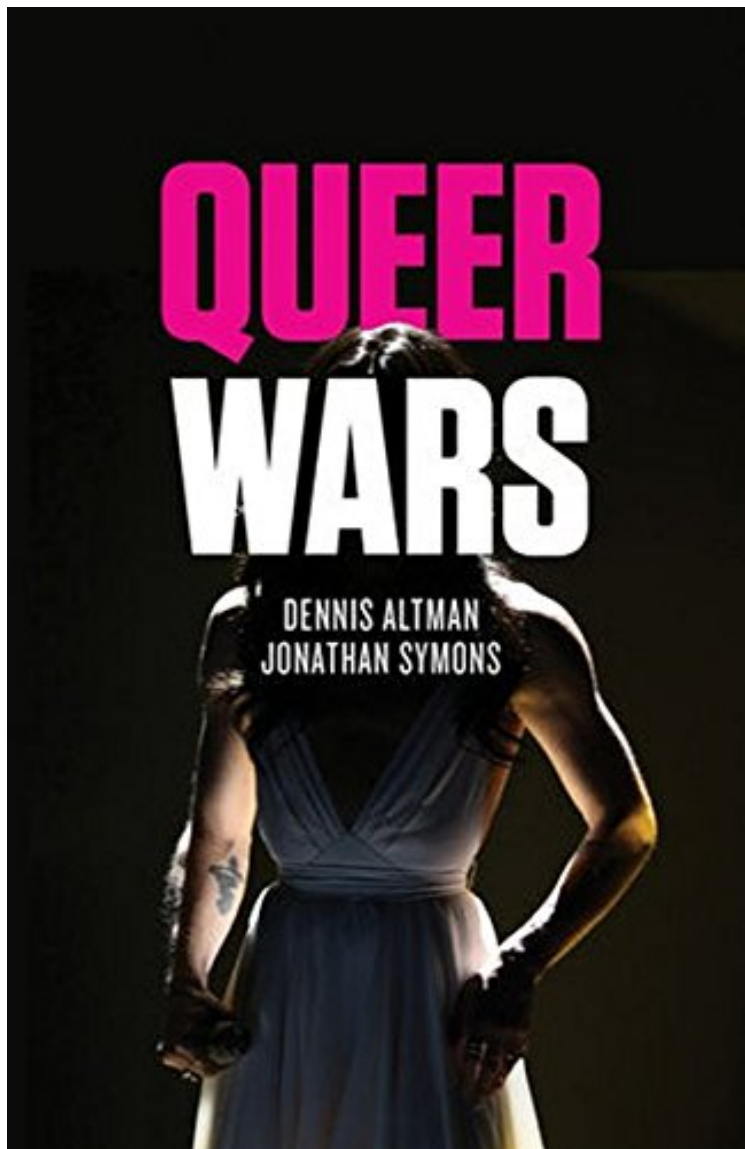


Queer Wars

Dennis Altman, Jonathan Symons
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Dennis Altman, Jonathan Symons : Queer Wars before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Queer Wars:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Pressing gender as the primary category and cautious except in imposing "queer" on those who do not identify themselves as "queeBy Stephen O. MurrayDennis Altman, who was born in 1943 in Australia, wrote the first book I ever read about homosexuality/gay liberation, *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation* (1971). Although not particularly prescient, it was inspirational to me when I was coming

