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Corey Robin

USA

Le gouvernement des émotions : Entretien autour de la peur

The author

Corey Robin (born in 1967) is an American political theorist, journalist and associate professor of Political Science at Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He has devoted his scholarly attention to the study of the contemporary forms of American conservatism and neoconservatism, as well as of the difficulties of both the liberals and the New Left in dealing with American supremacy, after the end of the Cold War.

In 1999, Robin received his Ph.D. from Yale University.

He is the author of the books *Fear: The History of a Political Idea* and *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin*. Robin's articles have appeared in many reviews and newspapers, including: *American Political Science Review*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The London Review of Books*, *The Nation* and *Dissent*.

Bibliography

The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin. (Oxford University Press, 2011) (304 p.)

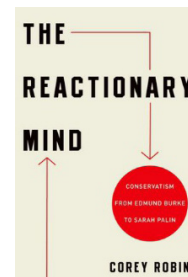
Fear: The History of a Political Idea (la peur : histoire d'une idée politique) (Oxford University Press, 2004) (336 p.)

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The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin. (Oxford University Press, 2011).



Late in life, William F. Buckley made a confession to Corey Robin. Capitalism is "boring," said the founding father of the American right. "Devoting your life to it," as conservatives do, "is horrifying if only because it's so repetitious. It's like sex." With this unlikely conversation began Robin's decade-long foray into the conservative mind. What is conservatism, and what's truly at stake for its proponents? If capitalism bores them, what excites them?

Tracing conservatism back to its roots in the reaction against the French Revolution, Robin argues that the right is fundamentally inspired by a hostility to emancipating the lower orders. Some conservatives endorse the free market, others oppose it. Some criticize the state, others celebrate it. Underlying these differences is the impulse to defend power and privilege against movements demanding freedom and equality.

Despite their opposition to these movements, conservatives favor a dynamic conception of politics and society--one that involves self-transformation, violence, and war. They are also highly adaptive to new challenges and circumstances. This partiality to violence and capacity for reinvention has been critical to their success.

Written by a keen, highly regarded observer of the contemporary political scene, *The Reactionary Mind* ranges widely, from Edmund Burke to Antonin Scalia, from John C. Calhoun to Ayn Rand. It advances the notion that all rightwing ideologies, from the eighteenth century through today, are historical improvisations on a theme: the felt experience of having power, seeing it threatened, and trying to win it back.

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Nous savons tous, intuitivement, que la peur joue un rôle dans la vie politique d'un pays. Et pas seulement lors d'événements exceptionnels comme les attentats du 11 septembre à New York. Mais, parce qu'il est humiliant d'avoir peur et de se

l'avouer, nous en minimisons irrésistiblement l'influence, préférant nous réfugier derrière des explications plus "rationnelles" du comportement des gouvernants comme des citoyens. Le maître-livre de Corey Robin déchire ce voile d'ignorance. Dans une analyse à la fois brillante et provocante, très largement saluée lors de sa récente publication aux Etats-Unis, il montre en quoi la peur constitue un levier fondamental de pouvoir, même dans une démocratie libérale comme la nôtre. L'auteur conjugue ici une analyse historique de l'idée de peur (de Hobbes à Hanna Arendt en passant par Montesquieu et Tocqueville) avec une description concrète, menée sans complaisances, de la vie politique américaine actuelle. Il s'en dégage une démonstration particulièrement efficace qui déborde le cadre strictement américain pour s'appliquer à tout fonctionnement démocratique. Si cette thèse originale trouble certainement notre confort intellectuel, elle peut aussi nous dessiller politiquement les yeux pour des lendemains mieux libérés de la peur.