

The Best Is the Enemy of the Good: The Gamble of the Environmental Jeremiad

Carl G. Herndl

The American jeremiad was born in an effort to impose metaphor upon reality. It was nourished by an imagination at once defiant of history and profoundly attuned to the historical forces that were shaping the community.
—Sacvan Bercovitch

It turns out that what constitutes moralizing is more difficult to put into words than to feel under one's skin. —
Jane Bennett

In her review of Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything*, the environmental writer Elizabeth Kolbert describes Klein's dire account of the ecological and political situation of climate change. Kolbert concludes that in the face of her trenchant critique of extractivism, global capitalism and the continual failure of international policy, Klein is "maddeningly" optimistic. She closes by suggesting that Klein, like the "Big Green" environmental groups which she calls "warmists," is "telling a fable she hopes will do some good." Not surprisingly, Klein objects strenuously to Kolbert's use of the term "fable." As Kolbert points out, however, fables can be useful. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, widely seen as one beginning of the modern environmental movement, famously opens with "A Fable for Tomorrow." As Klein herself argues, "a great deal of the work of deep social change involves having debates in which new stories can be told to replace the old ones that have failed us" (461). In the case of *This Changes Everything* this is new wine in an old bottle. Klein's story of climate crisis takes the form of what Andrew Murphy calls the progressive jeremiad, a popular genre of American political rhetoric.

Klein's book tells a narrative of sin and possible salvation. The first half describes the culpability of global capitalism and the neo-

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liberal ideology of radical individualism, self interest, and market deregulation. It argues that the post-industrial societies of the global North created the lion's share of the climate change problem over the last century and a half and that they are unwilling to accept their responsibilities. The analysis and data here are impressive. The case is overwhelming. The second half of the book holds out the possibility of hope and regeneration inspired by Blockadia, by indigenous movements and by "movements of 'people or groups of people' who 'adopt a certain set of dynamics that do not fit within the capitalist culture'" (450). Whether this is possible is an open question as even Klein acknowledges in a number of sobering moments throughout her book. But this narrative is certainly rhetorically astute; appeals to fear and anger over climate change and its villains can easily overwhelm people and lead to apathy unless they are accompanied by a sense of agency and possible alternatives (Moser & Dilling 164-65). Whether it is genuine or not, the promise of hope and regeneration is necessary if the book is going to motivate action and change. The genre of the jeremiad manages the rhetorical and emotional whiplash as we move from the devastating critique of the first half of the book to the wild optimism of the last section. The jeremiad also allows Klein to adopt the moral position and rhetorical strategy of a tradition of radical reformists like the nineteenth century abolitionists with whom Klein identifies herself. Klein's adaptation of the genre into what I will call the environmental jeremiad, however, has both rhetorical and policy consequences that are troubling.

Klein's Environmental Jeremiad

The jeremiad is a flexible genre that invokes the warnings by the Biblical prophet Jeremiah and it has a long history in American political rhetoric. It is a persuasive genre designed to fire the imagination of listeners and motivate them to action. Thus, it is an especially useful genre for social movements that seek to forge a collective identity and motivate social change. Throughout its long history, the genre has been successfully adapted to shifting cultural and historic circumstances. As Perry Miller and Sacvan Bercovitch have argued, it was a powerful force in puritan America, defining both the national mission and the myth of American exceptionalism. In later incarnations, the jeremiad was significant in the political rhetoric around the Civil War and the abolitionist movement in the nineteenth century and it sur-

vives in the civil rights movements and the cultural wars of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Bercovitch traces the flexibility of the jeremiad as its content and context shift from the theocracy of seventeenth century puritan colonies to the military and commercial needs of nineteenth century America. Similarly, David Howard-Pitney describes how the puritan jeremiad evolved to accommodate the political and economic arguments of the nineteenth century abolitionist movement and the civil rights movement of the twentieth century. According to Bercovitch,

[a]nd yet the rhetoric, while dramatically enlarged in its applications, has essentially the same structure. The shifts in subject and concept during this period [the nineteenth century] show the flexibility of the form; the widespread use of the jeremiad to mobilize the country attests to its efficacy. (119)

From a rhetorical perspective, the compelling question is whether Klein's environmental jeremiad will be similarly efficacious. With its acerbic condemnation of global capitalism, American political intransigence, and our culture of hyperconsumption, will it galvanize an activist community to militate for policies that take climate change seriously or will it alienate so many readers that even modest policy deliberations become paralyzed by the partisan warfare she embraces? In the meantime, the clash between Klein's jeremiad and the discourse of Right-wing organizations such as the Heartland Institute occlude the possibilities for alternative policies and practices. As Sacvan Bercovitch observed about the contest between the jeremiad and anti-jeremiad in nineteenth century America, "In this country, both the jeremiad and the anti-jeremiad foreclosed alternatives. . . ." (191). Thus, Klein's book risks increasing the rhetorical and political polarization that already plagues our current political stalemate and rejects alternative practices which she condemns as moderate and incrementalist.

