

**Review : Postmodern Climate Change**

By Leigh Glover

**Reviewed by Yves Laberge**

Québec. G1V 0A6, Canada

Glover, Leigh. *Postmodern Climate Change*. New York: Routledge, 2011 [2006]. xiii+304 pp. ISBN: 9780415663779 US \$49.95. Paperback; e-book also available. Series: Routledge Research in Environmental Politics.

Postmodernism is understood by Professor Leigh Glover (now at The University of Melbourne, Australia) in these terms: "Postmodern thinking exposes the repressive character of progress under Western civilization, and further, that the forces of opposition tend to reproduce the forms of thinking that produce such oppression in the first place" (p. 57).

His first book, titled *Postmodern Climate Change*, is a thorough discussion about what various postmodern thinkers have said or written about environmental issues and deep ecology; it is situated at the intersection of political ecology, philosophy of science and social theory (see p. 64). The author recognizes that few philosophers and postmodern thinkers have written about the environment, let alone climate change, because these issues are relatively recent in world history (p. 48). Nevertheless, some possible intersections exist between these two elements (i.e. the environmental cause and the postmodern thought) since each deal with human values. In various ways, these theoretical articulations can help scholars understand how most environmental issues are like symptoms of our modern (or postmodern) ages, and therefore, this is why some policies never change. In other words, this whole book is an effort to conceptualize environmentalism and especially climate change issues into terms linked with the postmodern perspective.

Now available in a paperback edition, Professor Glover's interdisciplinary book is full of insightful thoughts and theoretical demonstrations; that is its main strength. No equations are to be found here, and no statistics, just ideas and comparisons. This is not an easy book, however. As with so many books on postmodern thought, a short definition of the concept is difficult to catch while there is a long discussion about how postmodernism had been difficult to coin and delimitate (see pp. 36-51). It seems like the old difficulty to apprehend, delimitate and define postmodernity in the related literature has become in itself a real postmodern problem that needs to be retold every time this idea is discussed.

The first pages are deeply linked with the typical postmodern ideas of social construction and deconstruction:

"Ultimately and unavoidably, environmental problems are 'social constructs' of concrete natural phenomena reflected by social choices by which problems are identified, given priorities, and are addressed" (p. 9).

Professor Glover argues that "environmentalism and ecologism are derived from a wide variety of sources and reflect many cultural and ideological influences, extending the classic civilizations" (p. 32), and that environmentalism and ecologism are critiques of our modernity (p. 32). Possibly because postmodernism has brought into humanities a constant sense of doubt, one key attitude appears to be common to those who deny climate change and most postmodern thinkers: skepticism. Indeed, skepticism has been seen as a major philosophical notion from Montaigne to Descartes, but in the recent decades, many opponents to

environmental justice (who usually have nothing to do with philosophy) just declare there is no such thing as climate change; in fact, this whole debate can be described in postmodern terms (see pp. 21-30). As Professor Glover writes, “Postmodern politics takes up the themes of ‘fragmentation, ephemerality, discontinuity, and chaotic change’, and express skepticism for major political reform through any singular alternative subverting the mainstream” (p. 50). The last chapter introduces the concept of “ecological postmodernity” (see pp. 250-254).

Potential readers of Professor Glover’s book would be graduate students in philosophy and social theory, but also in history of ideas and environmental theory; undergraduates might feel lost within these dense pages even though the author’s style is always clear and efficient, avoiding jargon. Neither for colleges nor public libraries, this *Postmodern Climate Change* would rather fit those university libraries where graduate programs are being offered.

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Yves Laberge, Ph.D., < [yves.laberge.1@ulaval.ca](mailto:yves.laberge.1@ulaval.ca) >, Centre de recherche en éducation et formation relatives à l’environnement et à l’écocitoyenneté – Centr’ERE Québec. G1V 0A6, Canada

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