

AFTER HOMOSEXUAL

THE LEGACIES OF
GAY LIBERATION

EDITED BY
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We are particularly grateful to ALGA (www.alga.org.au), not just for its involvement in this project, but also for its thirty-five years of achievement in keeping the documents and memories of our movements' successes and failures alive through hundreds of volunteer hours and thousands of dollars of individual members' donations. A small selection of ALGA's extensive holdings appears in this anthology.

Our fellow conference organisers, Graham Willett (who also did an immaculate job of seeking permissions from ALGA), Michael Connors, Caroline Symons and Bree Ahrens, rate a special mention for their hard work and good humour. We are also thankful to all conference volunteers and participants, who provided a stimulating atmosphere in which some of these papers were delivered.

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Sadly, Dennis’s partner, Anthony Smith, died before this project was completed. While his own words do not appear in this anthology (he declined to write), his quiet participation and guidance were very much appreciated, and as we reread these pages after his death, we were struck by his presence throughout.

Above all, we are thankful to those who continue to participate in our movements and make explicit the connections we have to other struggles. We hope readers can draw as much inspiration and debate from this book as we have from the process of putting it together.

Carol and Mark
December 2013

Introduction

Coming ‘after *Homosexual*’

Mark Pendleton and Carolyn D’Cruz

Time is the longest distance between two places

Tennessee Williams¹

Queer communities are not always switched on to the vicissitudes of time. We are sometimes made aware of our histories, but through necessity are more often focused on the urgency of the now. We have needed to resist police, state and religious harassment based on our sex lives and our genders. We have forced politicians to pass legislation that responds to our demands. We have nursed our sick and dying, while not allowing their deaths to go unmarked. Challenging sexual norms and gender roles, we have scratched and clawed our way onto social and political agendas. This has earned us the accusation of threatening the very fabric of society. There was a time when ‘we’ would have read such an accusation as a compliment. Clearly, the measure of success for a liberation movement shifts with time. And as we fight among ourselves over our movement’s goals and what kind of future we want – not only for our ‘own’ folk, but for the kind

of world we want to live in – we have constantly had to reflect on who ‘we’ are.

So it is with some understandable awkwardness that in recent years queer movements in many parts of the world have begun to slow and stagnate. Fixated on the last few remnants of formal legal equality, such as marriage, it seems our movement is no longer asking fundamental questions of what sexuality and gender may mean politically, nor questioning the social mores of mainstream society. This process has left many with a warped sense of progress; with supposedly no time to look back at our history, to pause and reflect, the movement has become caught up in a campaign that has left many no longer reflecting at all. The contemporary movement’s focus on equality seems to suggest that we may no longer even need to do anything beyond the small legislative clean-ups that seem inevitably just around the corner. At the same time, there persists in some of us nostalgia for a period when so much more was to be done, a time that seemed much more exciting – even more fun – than the dull grind of legislative reform and the mundaneness of social tolerance. For ‘us’ the promise of an emancipatory vision for altering the structures of love, sex and kinship cannot settle at the present struggle for the ‘right’ to exchange vows at the altar. As things ‘progress’, we feel the need to press pause, to find time to reflect on the present through looking once more at what came before and thinking again about what is to come after.

More than forty years have passed since a band of ratbags in a downbeat New York City bar took an opportunity to resist the policing of sexuality and gender, and through this resistance carved out a space for their identities and communities. The narrative of the Stonewall Inn is common folklore now, yet the movement and ideas it spawned are less well discussed or understood, lost in the timelessness of immediate demands. This is not to say that there haven’t been those who have drawn on this history in similar

explosions of confrontation – the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) being just one notable, but by no means isolated, example. Yet despite these moments, there is a sense that, forty years on, we are in a stalled moment when we are not quite legally equal and yet are socially acceptable in certain limited ways. With this stalling, we suggest, comes an opportunity to reflect on time and history and to consider what has slipped away as we have collectively run towards acceptance.