The jeremiad, old or new, tells the narrative of a degenerate present compared to a more virtuous past, and then holds out the promise of renewal and salvation. As Andrew Murphy argues, its power comes from its ability to balance a lament over the evils of the present and the deep sense of hope in ultimate promise (3). The jeremiad's political and rhetorical power, its ability to move listeners to social and political action, lies in its ability to evoke a dynamic tension between despair and hope (12). The traditional American jeremiad man-

ages this juxtaposition by appealing either to a deep faith in God's justice and mercy or on a notion of American exceptionalism, of America as the "chosen nation" and the shining city on the hill, the promise of America as unique among nations. It is the balance of critique and despair against hope and promise that distinguishes the jeremiad from both nostalgic or critical analysis and from celebratory stories of progress and triumphalism. As Bercovitch writes, the American jeremiad imposed the myth of America as the chosen land in defiance of the reality of historical conditions to close the gap between the real and the ideal.

According to Murphy, the jeremiad has three central elements, though some examples dwell on one element more than others. The jeremiad identifies problems and describes them as a decline from a more just, virtuous or egalitarian past and often offers copious evidence that documents the contemporary decline. In puritan American, this was the commonplace of the preacher declaiming how the colonies had broken covenant with the Lord and fallen into sin. In contemporary America, the political Right regularly laments what it sees as the damning failures of liberal culture, whether that be abortion, LGBT rights or the general abandonment of what it sees as traditional values. The political left similarly laments the contemporary fall from a former sense of community, the rise of individualistic values, increasing social isolation or the rise of corporate culture which replaces more communitarian and democratic cultures of the past. Klein's work similarly documents the loss of community, the rise of hyper-consumerism, the repeated failure of the "political class" to fight their corporate sponsors and pass sensible climate policy in what she refers to as the "post-democratic" era. Politically our new era is marked by irrational partisan opposition that reverses the moderate partisanship of the past. As she writes,

It seems hard to believe today, but as recently as 2008, tackling climate change still had a veneer of bipartisan support, even in the United States. That year, Republican stalwart Newt Gingrich did a TV spot with Democratic congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, then Speaker of the House, in which they pledged to join forces and fight climate change together. And in 2007, Rupert Murdoch—whose Fox news channel relentlessly amplifies the climate change denial movement—launched an incentive program at Fox to encourage employees to buy hybrid cars (Murdoch announced he had purchased one himself).
(35)

The decline of bipartisan politics is echoed by what are almost clichés about consumer culture and mass marketing. Klein writes that,

Encouraging the frenetic and indiscriminate consumption of essentially disposable products can no longer be the system's goal. Goods must once again be made to last and the use of energy-intensive long-haul transport will need to be rationed—reserved for those cases where goods cannot be produced locally or where local production is more carbon-intensive.” (86-87)

Klein summarizes the structural change from a more functional past to a new, more corrupt era of American culture succinctly:

The three policy pillars of this new era are familiar to us all: privatization of the public sphere, deregulation of the corporate sector, and lower corporate taxation, paid for with cuts to public spending.” (19)

While Klein's condemnation of contemporary culture borders on the clichéd, she is not wrong. The *New York Times* recently ran an article about how the rise of services like Amazon and same day delivery have increased our collective carbon footprint and created a phenomenal amount of cardboard waste (Richtel). National polls from which Klein quotes document the decline of public belief and concern for climate change. And the rise of dysfunctional partisanship in government is a staple of editorials and the chattering class. The idea of Nancy Pelosi and Paul Ryan collaborating on climate change policy seems almost unimaginably nostalgic. Indeed, as I will argue shortly, it is the thoroughness and general accuracy of Klein's structural analysis of the failure of our contemporary political and economic institutions that make her subsequent turn toward optimism so problematic.

Beyond catechizing the political and economic failure of the present, the jeremiad typically identifies turning points where culture broke from a better past. For contemporary conservatives, the cultural shift of the 1960s is often the moment when America went to Hell in a handbasket, as are various supreme court decisions like those banning school prayer or legalizing abortion. On the Left, 9/11 and the subsequent rise of a security culture or the Citizens United decision in the Supreme Court and the growth of uncontrolled corporate spending on elections may well serve as turning points in a narrative of a political decline from privacy rights, civil rights, and democracy. For Klein, globalization and the triumph of international trade agree-

ments serve as a convenient tipping point in contemporary economic and political culture. She compares international trade agreements and international climate agreements as “two solitudes,” the first a remarkable but destructive success and the later an equally destructive failure. In telling her story, Klein seizes on the ironic fact that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Rio Earth summit, and the signing of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) all occurred in 1992. Subsequent chapters develop the argument that NAFTA and similar global trade agreements have institutionalized trade rules that stifle environmentally friendly practices and limit the growth of the green economy. She details, for example, how NAFTA regulations against subsidizing national industries effectively shuttered a solar panel manufacturer in Canada, putting the company and its workers out of work. Whether NAFTA is singlehandedly responsible for our current dystopic economic and political situation is not the point. NAFTA serves as a synecdoche for the emergence of a global trade and economic system that has effectively stifled climate change policy and economic change. Klein articulates the bitterness of the irony in a characteristically poignant turn of phrase, “[p]ut differently, the liberation of world markets, a process powered by the liberation of unprecedented amounts of fossil fuels from the earth, has dramatically sped up the same process that is liberating Arctic ice from existence” (20–21).

