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Volume 33  
Issue 2 June

Article 15


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2006

## Review of *Queer Wars: The New Gay Right and Its Critics*. Paul Robinson. Reviewed by Greg Mallon.

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### Recommended Citation

Mallon, Gerald P. (2006) "Review of *Queer Wars: The New Gay Right and Its Critics*. Paul Robinson. Reviewed by Greg Mallon.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 33 : Iss. 2 , Article 15. Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol33/iss2/15>

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cerned social groups can take place in the public sphere." This concept begs the consideration and inclusion of patients and clients as experts of their own lived experiences. The author's acknowledgement of "reflection to bring our own production devices to the surface" is a refreshing, needed and affirming stance if not directive.

The style in which the topic of AIDS is presented by Preda seems best suited for academicians interested in developing theory and logic models for AIDS prevention, education and advocacy. The theoretical framework of the text might be less appealing to direct service workers involved in practice and would be more helpful to those designing the theory that drives practice. Rhetoric is helpful in campaigns on AIDS prevention, but the question remains on how to communicate effectively. This book illustrates how important culture is within prevention and health policies and with respect to how scientific research is organized and funded.

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Paul Robinson, *Queer Wars: The New Gay Right and Its Critics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. \$25.00 hardcover.

Paul Robinson's *Queer Wars* is the first attempt to present and to critically analyze the rise of gay conservatism in the United States. Measuring conservatism along three axes: (1) politics – gay conservatives repudiate the gay movement's affiliation with the left; (2) gender – gay conservatives seek to rescue gays from their association with "gender deviance" namely, from effeminate men and mannish women (although lesbians are hardly mentioned at all in any of their work) and finally, (3) sexual license – urging gay men in their writing to restrain their erotic behavior. Robinson reviews the work of four gay, privileged, white, Christian, and conservative authors (Bruce Bawer; Andrew Sullivan, Michelangelo

Signorile and Gabriel Rotello) who have largely framed the conservative gay dialogue. While acknowledging their differences, Robinson notes that "they share enough ideological ground to justify grouping them together under the label conservative." Robinson acknowledges, writing about this group challenges one's tolerance. To his great credit, he does an excellent job at balancing his own personal distaste for their perspectives, with a skillful analysis of their work grounded in good reasoning and fairness.

Robinson's book - a very succinct 162 pages - is written in three chapters reviewing the work of these four conservative authors. In Chapter One, Robinson reviews the work of Bruce Bower and his friends but primarily focuses on Bower's *A Place at the Table*. Bower's book, notes Robinson, has as its central premise that the gay movement has been hijacked by gay radicals and it has embraced alliance politics - those who believe that the oppression of gays is linked to the oppression of other groups, namely women, trans folks, and people of color communities. Bower, says Robinson, prefers his gay men to be invisible, and well behaved. Effeminate gay men he believes impedes the acceptance of the larger heterosexual culture from accepting gay men. Bower's willingness to say unpopular things, and his skill as a storyteller, notes Robinson, makes him an effective advocate for his cause of conservatism.

Andrew Sullivan is the subject of the second chapter. Arguably the best known of these four, he is a more visible intellectual with, as Robinson notes, "greater intellectual pretensions". In his book, *Virtually Normal - An Argument about Homosexuality* Sullivan proposes that the reader think about homosexuality in four distinct ways: which he calls the prohibitionists, the conservatives, the liberals, and the liberationists. The remainder of this work consists of examining each of these categories, which Robinson does a remarkable job of synthesizing in his book. Robinson identifies Sullivan as the most political of the gay conservatives examined in his book when viewed through his three axes identified earlier and confirms that like Bower, Sullivan is critical of the alliance politics mentioned earlier. In his opinions about sex, Sullivan is clearly more to the left of his colleagues. With respect to gender he is somewhere in the middle.

Michelangelo Signorile and Gabriel Rotello are examined together in the third chapter of Robinson's book. Signorile first made a name for himself by "outing" closeted celebrities and politicians, but yet, Signorile is a conservative by Robinson's standard. Drugs, steroids, gay male body image and crystal methamphetamines are all explored in Signorile's work. He is, as Robinson suggests, primarily concerned with the hedonism of the gay movement – particularly the gay male circuit parties – at the expense of abandoning gay politics. Note that women are again completely excluded from this discussion. Although Robinson acknowledges that Signorile would reject his assertion that he is hostile to sex, many would agree that he is. His moral perspective, as defined by Robinson in his analysis, is apparent in both of his works and he is particularly vehement in his discussions about bare backing – the practice of engaging in anal intercourse without a protective condom.

Gabriel Rotello (1994) a journalist for a New York based newspaper, *Newsday*, is the author of *Sexual Ecology*. Rotello's central theme, as explained by Robinson is that the AIDS pandemic was caused by what he calls "anal multipartnerism" – suggesting that the pandemic was the "predictable result of changes in the sexual behavior of gay men. Rotello's work is, as Robinson says, "a work of prescription as analysis." The most controversial aspect of Rotello's book is that gay men cannot rely on condoms as our sole defense against HIV transmission – offering instead that gay liberation must give way to a more restrained style of sexual partnering. Rotello suggests, that gay men need to practice the sort of serial monogamy practiced by lesbians – a self sustaining culture in which people feel socially supported within their identities as gay men to settle down with individual partners for significant periods of time. Embracing a form of monogamy and shunning anal intercourse, unprotected oral sex as alternatives says Robinson, is clearly an argument that is conservative in nature, but nonetheless compelling.

While Robinson's book is highly recommended reading for those interested in the development of the gay movement, my only criticism of it is his conclusion. In the Epilogue to his book, Robinson extols the virtues of the Showtime TV series "Queer as Folk". This is a show that chronicles the lives of

several openly gay friends in Pittsburgh. While I was not one of the fans of this show, (and perhaps that is why I was disappointed in Robinson's use of it as a conclusion), I wished somehow after reading this wonderful book that he had tied together his sharp and clear cut analysis by some other means. Using a TV show to do that seemed to me to cheapen his accomplishment. Despite this however, Paul Robinson's book *Queer Wars* is excellent reading.

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