Forty years have also passed since the publication of Dennis Altman's *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation*, which captured the vibrant and violent explosions of the post-Stonewall liberation movement. The book sought to tease out what this might mean for a nascent community struggling with its new-found politicisation. As we approached this anniversary, we began to think therefore about gay liberation's legacies. We also began to wonder how Altman's book, reprinted, republished and translated multiple times and read by many thousands of queer people the world over, might speak to this contemporary moment. So we compiled *After Homosexual*.

We come 'after *Homosexual*' in many senses. In chronological time, we carry the movement's ideals, which arose later than the heyday of the counterculture and the wave of other projects that focused on liberation and oppression. We began to talk to people who had been there forty years ago, or who understood the context of the emergence of one of the great and most successful movements of identity politics. We approached some of the founding activists of Gay Liberation Front, such as provocateur and propagandist Martha Shelley and the co-editor of two early gay liberation collections Karla Jay. We also include Shelley's popular pamphlet 'Gay is Good' as a reminder of the political rhetoric of the time. We talked to prominent historians such as Jeffrey Weeks, Garry Wotherspoon, Alice Echols and Graham Willett. We hit up people who understand the broader contexts and coalition politics

of the time, like Raewyn Connell, Anne Summers and Gary Foley; we turned to Elena Jeffreys to reflect on coalition politics between queers and sex workers. We thought about the personal connections inherent in these social movements, such as reading books and making films or forming friendships, with Andrea Goldsmith, Barbara Creed, Richard Walsh and Gary Dowsett. And alongside these contextual observations, we also worked with colleagues at the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives to bring back into print some of the key speeches, manifestos, and other ephemera of these early movements.

Another sense in which we come ‘after *Homosexual*’ is through being ‘in quest or pursuit of’ the gay liberation movement. We did not want this project to be a volume that bundled up a past movement and permanently locked it between two covers as finished history. Instead, we wanted to think about what, if any, resonances from our pre-histories there may be for our communities now. We therefore asked a few people to reread, to seek ‘after’, *Homosexual* and consider how it may speak to the present. This list of people includes literary figures like Christos Tsiolkas and Sarah Schulman, activists like the North American collective Against Equality, and academics like John Treat, Robert Reynolds, Neville Hoad and Dean Spade. The sometimes vexed relations between the early gay liberation movement and later instantiations of queer theory is taken up by William Leonard, while Dion Kagan explores the intervening decades through the lens of struggles around HIV/AIDS and its impact on queer culture. The reach of *Homosexual*’s connections to other disciplinary domains, from international relations to film criticism, is taken up by Jonathan Symons and Jasmine McGowan respectively.

We recognise the impossibility of compiling a sufficiently complete or unbiased list of contributions in the book. The authors here, living primarily in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, represent particular views of history and of

social movements. The place and time in which *Homosexual* was written, and the sorts of networks and connections that congregate around the academic, community, policymaking and activist arms of the legacies of the gay liberation movement, have allowed us to assemble an exemplary cast of contributors. Even so, constraints of time, access and availability have meant not everyone on our wish list was able to contribute. Nevertheless, we hope this book will encourage the opening of more spaces from which we can engage and respond to the tasks of the movement we have inherited and take it towards the future.

What brings the disparate voices in this book together is a sense that they are writing from a time well after the book *Homosexual*. What possibly separates them is the extent to which they are writing after homosexual identity politics, and Altman's utopian imagining of 'The end of the homosexual'.

The final chapter of Altman's *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation* is perhaps the most controversial, and certainly the most strident. 'The end of the homosexual' argues that if gay liberation were to run its course, it would culminate in the end of sexual categories themselves through the liberation of human sexuality. This liberation never eventuated, and marks, perhaps, the most notable slippage in the political approaches of LGBT/queer communities over the last forty years. Still, is forty years an adequate time to traverse the space between the two places of oppression on one side and liberation on the other?