The final element of the jeremiad is a call for reform and renewal often in messianic or millennial language. Where the traditional American jeremiad promised a return to the civic and democratic promise of America, Klein’s environmental jeremiad proposes the war against climate change as the “unfinished business of liberation” of humanity (459). She quotes Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* where he writes that “the issue which blocks the horizon,” superseding even the struggle between colonialism and anti-colonialism, capitalism and socialism “is the need for a redistribution of wealth” (459). For Klein, the climate change movement will change “everything” because it draws together two centuries of progressive social movements. Her description of the scope and synthetic power of the climate movement is worth quoting at length.

There is, however, another way to look at this track record [of unfinished social revolutions]: these economic demands—for public services that work, for decent housing, for land redistribution—represent nothing less

than the unfinished business of the most powerful liberation movements of the past two centuries, from civil rights, to feminism to Indigenous sovereignty. The massive global investments required to respond to the climate threat—to adapt humanely and equitably to the heavy weather we have already locked in, and to avert the truly catastrophic warming we can still avoid—is a chance to change all that, and to get it right this time. It could deliver the equitable redistribution of agricultural lands that was supposed to follow independence from colonial rule and dictatorship; it could bring the jobs and homes that Martin Luther King dreamed of; it could bring jobs and clean water to native communities; it could at last turn on the lights and running water in every South African township. Such is the promise of a Marshall Plan for the earth. (458)

This prophetic paragraph returns to the themes which Klein has developed throughout the book as she argues that poverty, justice, equality, and climate action are all intimately linked. One great virtue of Klein's analysis is precisely the way she connects seemingly disparate environmental, social, and economic problems. For Klein, the climate movement unites all these historic struggles like "[a] rushing river fed by countless streams, gathering collective force to finally reach the sea" (459).

The image of centuries of unfinished liberation movements finding common cause, uniting like many streams which together accumulate an almost irresistible force and finally reach fulfillment in the image of the sea suggests a kind of historic inevitability that animates the peroration of the jeremiad. This optimistic crescendo provides an emotional balance to the structural critique in the first half of the book, closing the gap, as Bercovith writes, between the real and the ideal. But this optimism, like that of the traditional jeremiad, brings with it practical, political and rhetorical consequences that are stubborn, problematic and risky. These represent the gamble of my title.

Abolition and the Rhetoric of Immoderation

Klein's use of the jeremiad is not accidental. Certainly its familiar structure manages the emotional dynamic of her argument and offers readers the sense of agency they need to move forward with climate action. As she calls for a mass social movement to revolutionize global politics, the dominant economic structure and the ideology of individualism and market fundamentalism, she recognizes the scope

of the change for which she is calling. She writes, “I have no doubt about their necessity, but I question their political feasibility every day, especially given that climate change puts us on a tight and unforgiving deadline” (26). In the face of her own doubt and readers’ likely skepticism, she says that the grass roots revolution for which she advocates is not unprecedented and utopian, and offers the abolitionist movement of the nineteenth century as her example. Klein acknowledges that the analogy between the climate movement and abolitionism “is far from perfect” (456). Nonetheless, she claims that the abolitionist movement proves that the kind of fundamental ideological and political revolution that climate change demands is possible.

I am less interested in the accuracy of the analogy than in how the moral absolute which drove the abolitionist movement determines the logic of Klein’s political and rhetorical choices. As Klein reaches for the “moral clarity” and “full moral voice” (464) of the abolitionist movement, she looks to nineteenth century political orators like Thomas Clarkson, Wendell Phillips and Fredrick Douglas, many of whom used various forms of the jeremiad. As Klein comments, “[t]his kind of fiery, highly divisive rhetoric was typical of a battle with so much at stake. . . . [t]he rhetoric and arguments of American abolitionists could be even starker and more uncompromising” (463) than that of their British colleagues. The abolitionist movement, then, gives Klein not only a rhetorical genre but also warrants her own uncompromising and divisive political and rhetorical choices.

Social movement scholars describe social movements as framing contests in ways that clarify Klein’s position in the field of climate deliberation and what is at stake in her work. Benford and Snow’s synthetic analysis of social movements argues that the rhetorical and political work of movements like the climate movement are struggles to frame problems and our responses to them. The most relevant framing activities in this case involve what Benford and Snow call diagnostic, prognostic, and resonance framing (Benford and Snow 615–22). Diagnostic framing concerns the cause, definition or origin of a problem like climate change, and, as Benford and Snow argue, environmental movements generally agree on the causes of environmental problems. In Klein’s case the diagnostic framing that constitutes the first half of the book is indeed widely shared; her analysis draws on a very large and robust literature to make her case against corpo-

rate interests, neoliberalism and the ideology of extractivism. Prognostic framing involves deliberation about what movement members should do and who should take these actions, and resonance framing concerns how a movement should present itself in the broader social and political context. As Benford and Snow suggest, this is where conflict often occurs within movements. I suggest that this is where the stubborn, problematic, and risky consequences of Klein's environmental jeremiad lie. Few people in the climate movement disagree about the causes of climate change, but what to do about it and how to position the movement in contemporary culture are difficult questions of strategy. The conflict over prognostic framing captures Klein's all-or-nothing rhetorical gamble on radical revolution and the rejection of half measures. The resonance framing conflict captures the haunting question of the efficiency of Klein's environmental jeremiad in the current political and ideological context. It is to these choices and consequences to which I now turn.