out. Since then, Altman has been the prophet of the gay part of globalization, expanding his 1997 article, "Global gaze/global gays" into *Global Sex* (2001). His new book with Jonathan Symons (who had been Altman's colleague at La Trobe University, and is not at Macquarie University in Sydney) shies away from predicting the future. Though they do not consider the evidence for it, economic globalization is waning, and neoliberal protection of divergent sexual orientations was never guaranteed, of which they are well aware. *Queer Wars* discusses the rapid change in laws and (to a lesser but still considerable extent) mores in the West (including Latin America, as well as Australia, western Europe, and North America) and movements in the same direction in West Pacific countries, along with increasingly fervent persecution of deviations from narrow sex and gender roles in Africa, with moves in both directions in the countries of dar al-Islam. (Country is mostly their unit of analysis.) I guess the book is a fairly good introduction to recent trends both toward rights in some places (such as Spain) and adamant opposition to the idea of individual rights in others (especially in Uganda), though I found it rather boring and overly focused on laws. Instead of listing factual errors, I will express my concern with the widespread academic retreat from the study of same-sex sex in what I have called the empire of gender. And, aside from being a derogatory term outside academia, queer is a term historically indicative of gender rather than sexuality and one that the authors impose on others around the world, though there is no evidence that the label is embraced by those to whom the authors and other authors impose it with extremely dubious claims about inclusivity. Moreover, queer completely removes one of the recurrent bases (status differences) by which same-sex sexual relations have and are organized: age. Ephebophilia is entirely written out of the picture by those forefronting gender as the major analytical category. (Differences of gender presentation IS definitely one of the recurrent structuring of same-sex sex; the third and least common historically and geographically is homosexuality not structured by status differences: gay homosexuality.) I try not to judge books by their covers, but in that the authors call attention to the picture on the cover of their book in which the face is blotted out, it seems fair game to point out that the bad old days of gay invisibility featured books with faceless solitary figures. (I vetoed a cover showing the back of a figure more than twenty years ago.) The cover of *Queer Wars* thus combines both the privileging of gender (whether the faceless figure is a natal male in a dress or a natal female with developed musculature) and reinforces the erasure of faces of shamed deviants.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.
It's hard to know who this book is for...
By Kathryn W. Finn
This book can be very general at times, and, thus, it was hard for me to know after reading it what I got out of it. The themes are not ones that are hard to understand, so I really wanted more details of countries. What this book instead offers is a lot of shorter blurbs that say "Nepal is like ____," then "Uganda is doing ____." It felt like I would really need to do memorization to get much out of this. At times, this book references people or countries' issues that a real novice might not understand, but at the same time, this book would be very simple for someone who has followed the issues (and not provide much new value). Also, I found the incompleteness of their references to be really annoying. For example, they will say something like "only a few countries are guilty of ____," but then only mention one country as an example. Well, if you have done the research and know it is only a few countries, then why not name them all? Another example discusses "widespread murders of trans* women in Central America," but then doesn't provide any numbers or any other context. Thus, to me, this book is really a bare starting point that just made me want to do more research (which I wish the authors had just done for the reader). As a person who is passionate about LGBTQI rights, I am willing to put up with such disappointments, as I have enjoyment just reading about this topic. But, sadly, I am very lukewarm about recommending this book to others. My closest recommendation might be to use this book to educate younger advocates that are just starting to want to better understand the context and struggles.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.
int'l LGBT activism: what is to be done? it'll be difficult, incremental, and need careful advocacy
By Robert D. Harmon
This is an overview, somewhat sketchy, of the current state of LGBT matters in an international context. Its early chapters, esp. *Setting the Agenda*, a kind of long premise, is dry, academic and a bit wordy. It does talk about how a global movement has emerged, although the discussion is mainly about very recent times -- and is chopped up by locale and issue rather than as a linear timeline, so it's a little hard to follow. The book is better when it talks about the commonalities with evolving international humanitarian norms, starting in its *Queer Rights as Human Rights*. Whoever wrote this and subsequent chapters seems to have a good understanding of international law, and is valuable in pointing out how an exotic issue found a nexus with post-WWII concepts of a common international understanding of civil rights generally, of states' obligations to their citizens in matters like due process, and linking to subsequent issues like feminism and sexual expression. The book also points up resulting complexities and backlash. Some of the anti-LGBT pushback, we're told, is as much about political or religious opportunism -- dictators, nationalist parties or revolutionary regimes seeking convenient scapegoats -- as it is about traditional mores in different parts of the world. Economic insecurity and post-colonial resentment is also a factor. As to "What Is To Be Done?" (I wonder if the authors are aware this was an earlier Russian theme, a title of Chernyshevsky's and Lenin's writing), the concluding chapters have some admonitions to LGBT activists. Polarization -- by which they mean hardening attitudes in parts of the world, and acceptance elsewhere -- will complicate any responses. Attempts by well-meaning, or pedantic, Western media celebrities or LGBT organizations may make it hard for local activists, we're told, and attempts to peg Western aid to LGBT rights may be counterproductive and unfair. Also, acceptance in some countries may come from

local needs, for instance, aspirant EU nations like Croatia or Malta wanting to integrate with their new partners. Change may also be more subtle and gradual in countries like what the authors call Confucian Asia, where LGBT self-proclamation may not synch with a larger and more subtle polity which may still become more tolerant. This may be the main value in this uneven, but sometimes perceptive, book. It's going to be a difficult, complicated and gradual process, they seem to tell us, and it would be well to plan accordingly.

The claim that LGBT rights are human rights encounters fierce opposition in many parts of the world, as governments and religious leaders have used resistance to LGBT rights to cast themselves as defenders of traditional values against neo-colonial interference and western decadence. *Queer Wars* explores the growing international polarization over sexual rights, and the creative responses from social movements and activists, some of whom face murder, imprisonment or rape because of their perceived sexuality or gender expression. This book asks why sexuality and gender identity have become so vexed an issue between and within nations, and how we can best advocate for change.

"*Queer Wars* is broad in its scope, engaging in its material, thorough in its conception, and passionate in its argument on how advocacy should build a consensus that protects sexual minorities globally from violence and discrimination. A book for strategists, activists, academics and international workers alike." Edwin Cameron, Constitutional Court of South Africa "The global struggle for sexual and gender minority rights is one of the most critical and contested human rights movements of our time. As queer communities mobilize, and the coming generation of young people worldwide express greater tolerance, acceptance and calls for freedom, the pushback has been intense. Altman and Symons have done us all an invaluable service in unpacking the complex politics around LGBT rights, demands, cultures and contexts. *Queer Wars* is essential reading for all engaged in pressing for more just, open and diverse societies." Chris Beyrer, Johns Hopkins University and President of the International AIDS Society "Dennis Altman and Jonathan Symons work *Queer Wars* is a timely and accessible intervention on the global state of play for queer rights." Australian Institute of International Affairs
About the Author
Dennis Altman is Professorial Fellow in Human Security at La Trobe University
Jonathan Symons is Senior Lecturer in International Relations at Macquarie University