The views presented in the pages that follow all attempt in different ways an engagement with that suppressed vision of emancipatory politics. In doing so, they point not to a coherent movement for liberation along the lines of *Homosexual*, but instead to a queer spirit that persists through those forty years. It is this spirit of resistance, of fun, of perpetual motion that indicates we do not exist 'after' the end of the project of social transformation articulated with such force by Dennis Altman in 1971; political

imagination is not dead. Instead, it lives on in the hearts and minds and bodies of those who continue to question, to push and prod at social mores, and to imagine a future world that is more just. Such a future will allow for a greater freedom of gender expression and sexual desire, along with fulfilment of another ideal we have lost sight of over four decades – that social and economic justice must be central planks of any project of liberation.

To speak of a future for our movement in such a way supposes that we still have so much more to struggle for. In the early days of approaching publishers for this book, we were struck by two responses that gave us insight into how our movement might be ‘read’ by those who are not directly connected to queer politics and theory. The first was the idea that the use-by date for a book such as this was fast approaching, as the movement was perceived as being on the threshold of ‘success’. Such ‘success’ would come presumably with the passing of legislation for gay marriage. As readers will see, we do not all measure success in the same way. The second response concerned the question of what *type* of book we were compiling. Would it be personal reflections on Dennis Altman, or would it be about the movement? Would it be more theoretical, or would it focus more on activism? For most of the contributors to this book, it is all of the above. Many of us know Dennis personally, have been involved in the movement at one time or another, and have dabbled to a greater and lesser degree in queer theories. It is precisely the energy that emerges from the intersections between the personal, political and theoretical that provides the commemoration of *Homosexual* with such fertile material for reflecting on our present moment.

It is our hope that through reading this book, the reader may be prompted to imagine a world that is not simply chronologically ‘after *Homosexual*’, nor ‘after’ in the sense of being ‘behind’ us. Rather we carry on the quest to *search after* liberation, continuing the desire to fashion something new and better. This book does

not offer a program for change, but instead reflects an openness to the idea that our movements may not be done just yet; we also join those less audible voices that suggest that perhaps formal legal equality on the grounds of sexual and gender identity may be a limited political aim.

As this book demonstrates, people and ideas continue to challenge us to imagine what might come to be. One way to think about what may emerge is to look at where we have come from, consider the ongoing challenges our communities face, and look at the changing nature of identity, sexual desire and social values. This reflection on time and history may, we hope, contribute to a reacceleration, a recommitment to a stalled vision that sexuality, as with all aspects of our lives, is a site rich in potential for political and social transformation.

1 Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, Heinemann Educational, London, 1996 (first staged 1944), p. 75.

Section One

Looking back

On first reading Dennis Altman

Jeffrey Weeks

I've always had a problem with the title of Dennis Altman's *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation*. In Australia and the United States it is known as *Homosexual*: a stark noun, with the balancing subtitle suggesting a dialectic, but subordinate to the major word. For me, the *Homosexual* of the title has always had more of an adjectival tone: 'Homosexual oppression and liberation', and I always think of it without the colon. Titles matter. The American publisher apparently rejected Dennis's more provocative 'The end of the homosexual', the title of the last, and still most controversial, section of the book, as too challenging, and perhaps less marketable. *Homosexual* stood out on the bookshelf. But for me the bald title *Homosexual* didn't make sense without the two other words. It was the new linkage of the idea of 'oppression' and 'liberation' that was the real breakthrough in our thinking and activism post-Stonewall, and Dennis's book was the first

comprehensive work that captured the new spirit. My version of the title reflects that.