Maddeningly Optimistic

Klein warrants her call for the radical overthrow of global capitalism with the argument that time is running out fast and that what we have done in the past has not worked. The temporal urgency of the crisis, however compelling, seems starkly incompatible with the solution Klein proposes. The first 300 pages of the book detail a situation of such entrenched ideology, economic investment, institutionalized failure and modernist arrogance that it seems unlikely if not impossible for the mass social movements invoked in the last 160 pages to reverse this in the short time left to us. Klein articulates this dilemma nicely herself when she writes: "Because of our lost decades, it is time to turn this around now. Is it possible? Absolutely. Is it possible without challenging the fundamental logic of deregulated capitalism? Not a chance." (24) "Decade Zero" as she refers to the present, is a scientific estimate of the time left before we reach possible "tipping points" that will disrupt the non-linear dynamics of the climate system and precipitate potentially catastrophic change. For example, as the arctic tundra melts, the snow cover which reflects sunlight is replaced by the dark earth beneath it, the tundra absorbs more solar radiation. The increase in the rate at which solar radiation is absorbed increases the temperature which, in turn, increases the rate of solar absorption in a viscous cycle. In addition, as the tundra

melts, it releases huge amounts of carbon dioxide stored in the frozen soil, thus aggravating the global greenhouse effect. Klein tells us that the chance to hold climate change to two degrees closed in 2017 (230). Decade zero is also a metaphor for the urgent need for policy and institutional change. The conflict between existential urgency and institutional intransigence make Klein's solution to the crisis unlikely if not impossible. Her call for nothing short of a global revolution—in the next decade—is not realistic. The jeremiad is not a realistic or pragmatic genre and the judgment that Klein's solutions are unrealistic is the kind of "moderate" judgment Klein condemns. Nonetheless, while framing our choices as a binary opposition between consistently failed policies of the past and a radical global revolution may be rhetorically useful for inspiring a revolution, it leaves out too many things we should consider in policy and in communication. This is why Kolbert calls the book maddeningly optimistic.

What does it mean to "change everything" about how modernism and global capitalism are institutionalized and to do it in a decade? This question may seem unfair, but I take dead seriously the temporal exigency that warrants the book's radical position. Klein herself is not unaware of this challenge or how improbable it seems. In one of her regular hedges, she writes "I have no doubt of their [the fundamental changes she advocates] necessity, but I question their political feasibility every day, especially given that climate change puts us on such a tight and unforgiving deadline" (26). Yet this radical change is precisely what she consistently demands. Though there are quiet moments of pragmatism, the consistent argument is that we take no prisoners, that this is an all or nothing battle: "think big, go deep, and move the ideological pole far away from the stifling market fundamentalism that has become the greatest enemy of planetary health" (26). As she says elsewhere "That is a big ask" (23).

The social, economic, and political scope of the challenge Klein presents us is clear when she writes:

The real reason we are failing to rise to the climate moment is because the actions required directly challenge our reigning economic paradigm (deregulated capitalism combined with public austerity), the stories on which western cultures are founded (that we stand apart from Nature and can outsmart its limits), as well as many of the activities that form our identities and define our communities (shopping, living virtually, shopping some more). They also spell extinction to the richest and most powerful industry the world has ever known—the oil and

gas industry, which cannot survive in anything like its current form if we humans are to avoid our own extinction. In short, we have not responded to this challenge because we are locked in – politically, physically, culturally. Only when we identify these chains do we have a chance of breaking free. (63)

We seem caught between a rock and a hard place: between an implacable biogeophysical timeline and a global economic ideology that has eviscerated our politics. If we think about institutions and forms of institutionalization, it is not just the sheer size of this “ask,” but the nature of the changes involved that emerge. Changing these institutions means breaking up the material/semiotic assemblages that constitute the economic paradigm, our cultural relation to nature, and our hyper-materialism. As Bruno Latour has argued, the broader and more extended an assemblage is and the more actants or elements it articulates, the more durable and stable it is (*Pandora's Hope*). It is precisely the durability and stability of the existing networks that militate against Klein's prognostic framing and her argument that only a mass protest movement can save us now.

