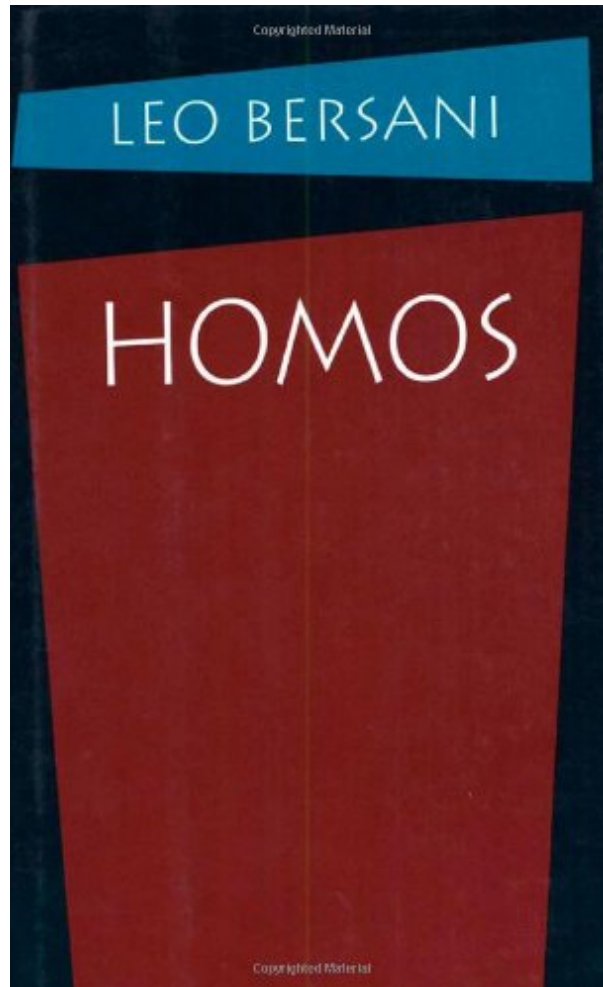
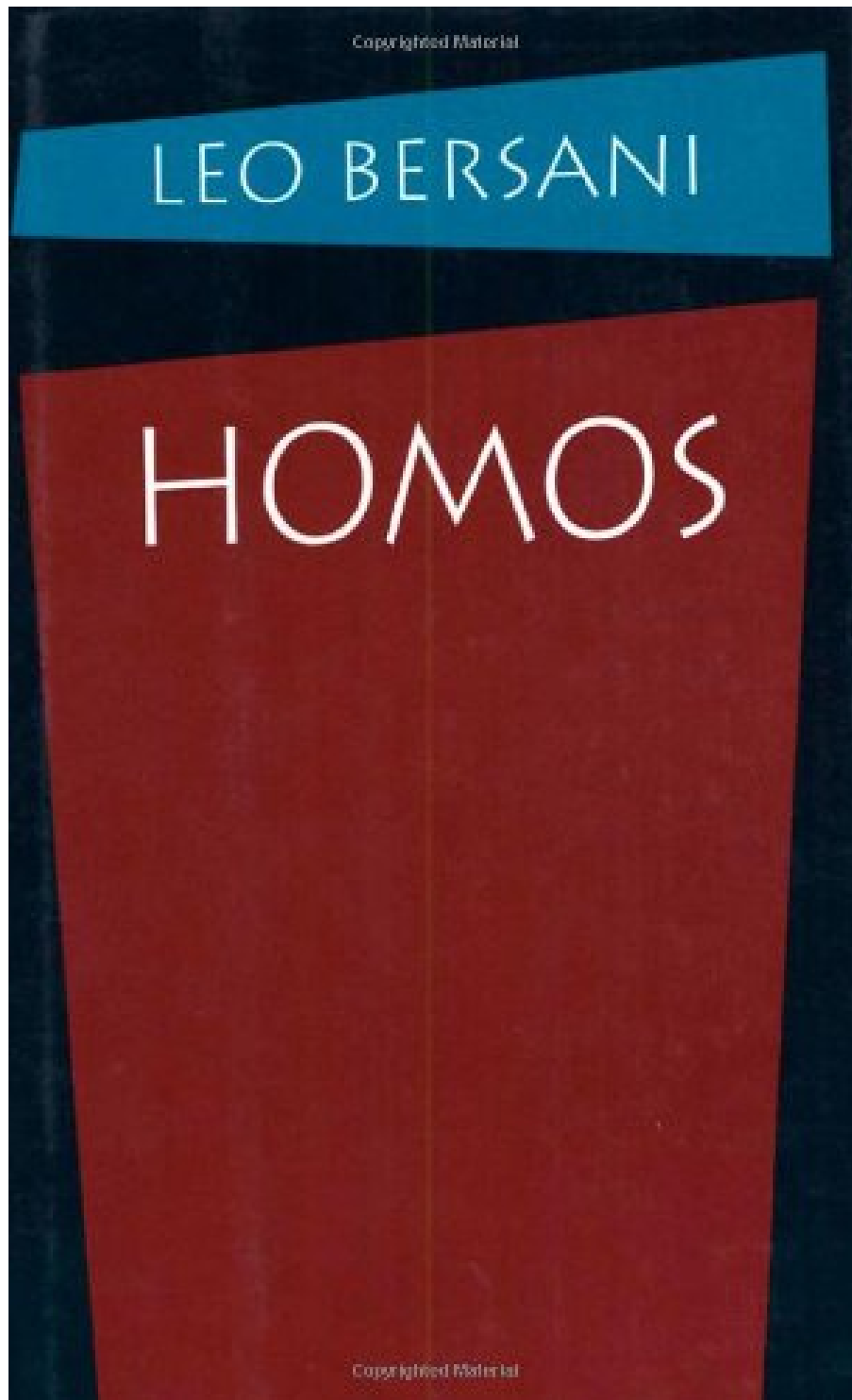