As I recounted in my introduction to the second (and third) editions of *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation*, my first reaction to news of the Stonewall riots was one of nervous scepticism. I was a graduate student in Britain in June 1969, just about to begin teaching in a school, a rather desperate (and short-lived) escape from completing my PhD. I was completely ignorant of the riots. My first inkling that something significant had happened came a year later, when I heard a facetious item on the BBC's premier radio news program about a gay march in New York, commemorating the first anniversary of Stonewall. My initial reaction was that it would never happen in Britain, with its deep hostility towards homosexuality. It was not until the London Gay Liberation Front had its first meeting in October 1970, at the London School of Economics where I was then working (my escape from the school was almost as desperate as my earlier escape from my PhD), that I realised its significance for me. I went along to my first meeting nervously, just like my first tentative step of going into a gay bar on my own a few years earlier. I was ready to leave as soon as I got in, but stayed, enthralled by the chaos and vibrancy, and above all openness (I had never seen so many homosexuals in one room before), went back the next week, and the next – and the rest, if not History, is certainly my history. My politics, my personal relationships, my living arrangements, my personal appearance, even my career: all were challenged and transformed by those early, heady days. Instead of becoming a historian of political theory, which I was on track to be, I eventually became a gay historian and sociologist. (That's a separate story, with its own ups and downs.)

But at first, in this euphoric atmosphere, there were so many things to take in, so many new ideas and insights, so many new ways of being and doing, that I began to feel I needed a bit of a map.

The rhetoric of gay liberation began to provide me with a wider rationale for ‘coming out’, a heady brew of liberationist aspirations and a new sense of community. The leaflets and early journals of gay liberation began to seep through to London from the United States, passed from hand to hand or occasionally obtainable in the more radical bookshops. The new feminist texts began to fill my bookshelves, and the first edited collections of articles on gay liberation began to appear. But what I felt I needed was a wider framework that would pull all these experiences together, giving them a structure and some sense of historical and political context.

Dennis’s Altman’s book was the first full-scale work to try to do that. When I heard of its publication – it must have been in mid-1972 – I eagerly sought out a copy, a photographic reproduction of the first American edition, with an author’s note on the inside cover pointing out a few minor typographical errors. At last, here was something that helped make sense of my helter-skelter experiences and readings of the previous, hectic eighteen months. It helped give shape to a host of inchoate ideas. I read it at precisely the moment I was myself beginning to write about gay politics, gay history and the wider meanings of sexuality. Within a year I was heavily involved in working with the Gay Left collective, producing its journal, and was beginning to plan what became my first two solo books (though they took rather longer to write than to plan). Dennis’s book was a catalyst that brought together many of the key ideas I needed to get going.

‘To be a homosexual in our society’, Dennis began, ‘is to be constantly aware that one bears a stigma’. The task of gay liberation was to understand not just why homosexuals were stigmatised, which was how sociologists were beginning to articulate it, but why, in the new and powerful language of the time, homosexuals were oppressed, and how to fight that oppression. Dennis drew on an extremely eclectic collection of influences: the pioneering gay novels of writers like Christopher Isherwood, Gore Vidal and

James Baldwin; the polemical writings and practice of the Black Panthers; anarchist writings; the Freudo-Marxism of Herbert Marcuse; early second-wave feminist writers; the radical sociology of deviance, labelling and stigma; the grassroots writings of gay liberationists; and so on – an apparent mishmash he helped weld into a more or less coherent framework of concepts and theories that were to prove amazingly flexible and fertile over the next few decades. Embryonic in the book were some of the most significant ideas in early gay theory (social constructionism especially, but also ideas of homophobia and what came to be known as heteronormativity), and even of later queer theory (above all the challenge to the fixity of identity and looking forward to the end of the homosexual – and the heterosexual, too).

Identity was at the heart of the book: its necessity for affirming who we were, and wanted to be; and simultaneously its contingency and historical fluidity. I am of the same generation as Dennis, so these have been my preoccupations, too, and all my own books have been in one way or another about the paradoxes of identity, community, movement, recognition. *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation* heralded an explosion of publications that have influenced me over the years, but rereading the book now reminds me how much of the ground Dennis staked out. Forty years on, that remains the book's signal achievement.