In her analysis of the two “solitudes” international trade bills and climate compacts, Klein offers the beginnings of an institutional analysis of free trade, but she does not really pursue the way that assemblage articulates ideas, materiality and identity. NAFTA is an idea, a discourse, a set of legal and economic rules, a set of international institutions, and a whole suite of products, commodities and technologies. As Klein says, technological innovation is restricted by “protections for technology patents enshrined under WTO” (76). Violations of NAFTA are adjudicated by a legal institution for dispute settlement. These legal mechanisms are part of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund policy and daily practices negotiated by sovereign nations. Behind these visible networks within individual countries, industries and companies are shifting production, moving facilities, and firing and hiring workers. Communities are setting tax policy, building infrastructure, and adjusting to new employment conditions. And this is true in every nation that is party to NAFTA. These institutionalized policies take a local habitation and a name in far reaching material practices, social commitments, and community structures. They connect people and things in durably sedimented institutions.

The stability of these deeply sedimented institutions can be seen in industrial agriculture and the growth of the “energy-intensive,

higher-emissions model of industrial agriculture around the world,” which Klein decries (78). I spent a decade working in sustainable agriculture and with scholars, practitioners, farmers, and policy analysts fighting for precisely the agro-ecology Klein advocates. I worked with the “Practical Farmers of Iowa,” a farmer organized community collaboration with the researchers from Iowa State university—a grass roots, citizen-lead movement for sustainable and organic farm practices. This was wonderful, inspiring work, but also a long, hard, uneven process. Farming practice in the Midwest is powerfully determined by the US Farm Bill that is negotiated in congress every five years. The agriculture committees in congress are among the oldest in America and date back to the early 19th century, and they have a legacy of constituents and interests that date back decades. The farm bill connects policy for commodities like corn, wheat, and soy beans, conservation measures like the conservation reserve program (CRP), international trade, nutrition programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), rural development like electrical cooperatives, forestry, energy policy such as ethanol production targets and crop insurance. The fertilizer, energy, and investment intensive model of industrial agriculture has developed in rural America for decades. It shapes the curriculum and faculty research at numerous American universities. It literally shapes the human and physical landscape and the mundane practices of the people who live in rural America. It determines not just what farmers grow, how they plant, and how they finance their farms, it also shapes social networks, housing patterns, land ownership, and recreation activities. It shapes what happens in 4H and Future Farmers of America where young boys and girls learn to be farmers. To fully understand the way something like the Farm Bill is institutionalized, we need a full-fledged actor network analysis to trace the extended material and semiotic network that is agriculture in America. And the Farm Bill is only the policy instrument of the global agriculture industry.

The second item in Klein’s list is the “stories on which western culture is founded,” particularly the relationship to nature that underwrites the ideology of extractivism. Klein borrows the term from political science to name an economic and political model that embraces endless growth based on a “resource-depleting model as the road to development” (169). Extractivism “is the reduction of life into objects for the use of others, giving them no integrity or value of their own—turning living complex ecosystems into ‘natural re-

sources, mountains into 'overburden' (as the mining industry terms the forests, rocks, and streams that get in their way)" (169). Klein identifies Frances Bacon as the patron saint of extractivism and argues that this ideology "of a completely knowable and controllable earth animated not only the Scientific Revolution but, critically, the colonial project as well, which sent ships crisscrossing the globe to poke and prod and bring the secrets, and wealth, back to their respective crowns" (170). This is nothing less than the driving ideology behind what Bruno Latour calls the "Modern Constitution" (Latour 1993). It is predicated on the ontological distinction that distributes everything into the mutually exclusive realms of Nature and Culture. As Latour makes very clear, this is an avatar of the grounding distinctions of modernity. It supports not only our policy framework, but also the institution of modern science. Like Klein, Latour calls for us to rethink this relationship, and in *Politics of Nature* argues that this distinction and the myth of knowable and controllable nature precludes sensible policy. Latour and Klein are convincing in their analysis, but this story is institutionalized everywhere. It is naturalized in things as disparate as NSF grant proposal guidelines and evaluation criteria, a Christian belief that man was given dominion over the earth and what A.O. Lovejoy long ago referred to as the belief in the great chain of being in which man ruled the earth as God rule man. Deconstructing and replacing the dilemmas of modernity has been a project of critical theory since the middle of the last century. This is an intellectually, ethically, and politically laudable project. Doable in a decade? Probably not.

At least as difficult a challenge is Klein's last item, our daily habits and mundane practices. She satirizes "shopping, living virtually, and shopping some more" (63), but the ideological pillars she wants to overturn also shape our identities and communities. This is not something that can be reduced to a cultural passion for shopping or even the hyper-materialism for which shopping is an avatar. More than ideology and abstractions, material practices are us. Changing the stories and practices that tell us who we are, who our community is, how we should live together, and what gives us pleasure, is going to be much harder than changing free trade agreements or merely reshaping the World Trade Organization or World Bank. These practices are routinized in institutions but also in our individual and collective *habitus*.