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Hardly a day goes by without the media focusing an often sympathetic beam on gay life--and, with AIDS, on gay death. Gay plays on Broadway, big book awards to authors writing on gay subjects, Hollywood movies with gay themes, gay and lesbian studies at dozens of universities, openly gay columnists and even editors at national mainstream publications, political leaders speaking in favor of gay rights: it seems that straight America has finally begun to listen to homosexual America.

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The Irruptive Force of Gay Identity

By K. N.

Bersani's **Homos** is arguably the most underappreciated text in the academic canon of queer theory. The book is not only the foundation for the "no future" turn in the field but also one of the earliest critiques of gay and lesbian visibility in American culture and politics. In a twist to the conventional logic that motivates gay rights activism, Bersani contends that the drive toward visibility, representation, and tolerance has denuded gay identity as such of its sexually specific character (i.e., the "desire for the same"). It's as though gay rights activism has had to mute its erotic lifeworld in order to gain respectability in American society. Bersani suggests the trade off isn't worth it, in part because such a pact doesn't challenge power relations in toto, thus leaving the door open for future homophobic attacks.

Along with mainstream gay rights activism, Bersani is concerned to identify how then-emergent trends in queer theory seemed to follow the liberal/tolerance script. Indeed the book's most insightful moments inhere in Bersani showing how queer theory elides the specificity of same-sex desire in courting "subversive" notions of sexual practice. In withering critiques of Judith Butler, **Paris Is Burning**, and S/M culture, Bersani says that queer theory has made a fetish of the micro-politics of performance and given up on a wholesale challenge to the structures of power by way of same-sex desire. Bersani's readings are refreshing because they take queer politics to task from a standpoint of wanting to radicalize it -- and to do so through

gay erotics, not platitudes about how queerness works against the "system."

Homos elaborates on Bersani's controversial but brilliant essay "Is the Rectum a Grave?" (1988). The book is not as precise in its theoretical argument as I wanted it to be, which is why I'm giving it four stars. For those who want Bersani's essential point in a compact form, I recommend going to the essay before the book. Still, *Homos* deserves extended study and revisiting among scholars interested in queer theory, gay and lesbian studies, and contemporary social critique.

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sharp & still current

By Duncan Armstrong

Insightful, literate, articulate look at gay culture that remains current today. Put into words ideas that have been on my mind for some time. Highly recommended.

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Absolute Genius! Assimilationists look out!

By A Customer

This is the most reasonable, well organized work on gay political culture in existence. Bersani delves beyond the rhetoric, and into the psyche of society and the gay culture, making clear why "de-gaying gayness" is a travesty to all parts of society. It is a must read for anyone grappling with their sense of society, belonging, be-ing.

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