From Ulan Bator to literary fame

Richard Walsh

If the fates had only been a tad kinder, Dennis Altman and I might have travelled together to the Ninth Congress of the International Union of Students (IUS) at Ulan Bator, the capital of Mongolia, in 1967. At the time, both of us were movers and shakers in the National Union of Australian University Students (later simply called NUS); when the union decided to send a two-person delegation to this exotic meeting, Dennis was elected as the leader and I as his deputy.

Subsequently the union found it had only enough money to send our glorious leader. When Dennis returned and delivered his fairly droll report on proceedings, it appeared that I had merely missed unbelievable cold, modest hospitality and predictably tendentious speeches.

Up to then, he and I had shared the conviviality and hustle of student political life. Australia was not actually a member of the Communist-dominated IUS, but we had risen to the dizzy heights

of being on the SupCom (Supervising Commission) of its arch rival, the International Student Conference (ISC), which was based in Leiden, the Netherlands, but was fast falling into profound disfavour as it became public that it was being secretly funded by the CIA. Dennis was fairly cynical about both organisations, as was I.

By the early 1970s I had been installed by the owners of Angus & Robertson (A&R) as its managing director in one last throw of the dice before it collapsed under the weight of its trading losses. I was keen for the company to throw off its fuddy-duddy image and for it to be an active participant in the cultural renaissance of those vertiginous times. When I read that Dennis had published *Homosexual* with a small press in the United States, I contacted him and ultimately negotiated with his London agent, Murray Pollinger, for us to publish his book as quickly as possible.

In July 1972 we produced a hardback edition for sale at \$4.95 in Australia (it's hard to believe today that hardbacks were ever that cheap) and £2.50 in the United Kingdom. Locally, its release coincided with the first publication of Frank Moorhouse's *The Americans, Baby*, a collection of stories so confronting that we could not find a mainstream typesetter who would handle it and we therefore had to set it ourselves at *Nation Review*, the national newspaper I was then running out of Melbourne.

I was very new in the chair at A&R and I cannot claim to have had wholehearted support from the fairly conservative staff I had inherited for the new direction I wanted to take the company. They were frankly appalled. As if to compound these tensions, just before I arrived they had inaugurated the A&R Writer's Fellowship and – at a glittering occasion at which the cultural world's new superstar, Germaine Greer, was present – had announced the winner as Kerryyn Higgs, who seemed to be intending to write a new kind of feisty romantic novel. When Kerryyn's manuscript ultimately landed, to everyone's horror it turned out to be about the romantic misadventures of a young lesbian.

Homosexual obviously got off to a great start in Australia because by September it was listed as number 2 on the non-fiction bestseller list. The following year Penguin published a paperback for \$1.60. I have seen a letter to Dennis from Penguin's Bob Sessions informing him that their edition had sold 4000 copies in its first two months.

Given the times, it was amazing what publicity A&R was able to achieve for such a relatively scholarly book. Dennis was even interviewed by Daphne Guinness in Australian *Vogue*, where he told her that:

obviously the media in Australia are not as uptight about homosexuality as in America...There, for example, they wouldn't have a homosexual on the David Frost show because it is a family program, but I've been on the *Bob Rogers Show*, which is much more of a family program...where I was surrounded by starlets and Lonnie Donegan and all sorts of peculiar people, but actually Bob was very good and asked what I thought were intelligent questions.¹

He was interviewed on ABC TV's flagship *Monday Conference* by Bob Moore; but Don Anderson in *The Bulletin* wrote of 'the shoddy treatment' he had received 'at the hands of Robert Moore's moralism'.²

In London the book was reviewed by the *Sunday Telegraph*'s John Rowan Wilson, who dismissed it as having 'little to offer in either the way of psychological or political analysis', but he conceded that 'to those who still think the Gay Liberation Front is a brand of patent underwear, it may be a useful handbook'.³ But in Sydney it was reviewed for the *Daily Telegraph* by the iconic Ross Campbell, whose whimsical evocations of suburban life were highly popular in the *Australian Women's Weekly*. Ross observed that the book had received a 'respectful reception' in America and 'has earned Altman something of the status of the homosexual's

Germaine Greer, though he is a much less flamboyant personality than Germaine'.⁴

He went on:

Basic to the gay lib case is their claim that they are not perverts, but merely different from the majority of people. This question depends on one's idea of what sex is for. If you adopt the puritan belief that it exists solely for the production of children, then homosexuals are clearly abnormal. They don't produce babies.

