he demonstrates that nationalism is only given a language via the politics of sovereignty (which makes the nation a political individual), but has nothing to say, except that which is implied into ‘the nation’ by political ideologies.

This case study of nationalism illustrates Vincent’s belief that theories of particularity are based in the individualistic aspect of groups, and in the anthropomorphism that occurs in creating group identities. His argument is that any group becomes focused on a single point of identity: the group as an individual personality. From this point, Vincent argues that to follow ‘group particular’ theories through to their logical end is to arrive at a complete inability to communicate. Hence, in current political thought there must either be complete cohesion or complete disparity, as theorists must either adopt the language of universalism or that of particularity.

The conclusion that Vincent arrives at is that a mid-way point has to be reached between the ‘deeply complex, internally divisive, often incoherent and conceptually suspect structure’ of particularism and the older political theory of universalism; one which can incorporate human rights theories to protect individuals across boundaries implied by group constructs such as nationalism while recognising the different group affiliations that people have.

The book is well researched and wide-ranging in its sources and historical perspective, but does try to draw too stark a difference between universalist theory and particularist theory, even disallowing that some theorists incorporate both in their philosophy. A group that Vincent calls the ‘soft particularists’ argue that human rights are valid as a ‘universal’ because differing groups’ moral concepts intersect at points where they are in agreement, forming ‘minimal’ human rights. Leaving aside the fact that some of the theorists Vincent discusses seem to have answered his call for a ‘midway’ political theory, this is an excellent work.

SAMUEL KOEHNE
University of Melbourne


Robert Reynolds’ From Camp to Queer traces the history of homosexual activism in 1970s Australia, with particular attention to the problems of identity; it takes as its starting point Foucault’s maxim, with which it opens, that the modern ‘is the man who tries to invent himself’.

There can be no denying the importance of gay activism in the longer history of identity politics - one only has to witness the incredible conservative anxieties and fundamentalist hysteria which forms the opposing corollary to ‘gay liberation’. Such reactions however are responses to developments which were largely unforeseen thirty years ago – Reynold’s history was published before the recognition of same-sex marriage in Canada, the first Anglophone nation to grant homosexuals
equality with the heterosexual majority. Australia lagging behind in this regard comes as no surprise given the derivative beginnings of the ‘gay movement’ in this country. *From Camp to Queer* traces the Australian movement’s tardiness among many other challenges to gay rights in Australia, from the social/political divide, to the not-so-invisible gender barrier between its gay and lesbian components, and the more recent uncertainties over the appropriation of ‘Queer’.

Reynolds has woven a broad as well as deep tapestry, a style which matches the multilayered and amorphous subject of his study. For example, Reynolds combines an account of the personalities and individuals involved in social movements, and of the experiences and words of people on the ground, with the high theorising of figures such as Altman. In this regard the book provides a compelling study of the interactions between life and theory, animating the philosophical and experiential interactions at the core of personal identity.

The account of the formation in 1970 of the Australian Lesbian Reform Movement and the Campaign Against Moral Persecution (CAMP) is an insight into a movement ‘teetering on the brink of anarchy’, with CAMP’s first convenors John Ware and Christabel Poll ‘casually sharing a flagon of wine’ in the proceedings of its first AGM. From such beginnings came Australia’s first ‘openly gay’ public demonstration, on the 6 October 1971, ‘the month when we came of age’. This ‘coming out’ as a political body was far from radical – it was in support of Liberal Attorney-General Tom Hughes, who favoured law reform and was facing a challenge by a right-wing fundamentalist. Even then gay liberation demonstrated an eagerness to appropriate the signs of the dominant culture with ‘a really High-Camp demonstration’ including a rendition of ‘God love Australian Fairies’ in place of the national anthem, *God Save The Queen*.

Gay liberation was not just about liberal legal reform however, as ‘new narratives of emancipation’ sought to cast homosexuals as agents rather than victims. Thus conservative reformers lagged behind the growing number who began to contest even the divide between private activity and public identity, so that long awaited legislation of liberal tolerance could be greeted by many with a ‘so boys thanks, but thanks for nothing’. Liberal reform was about limits, while gay identity politics was about exploding limitations, with the result that the movement was riven with internal conflict as well as with fighting oppression. Rather than sidestepping these internal contradictions, Reynolds takes on the notion of ‘Competing homosexualities’ using the voices of the individuals who passed through the ‘movement’. A particular line emerged between the ‘subculture’ and the political visionaries, as emancipation itself was not unchallenged by the voices of those more comfortable with the ‘fugitive life’, with ‘all the delights of a secret society on a huge scale’. *From Camp to Queer* thus raises the further question – how to reconcile the ideals of equality with notions of difference?

Reynolds offers a book that can speak volumes to a wide audience, dealing as it does with broad themes of gender and sexuality, in a history of a movement which at once promises freedoms and identities specific to
gays and lesbians, yet also yearns to proffer liberation to everyone. It is a movement at once seeking realisation of a true and inner self, while at the same time exploding the social construction of such identities. *From Camp to Queer* also highlights the link between subjectivity and corresponding action. Identity is the basis for political action – hence the highly contested nature of this identity as a basis for competing visions, in which the actors have heavy emotional investments.

**ARON PAUL**  
*University of Melbourne*