The institutions that created climate change and which must be changed are extended networks of human and non-human actors,

of discursive and material practices. The more extended those networks are, the more durable they and the institutions they constitute are. As Anthony Giddens says, institutions emerge from routinized practice and make action possible. They are designed to be both durable and flexible. Networks are solidified and extended as words, ideas, people, things are articulated to them. As Mike Hulme, former director of the Tyndal Center for Climate Change Research, has argued, climate change is unlike all previous environmental challenges, precisely because of the extended network that is the energy industry. Add to that our modernist conception of science, nature, and the human, as well as all our mundane daily practices, and you have a dauntingly extended and durable network.

Moderation and Low Hanging Fruit

Just as the uncompromising logic Klein adopts from the abolitionist movement sustains her argument in the face of the herculean scope of her project and her own moments of doubt, that same logic leads Klein to reject half measures and any logic of pragmatism. This is the moment where Klein's fervor opens prognostic and resonance frame disputes and questions of what we should do and how we should present ourselves. Faced with the reality that wealthy nations must make deep cuts in their emissions now and in the absence of new "whiz-bang technologies," Klein asks a rhetorical question: "So what do we do in the meantime" (90)? Her response is to double down on her bet for a radical change of everything because "anything short of that is not worth doing" (25). She rejects incremental action, moderate positions, and the "low hanging fruit" of easy, practical steps toward mitigation, because they are at best distractions, at worst, they reify the very capitalist ideology that is the fundamental problem. These positions constitute the "fetish for centrism—of reasonableness, seriousness, splitting the difference, and generally not getting overly excited about anything" (22). Klein's argument here could be taken from the famous scene in the movie *Network* where the news anchor sticks his head out the window and yells "I'm mad as Hell, and I'm not going to take it anymore."

Answering her question about what we should do, Klein writes:

And what we can do—what doesn't require a technological or infrastructure revolution—is to consume less, right away. Policies based on encouraging people to consume

less are far more difficult for our political class to embrace than policies that are about encouraging people to consume green. Consuming green just means substituting one power source for another, or one model of consumer goods for a more efficient one. The reason we have placed all our eggs in the green tech or green efficiency basket is precisely because these changes are safely within the market logic—indeed they encourage us to go out and buy more new, efficient, green cars and washing machines. (90)

The clarity of Klein's logic here is attractive. She is arguing against the "techno-fix" solution—the notion that new technologies and production practices, from green chemistry to green tourism, can solve the climate dilemma created by our past technoscientific industrialization—and in favor of fundamental social and ethical change. This is a purist's argument. It mirrors the denialist argument that we don't need to worry about climate change because new technologies will save us. Seen from Klein's analogy with abolition, it makes sense. Yet, like almost every other choice in her book, this is framed as a stark binary that rejects half measures and incremental change. If I put photovoltaic cells on my roof as her climate warriors learn to do on the Cheyenne reservation, I am still just consuming green, "substituting one power source for another." If I pay a little more to use phosphate free dishwasher detergent that reduces the phosphate load in the estuary where I live, I am still merely consuming green. When I eat only grass-fed lamb so that the farm where my food is produced is covered, not with corn, but with perennial grasses that stop erosion and use no fertilizer, I am still merely consuming green.

Let me articulate the danger of Klein's rejection of these alternative practices, these low hanging fruit. At one point she condemns "monetizing nature's 'services'" (39) as soft-pedaling climate action so that it is compatible with the basic logic of the market. In doing so, she condemns one of the crucial tools of agroecosystem management, a movement she lauds elsewhere. In sustainable agriculture and many other environmental projects "ecosystem services" is a concept used to preserve ecosystems by pointing out what it would cost to provide the necessary functions like water filtration, insect control, coastal protection that an ecosystem provides naturally. So, for example, sustainable agriculture advocates argue for protecting bats and their habitat by pointing out that bats pollinate many of our food crops and that it would cost enormous sums to do that job with-

out the bat population. Similarly, a coastal mangrove swamp provides valuable protection from storm surge and habitat where many sport fish species spawn and grow to maturity. Putting a monetary value on the function or services of an ecosystem is a powerful argument for ecological preservation. It is a flexible policy tool that has preserved fragile land, protected threatened species, and preserved rare ecosystems. Without this tool, policies like the U.S. Department of Agriculture's "conservation reserve program" could not exist. This program pays farmers to leave fragile, highly erodible land out of production and preserves a modicum of biodiversity, provides habitat for migratory birds, buffers waterways against fertilizer runoff and supplies a host of other "ecosystem services." These are important benefits for local and national communities, and their loss would erode our already fragile environmental policy. As Klein and other critics have pointed out, however, the concept of ecosystem services does reinforce and naturalize the basic logic of market capitalism by implying that everything can be assigned a price. Klein is not wrong that a term like "ecosystem services" naturalizes a fundamental economic logic, but condemning it as a fetish for centrism or reasonableness is an enormous policy and rhetorical risk.