But if you take the view, widely held today, that one important function of sex is to give people emotional satisfaction, homosexuals can argue that they are just doing what everyone else does. They happen to go about it in a different way. This tolerant view is accepted by the law in Britain, though not in America or here.

In a family paper like the *Telegraph*, this was as close to acceptance as gays could expect in 1972. The following year Ross Campbell's daughter, Little Nell, was to become a gay icon as a result of her starring role in Jim Sharman's stupendously successful production of *The Rocky Horror Show* in London.

In the years that followed, Dennis and I kept in contact. He wrote intermittently for my newspaper, *Nation Review*, but somehow felt more comfortable contributing to our rival, the *National Times*. In the late 1970s I bumped into him in the street in Paris and, on the spur of the moment, he decided to join me in driving to the Frankfurt Book Fair. That was a small, belated compensation for the journey we never made to Ulan Bator.

1 Daphne Guinness, Australian *Vogue*.

2 Don Anderson, *The Bulletin*.

3 John Rowan Wilson, London *Sunday Telegraph*.

4 Ross Campbell, *Daily Telegraph*.

Homosexual, forty years on

Andrea Goldsmith

I had just returned from a year in Europe. I had a boyfriend waiting for me at home. I was twenty-two years old.

And I was not a lesbian.

At the age of twelve I had fallen in heated love with a girl from my school. Running in tandem with this inexplicable, intense, occasioning-emotions-my-adolescent-self-did-not-understand love, were boyfriends – lots of boyfriends lining up in sweet adolescent innocence through those years. The boys came and went but my schoolfriend persisted. The way I regarded things back then was that I was definitely not a lesbian, but given I had fallen for my girlfriend, there was either something unique about her – and there was – or I had a ‘weakness’, a bit like a constitutional predisposition towards asthma or migraine.

I was not a lesbian but nonetheless I was worried. It was the persistence of my feelings for my schoolfriend, their intensity too.

I'd heard of *The Well of Loneliness* – the famous lesbian novel. I don't where or how I secured a copy but I did. I read it with great relief. This book confirmed I was definitely not a lesbian. There was not a single point of similarity between me and the main character, a girl called Stephen who dressed in men's suits.

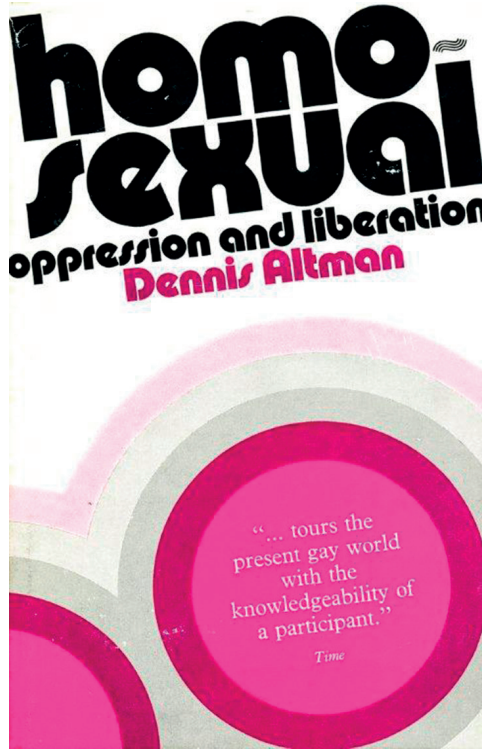
At this period in my history – the early 1970s – lesbians did not exist, or at least not in my world. In 1973, Jill Johnston published a book titled *Lesbian Nation*, which included an essay 'There wasn't a dyke in the land'. While Johnston was not referring to Australia she could have been. And I was still very much in the dark.

