Dymphna Cusack (1902-1981): A Feminist Analysis of Gender in her Romantic Realistic Texts.

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INHALTSVERZEICHNIS

Zusammenfassung. iv

Einleitung.....iv
Theoretischer Ansatz.....vi

Ergebnisse.....x

Table of Contents…….....1

Dissertation……...……3

Veröffentlichung……222

DOROTHY PARKER

A CERTAIN LADY

Oh, I can smile for you, and tilt my head,
And drink your rushing words with eager lips,
And paint my mouth for you a fragrant red,
And trace your brows with tutored finger-tips.
When you rehearse your list of loves to me,
Oh, I can laugh and marvel, rapturous-eyed.
And you laugh back, nor can you ever see
The thousand little deaths my heart has died.
And you believe, so well I know my part,
That I am gay as morning, light as snow,
And all the straining things within my heart
You'll never know.

Oh, I can laugh and listen, when we meet,
And you bring tales of fresh adventurings-
Of ladies delicately indiscreet,
Of lingering hands, and gently whispered things.
And you are pleased with me, and strive anew
To sing me sagas of your late delights.
Thus do you want me – marveling, gay, and true-
Nor do you see my staring eyes of nights.
And when, in search of novelty, you stray,
Oh, I can kiss you blithely as you go…
And what goes on, my love, while you're away,
You'll never know.

(1937)

Zusammenfassung

Dymphna Cusack (1902-1981): eine feministische Analyse von Geschlecht/Gender in ihren romantischen realistischen Texten.

Einleitung

Das Dissertationsprojekt befaßt sich mit der australischen Autorin Dymphna Cusack, deren Popularität in Ost und West zwischen 1955 und 1975 ihren Höhepunkt erreichte. In diesem Zeitraum wurde sie nicht nur in den westlichen Industriestaaten, in Australien, England, Frankreich und Nord Amerika viel gelesen, sondern auch in China, Rußland, der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und in vielen Sowjetrepubliken. Im Verlauf ihres Schaffens wurde ihr große Anerkennung für ihren Beitrag zur australischen Literatur zuteil; sie erhielt die „Commonwealth Literary Pension", die „Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal" und 1981 den „Award of her Majesty". Trotz dieser Unterstützung durch den Staat in Australien und England äußerte Cusack immer wieder feministische, humanistisch-pazifistische, und anti-faschistisch bzw. pro-sowjetische Sozialkritik.

Sie war auch für ihren starken Nationalismus bekannt, plädierte dafür, eine „einheimische" Literatur und Kultur zu pflegen. Besonders das australische Bildungssystem war das Ziel ihrer Kritik, basierend auf ihren Erfahrungen als

Lehrerin in städtischen und ländlichen Schulen, die sie ihrer Autobiographie beschrieb.[1]

> Weder ihr Intellekt, noch ihre Seele oder ihre Körper wurden gefördert, um ganze Männer oder ganze Frauen aus ihnen zu machen. Besonders letztere wurden vernachlässigt. Mädchen wurden ermutigt, ihren Platz dort zu sehen, wo deutsche Mädchen ihn einst zu sehen hatten: bei Kindern, Küche, Kirche.[2]

Cusack engagierte sich stark für Bildungsreformen, die das Versagen australischer Schulen, das erwünschte liberal-humanistische Subjekt zu herauszubilden, beheben sollten.

Der liberale Humanismus der Nachkriegszeit schuf ein populäres Bedürfnis nach romantischem Realismus, den man in Cusacks Texten finden kann. Um verstehen zu können, wie Frauen sich zwischen „Realismus und Romanze" verfingen, biete ich eine Dekonstruktion von Geschlecht innerhalb dieses „hybriden" Genres an. Mittels feministischer Methodik können Einblicke in die konfliktvolle Subjektivität beider Geschlechter in verschiedenen historischen Perioden gewonnen werden: die Zeit zwischen den Kriegen, während des Pazifischen Krieges und den Weltkriegen, während des Kalten Krieges, zur Zeit der Aborigine-Bewegung, des Vietnamkrieges, sowie zu Beginn der zweiten feministischen Bewegung in den siebziger Jahren. Eine Rezeptionsanalyse des romantischen Realismus und der Diskurse, die diesen prägen, sind in Kapitel zwei und drei untersucht.

Die Dekonstruktion von Weiblichkeit und eines weiblichen Subjekts ist in Kapitel vier unternommen, innerhalb einer Diskussion der Art und Weise, wie Cusacks romantischer Erzählstil mit dem sozialen Realismus interagiert. Nach der Forschung von Janice Radway, werden Cusacks Erzählungen in zwei Tabellen unterteilt: die Liebesgeschichte versagt, ist erfolgreich, eine Parodie oder Idealisierung (s. „Ideal and Failed Romances"; „Primary Love Story Succeeds or Fails"). Unter Einbeziehung von Judith Butlers philosophischem Ansatz in die Literaturkritik wird deutlich, daß diese Hybridisierung der Gattungen das fiktionale Subjekt davon abhält, ihr/sein Geschlecht „sinnvoll" zu inszenieren. Wie das „reale Subjekt", der Frau in

[1] Dymphna Cusack war Gymnasiallehrerin für Englisch bis 1944, als einer schwere Krankheit sie zur Invaliden machte und sie ihre Manuskripte bis an ihr Lebensende diktieren mußte.

der Gesellschaft, agiert die fiktionale Protagonistin in einer nicht intelligiblen Art und Weise aufgrund der multiplen Anforderungen an und den Einschränkungen für ihr Geschlecht.

