism and scholarship. Climate change engages the problems of globalization, the

structural disenfranchisement of populations and peoples, and the need for constructive social action. If Klein is right that climate change is changing everything, and I believe that she is, then we must take up the call that *Works and Days* began with and challenge the boundaries that bog down and bind discourse in order to make a more inclusive and constructive democracy.

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Section II:

The Rhetorical Landscape

of Capitalism and Climate