Then two things happened: *Homosexual* by Dennis Altman was published and, early in 1973 – March? – the first gay pride week was held in this country.

I was still not a lesbian, but I was definitely interested.

The shock of that book. Its brazenness. Go no further than the cover, that incriminating cover. (And perhaps I should highlight the innocence of those days for the modern reader. Mary McCarthy's 1963 novel *The Group* had been banned in Australia as 'an offence against public morals'. A friend of mine had managed to obtain a pirated copy. He read the offending chapter, where one of the characters, an unmarried young woman, has sex – a scene that occasioned greater offence to the public morals than the lesbian part of the novel. I remember him taking me aside and, in lowered voice, confiding that 'of course she must have done it'. 'She' was the author Mary McCarthy and 'it' was sexual intercourse. McCarthy was a grown-up, we were not. Sex was the great unreachable, sex was the great taboo.)

But back to Dennis Altman's book. The cover. Here it is, the original jacket design for the Australian edition. For someone who was defiantly heterosexual but with a worrying weakness, this cover was both shocking and enlightening.



Look at that word. HOMOSEXUAL. Could it be writ any larger? And the flagrant abuse of English grammar by using all lower-case letters. And that shocking pink.

Homosexuality of the male sort was illegal; red-blooded, heterosexual blokes went out poofter-bashing as a form of entertainment. Female homosexuality had been defined out of existence by Queen Victoria; that's how perverted she thought it was. And here was someone brazenly outing himself to the whole world. This Altman fellow clearly thought he had nothing to hide. What made it even worse was that I heard he was Jewish. I'm Jewish, my father fought in World War II, Hitler was well within living memory. 'We Jews have to be careful', my father would say, 'we must be good citizens, we must not rock the boat'. And here was this Altman fellow rocking the whole bloody continent.

I was embarrassed for him, but at the same time I admired his courage. It was a quality I lacked. Girls were expected to marry before they were twenty-five, have two or three children, perhaps a part-time job, and the marriages were expected to last, even if you were unhappy. I expected to follow this plan. Of course there was the lurking girlfriend, a permanent item in my otherwise heterosexual life, and now there was this outrageous book. Outrageous and seductive.

I had to read it. But how to obtain a copy when my closet door was firmly locked?

My local bookshop – Jeffreys in Glenferrie Road, Malvern (it still exists) – had a good selection of books, and extremely helpful owners. They were bookish people who knew their customers well, including all of my family, both immediate and extended. While the book may well have been on their shelves or just an order form away, I could not possibly purchase a copy from them. I went into a few other independents where I was not known, but the shops were smallish and the booksellers so attentive that to make the purchase was beyond me. In fact, I lacked the courage even to handle the book in public.

My reasoning was simple: to want this book, to be seen with it would automatically label me. *The mere possession of the book would out me.* As if anyone were actually interested in me and my reading. As if anyone would draw an equivalence between reader and reading material. But the discrimination was so entrenched in those days, and the ostracism so nasty, that what was logical or sensible simply did not figure. And most significant of all, you yourself were not immune to the values and attitudes that prevailed.

What was required, I decided, was a large bookshop with an impersonal approach to their customers. And not so easy given that bookshops at the time were, in the main, smallish, cosy businesses. And suddenly it occurred to me: the university bookshops. I cannot remember if I made my purchase from the University

of Melbourne or Monash University bookshop – it was one or the other. But I do remember reading the book sequestered away because I did not want anyone to see me.

And I remember thinking that Dennis Altman's arguments were so obvious and persuasive that the book had to bring about huge changes. It certainly did in me. It might only be forty years, but Dennis's book, together with gay liberation and the feminist movement, moved us out of the social and cultural stone age. Most books do not change lives, but Dennis Altman's *Homosexual* did.