

## Book Review

*DOPPELGANGERREGNAGLEPPOD A Trip into the Mirror World*

Naomi Klein

Toronto, Canada: Penguin, Random House, Knopf Canada

Reviewed by Eleanor D. Glor

Naomi Klein really does have a doppelganger, a double with whom she is regularly confused. A phenomenon recognized for hundreds of years, including by Edgar Allan Poe, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Sigmund Freud and Philip Roth, having a double-walker is an uncanny experience. The “Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” by Robert Louis Stevenson is a doppelganger story. Doppelgangers are doubles of living persons.

Naomi Klein is a Canadian intellectual and a democratic socialist. She has published eight other books, among them *No Logo*, *The Shock Doctrine*, *This Changes Everything and How to Change Everything*. She is a progressive activist who has been involved in the Occupy Wallstreet, Black Lives Matter and environmental movements. A journalist, she now teaches at the University of British Columbia (UBC) (interestingly, in the geography department) and is the founding co-director of UBC’s Centre for Climate Justice. Klein is highly articulate and has insights that others do not have. *The Innovation Journal: The Public Sector Innovation Journal* has previously reviewed four of her books: *On Fire: The (Burning) Case for a Green New Deal*, 2019; *No Is Not Enough: Resisting Trump’s Shock Politics and Winning the World We Need*, 2017; *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, 2014; and *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 2007. Her books are always timely, addressing big questions of serious subjects (page [p.] 3).

*Doppelganger: A Trip into the Mirror World* is more personal than her other ones that I have previously read (*No Logo*, *The Shock Doctrine*). I don’t usually find a personal approach helpful or particularly interesting but Klein succeeds in integrating her personal experiences into her discussions of important social issues. She is high-profile and a truth-teller. For this complex and comprehensive book, she had the support of many people, including a research team.

Naomi Klein’s doppelganger is Naomi Wolf—they share a first name. Klein has been chronically confused with Wolf for over a decade. Wolf is the well-known author of twelve books, most on women, and a commentator on women, beginning in the 1990s. Originally considered progressive, more recently she has changed her perspective and has thereby become of interest to the ideologically far-right. She is a regular guest on former USA President Donald Trump’s strategic advisor, Steve Bannon. Bannon hosts Wolf as a regular on his podcast, *War Room*. Klein describes Wolf as a “person who does many extreme things that cause strangers to chastise me [Klein] or thank me or express their pity for me” (p. 3). Wolf and her fellow travellers are in “open warfare against reality” (p. 5).

Interestingly, Naomi Klein has another doppelganger, Naomi Campbell, who testified at the international war crimes trial of former Liberian president Charles Taylor concerning allegations Taylor had gifted her a pouch of blood diamonds<sup>1</sup> after they met at a dinner party hosted by Nelson Mandela. Klein says: “It’s this intuitive awareness that elites occupy an interconnected world of their own, one where the laws governing the rest of us are shrugged off, that is the well-spring of today’s conspiracy singularity” (p. 137).

I too had a doppelganger, when I was in elementary school. We were confused because we looked somewhat alike, especially our physiques. Our classmates got over it as they got to know us better. Naomi Klein’s commenters did not. Yes, Klein assesses that she is confused with Naomi Wolf and Naomi Campbell because they share the same first names but also because automatic fill-in word processing software suggests their names instead of hers, when people mean hers.

This has had consequences for Klein. One is that she receives their hate mail as well as her own. A second is that people confuse what the Naomis have said attribute statements to the wrong person. A third is that this has caused confusion on the part of readers and muddied their sense of what Klein writes about and has to say. Vile things have been said to her because of this misinformation. Fourth, this has muddied the impact of what she has said.

*Doppelganger* begins with a discussion of Naomi Wolf and her current world. It comingles people who believe in conspiracies like QAnon, wellness hucksters, Covid-19 deniers, anti-vaccine hysterics and fascists, and consists of people with right wing agendas. These people, and others, have been empowered by technology, in particular cell phones. Klein sees the medical experimentation on and euthanasia of disabled people during the 1930s as a precursor to the genocide of Jews in Europe during the 1930s and World War II. She observes the merging of the politics of the far right and the far-out, autism falsehoods and COVID-19 epidemic and the anti-vax movement as prequels to the current situation that has created enormous wealth, enormous income inequality, support for right-wing populists and political and institutional disenchantment, along with lie-spreading technology, as having opened people to disbelief in the status quo and belief in falsehoods. She is worried by what our society has become, its welcoming of populists and its openness to fascism.

Klein sees the way people have been encouraged to focus on themselves (the individual), and not focus on the social and the unequal society we have allowed to happen as part of the problem. She devotes a chapter to “Unselfing”.

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<sup>1</sup> Blood diamonds, also known as conflict diamonds, are diamonds mined in war zones and sold to finance armed conflicts against legitimate governments. The diamonds are often mined using forced labor, including children, and are traded illegally to illegally to fund violent conflicts and human rights abuses. This definition was formed by the UN in the 1990s as brutal civil wars were waged in parts of western and central Africa by rebel groups in diamond-rich areas (<https://www.brilliantearth.com/en-ca/news/what-are-blood-diamonds/>).

## **About the Author:**

**Eleanor D. Glor** is Editor-in-Chief and Founding Publisher of *The Innovation Journal* (TIJ) ([www.innovation.cc](http://www.innovation.cc)) and Fellow, McLaughlin College, York University, Toronto. As a practitioner, she worked for the Government of Canada, two Canadian provincial governments, a regional municipality and a city. Eleanor has published about innovation in the areas of aging, rehabilitation, public health, aboriginal health, Saskatchewan and other Canadian innovations. She has published seven books, five chapters and 45 peer-reviewed articles on public sector innovation from an organizational, especially a public service perspective. Eleanor published five articles in a special issue of TIJ on Public Innovation in Saskatchewan, Canada—Volume 28(1), 2023, <https://innovation.cc/all-issues/volume28-issue1/>. Email address: [glor@magma.ca](mailto:glor@magma.ca)