The risk of Klein's polemic is perhaps most evident in what is missing from her agenda. Her book is about climate mitigation and the radical program to change everything. Almost nowhere does she talk about the other two elements of most "moderate" climate policy—adaptation and retreat. To be fair, Klein does talk about sensible actions that communities are taking in the face of climate change, and she does mention the need to "adapt humanely and equitably to the heavy weather we have already locked in" (458). But the policy and projects of climate adaptation are almost invisible in her book. Dwelling on the details of adaptation and the difficulties in persuading communities to take those inconvenient and expensive changes not only accepts the inevitability of climate change, but reduces the emotional crescendo of her exhortation. This is a reasonable rhetorical choice, but a dangerous one. To preserve the jeremiad's absolute commitment to reducing consumption and the disaster of extreme extractivism, Klein's strategy forces her to largely ignore the necessity of adaptation. Emotionally, if not logically, a focus on adaptation admits a certain degree of defeat and acceptance of climate change and complicates the clarity of her exhortation.

In urban planning, analysts talk about wicked problems for which there are no solutions and which call for difficult trade-offs and compromises (Rittel and Webber). Klein's absolutist rhetoric plays out a compelling logic of moral clarity, but in doing so, it reduces wicked problems to simple choices between climate virtue and market culpability. Klein turns away, sometimes with biting sarcasm, from practical action that will have real benefits for ecosystems, human communities, and the climate. To borrow a metaphor from a climate scientist I heard a decade ago, there is no silver bullet for climate change, only a shot gun shell full of silver pellets.

Outsider Critics and the Problem of Resonance

When Klein reminds Elizabeth Kolbert that her book is really about ideology, she is in many ways correct. Her analysis of extractivism, global capitalism, and the language of economic calculation is an example of ideological critique in the Marxist tradition. I am deeply sympathetic to Klein's critique. Eviscerating the greedy energy corporations, calling out the complicity of our politicians, and condemning the manipulative denialism of the Heartland Institute is deeply gratifying. Watching villains get what is coming to them is reassuring. Outside those moments of righteous enthusiasm, however, I worry about whether this sort of trenchant critique will do more harm than good in the current political and cultural moment. Or, to truncate Bruno Latour's question by a word, has critique run out of steam (Latour "Why Has Critique")? What are the rhetorical contours and consequences of this environmental jeremiad?

If the logic of Klein's moral clarity limits her policy choices, her rhetorical choices are even more exclusionary. When she embraces the uncompromising and divisive rhetoric of the abolitionists and the pyrotechnics of the jeremiad, she adopts the ethos of what the environmental political theorist John Meyer calls the "outsider critic" (Meyer 5–10). Meyer's outsider critic is the intellectual or analyst who stands apart from society and delivers some form of ideology critique that catechizes and condemns the attitudes, beliefs and inaction of the masses. Recall Klein's dismissive "shopping, living virtually, and more shopping." Meyer is concerned with what climate communication scholars like Moser and Dilling call the "science-action gap" which he redescribes as the "resonance dilemma" (Meyer 1–10). He

argues that the way environmental problems like climate change are understood and communicated often generates a good deal of concern, but fails to motivate action or change. For Meyer, the root of this problem is not an ideological fault as Klein suggests, but a rhetorical failure. Meyer argues that the dominant model of environmental argumentation relies on appeals to the authority of science and morality to direct action and that it does not resonate with the daily experience of most Americans (3). The traditional epistemic and ethically based argument also occludes the political judgments which rely on mundane experience and which shape public policy. Meyer is not rejecting either science or morality, but he is arguing that focusing on these alone, as Klein does, leads environmentalists to disregard the complexity of political judgment and to regard their opponents as ignorant, apathetic, or immoral (5). These are precisely the rhetorical grounds and risks of Klein's jeremiad. Klein writes with a sarcasm that dismisses many environmental NGOs as "warmists," vilifies our "political elites," and emphasizes the difference between environmental critics who know and understand reality and the public who are submerged in a corrupt ideology. This is the position that Bruno Latour caricatures as the "belief in belief" that warrants critique; the critic believes that while she has knowledge, others merely have beliefs ("Why Has Critique?"). For example, Klein frames the contest over climate and capitalism as a war in which mainstream environmentalists are essentially collaborators:

I do not question the desire on the part of these self-styled pragmatists to protect the earth from catastrophic warming. But between the Heartlanders who recognize that climate change is a profound threat to our economic and social systems and therefore deny its scientific reality, and those who claim climate change requires only minor tweaks to business-as-usual and therefore allow themselves to believe in its reality, it's not clear who is more deluded. (211)

As Jane Bennett has argued, the moralizing element of an implicit or explicit condemnation, such as that of Klein's jeremiad, emphasizes the distance between the critic and the public, and, more importantly, is as likely to offend and alienate readers as it is to inspire them (Bennett 8). It is, as she suggests in the epigraph to this article, easy to feel under one's skin.

Meyers points out that debates over the best strategy for environmental advocacy are typically seen as a choice between the rhetoric

of the outside critic like Klein and the pragmatic or collaborative style of what he calls “inside players.” These are the green NGOs who work within the dominant political and economic model and who Klein condemns as deluded “bean counters” (464). Meyer traces the real root of our collective inaction and apathy to the failure of environmentalist arguments to resonate with average citizens. In choosing how to address his fellow citizens about environmental challenges, Meyer suggests, “the criteria for choice are dependent upon pragmatic judgments about the act’s likely success in achieving the radical goal of greater resonance with the everyday concerns of the public” (10). In order to get to the rhetorical and political roots of the resonance dilemma, Meyer turns to his notion of the “inside critic.” Rather than launch acerbic critiques of our everyday practices, the inside critic strives to provide a critical perspective on business as usual, but does so from within the lifeworld or mundane experience of the public. While Klein might dismiss this inside critic as moderate, incrementalist, or reasonable, Meyer suggests that rather than condemn daily practices in the service of radical change, the inside critic can help her fellows understand daily practices as themselves ambiguous and pliable (Meyer 8; Walzer 31). He proposes that by engaging the daily material practices of people’s lives, environmental rhetoric can resonate and begin to cross the science-action gap in ways the caustic rhetoric of the outside critic cannot.

Meyer explores the rhetorical possibilities of engaging our practices of land ownership and use, of automobility, and of homes and household practices. I’ll take up his argument about automobility, because in American culture private transportation and the automobile might well be the hardest case to crack. While changing Americans’ transportation behavior is a daunting task, it is also a crucial part of addressing climate change. Meyer sketches a strategy that begins with understanding the enduring appeal of automobility and then disrupting that seemingly unimpeachable appeal:

Reflecting upon everyday practices can help us to identify those spaces where it [the argument that citizens in postindustrial society are unwilling to sacrifice or change] is least persuasive and arguments for change the most likely to resonate. For example, I argue that reimagining automobility in contemporary society must begin by recognizing the distinctive ways such a society enables a sense of individual freedom. Otherwise, ideas for reducing cars and driving will rightly be resisted as a paternalistic threat to this freedom. Yet the relationship between

automobility and freedom is not unidirectional. Attention to freedom also enables greater clarity about the many ways in which dependence on cars also constrains freedom. (17)

Meyer recognizes that automobility is so pervasive not because automobile companies make fortunes, but because the private automobile is part of our emotional attachment to freedom as an ideal and a practice. Ignoring the vast appeal of the automobile is rhetorically short sighted. Meyer suggests that the critic should accept citizens' attachment to freedom. That is the "inside" part of his alternative. But he also imagines ways he might disrupt that immediate linkage between cars and freedom by exploring how car ownership and use limits our freedoms in everyday life. That is the critical element of his alternative.

Another way to understand the rhetorical possibilities for the insider critic is to explore the role of place in citizens' understanding of climate change. The concept of place gathers together people's attachment to their physical surrounding, their sense of community and personal identity, and their daily experience moving through the physical and social geography in which they live. Place captures the way people dwell in a material and emotional locale (Herndl et al; Herndl & Zarengo). Researchers have begun to explore how citizens react to seeing the consequences of climate change on the places in which they live. The likely effects of sea level rise, for example, resonate with citizens in coastal communities. These tacit arguments for social change begin by accepting the everyday experience and affective power of place attachments and then addressing precisely those things citizens value in their emplaced dwelling.

Conclusion

This Changes Everything is an intimidating book both in the amount of scientific and social territory it covers and in the moral position it stakes out. It is hard to argue with a book that advocates for environmental justice by analogy to the abolitionist movement and invokes Fredrick Douglas, Martin Luther King, and Franz Fanon. In its radical position, however, the book enacts what Bennet calls the "moraline drift," characterized by a thorough self-certainty, an ideological or political purity, and a penchant for punitiveness (12–15). The book is a form of epideictic rhetoric one of whose functions is to

unify a community and clarify its values. Self-certainty, purity, and a willingness to condemn those who follow less radical practices appeals to the community of the faithful. Thus, the strategic value of this rhetoric may outweigh its truth value. The question then becomes whether the community to which the book speaks and which it solidifies is broad and inclusive enough to instigate the mass social movement to which Klein looks for salvation or whether its divisive absolutism will polarize and alienate the masses who would have to join the mass social movement Klein envisions. This asks Latour's question about critique in a more rhetorical way. What is the larger cost of a jeremiad that appeals only to the passions of the faithful?

Some part of my irritation with Klein's book is not simply its maddening optimism, but also the way her moralizing and purist rhetoric undercut much of what I teach in the college of sustainability. I teach students who will soon be professionals in business and industry to understand what is at stake in communicating about sustainability and what strategic choices they have. Much of this theory and pedagogy would constitute the moderate and reasonable practice Klein castigates. Like many environmental rhetoricians, however, I, too, feel the siren call of the jeremiad. But this seeming dilemma confuses categories; Klein is writing popular journalism for an audience of radical environmentalists while many rhetoricians teach young professionals who work tactically in more quotidian contexts. Klein invokes the crisis of decade zero to justify her jeremiad, but in a moment of calm reflection she suggests that "we do what we can." I am not suggesting that we abandon critique or even the rhetoric of the outside critic. I am suggesting, however, that Klein's gamble is both dangerous and unnecessary. Besides engaging in thoughtful critique, we must also practice the rhetoric of the insider critic, advocate for climate adaptation as well as mitigation, and engage the mundane and not just the apocalyptic.

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