Demnach produziert die geschlechtliche Benennung des Subjektes eine Vielfalt von Geschlechtern: Cusacks Frauen und Männer sind geprägt von den unterschiedlichen und konfliktvollen Ansprüchen der dichotom gegenübergestellten Genres. Geschlecht, als biologisches und soziales Gebilde, wird danach undefinierbar durch seine komplexen und inkonsistenten Ausdrucksformen in einem romantisch-realistischen Text. Anders gesagt führt die populäre Kombination von Liebesroman und Realismus zu einer Überschreitung der Geschlechtsbinarität, die in beiden Genres vorausgesetzt wird.

Weiterführend dient eine Betrachtung von Sexualität und Ethnie in Kapitel fünf einer differenzierteren Analyse humanistischer Repräsentationen von Geschlecht in der Nachkriegsliteratur. Die Notwendigkeit, diese Repräsentationen in der Populär- und in der Literatur des Kanons zu dekonstruieren, ist im letzten Kapitel dieser Dissertation weiter erläutert.

Theoretischer Ansatz

Der theoretische Ansatz dieser Dissertation postuliert die Hybridisierung der „sozial-realistischen Erzählung“, charakterisiert durch deren polemische Reportage und dokumentarische Erzählweise mit dem Liebesroman, definiert durch ihre sentimentale Liebesgeschichte und den melodramatischen Aufbau. Diese Genres weisen wichtige Verbindungen mit den Ausdrucksformen von Weiblichkeit im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert auf: die populäre Romanze vergrößert angeblich weibliche Phantasien und idealisiert etablierte Gechlechterrollen, während der Realismus die „Wahrheit“

[2] Dymphna Cusack, A Window in the Dark, Hrg. Debra Adelaide (Canberra: National Library of

der Geschlechter darstellt, oder, besser gesagt, das „wahre“ Begehren von Individuen, deren soziales Geschlecht sich als natürliche Konsequenz aus ihrem Biologischen entwickelt. In der literarischen Geschichte ist das Genre somit selbst geschlechtlich markiert, da populäre Liebesgeschichten weibliche Phantasie und weibliche Realitätsflucht repräsentieren, während der soziale Realismus maskuline Wahrheiten fortschreibt, die die Literatur seit jeher bestimmen.

Diane Elam hat auf eine Maskulinisierung der Gattung hingewiesen, darauf, daß das Genre des klassischen Realismus und sein Maskulinismus noch immer nicht offen für Schriftstellerinnen sei, die auf „historische Romanzen“ beschränkt werden, auch wenn es ihnen gelingt, realistische Erzählungen zu schreiben.[3] Trotzdem warnt Yvonne Tasker vor den theoretischen Fallgruben, die bei einer Feminisierung populärer Romanzen entstehen, da sie i.d.R. ausschließlich mit weiblicher Leserschaft in Verbindung gebracht werden.[4] In jeder Rezeptionsanalyse sollte also die Literaturkritik auch die vorgegebenen Erwartungen der Gattungen in Betrachtung nehmen, da das Geschlecht der Autorin, der Leserschaft sogar das Geschlecht des Erzählstils einer Rezension beinflussen kann.

Mit dieser Argumentation beziehe ich mich auf die Arbeiten von Judith Butler, die das feministisches Gedankengut von Simone de Beauvoir und Monique Wittig weiterentwickelte, in dem der Grundsatz gilt, daß eine Frau zu „sein“ auch immer bedeutet eine Frau „zu werden“. Butler fügt hinzu:

> Da aber dieser Prozeß in keiner Hinsicht starr ist, kann man auch ein Wesen werden, das weder Mann noch Frau wahrhaft beschreiben. Es geht hier weder um die Figur des androgynen, noch um eine mutmaßliche dritte Geschlechtsidentität, noch um die Transzendierung der Binarität. Statt dessen handelt es sich um eine interne Subversion, die die Binarität sowohl voraussetzt als auch bis zu dem Punkt vervielfältigt, daß sie letztlich sinnlos wird.[5]

Australia, 1991) 104.
[3] Diane Elam, Romancing the Postmodern (London: Routledge, 1994) 2-4.
[4] Yvonne Tasker, „Having it all: Feminism and the Pleasures of the Popular,“ Off-Centre: Feminism and Cultural Studies, Hrg. Sarah Franklin, Celia Lury und Jackie Stacey (London: Harper Collins, 1991) 85-96. 90.
[5] Judith Butler, Das Unbehagen der Geschlechter (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991) 188.

Die fiktionalen Charaktere in Cusacks romantisch-realistischen Texten bewegen sich zwischen den dichotomen, doch gleichzeitig auch konstitutiven Anforderungen der konventionellen Liebesgeschichten und des sozialen Realismus.

In Kapitel vier werde ich darstellen, daß es den ProtagonistInnen bisweilen nicht gelingt, „vollständig" Mann oder Frau zu „werden" (s. Cusacks Aussage über „ganze" Männer und Frauen in dem ersten Zitat). Sie werden statt dessen „anders geschlechtlich" und zeitweilig unintelligibel innerhalb normativer Zweigeschlechtlichkeit, die wiederum die generischen Grenzen sowohl des Sozialromans, als auch der Romanze beeinflußt und reguliert. Wenn Weiblichkeit und das weibliche Subjekt durch das Prisma des Genres dekonstruiert werden, kann der *prima facie* Glauben an binäre Zweigeschlechtlichkeit verworfen werden.

In dieser Dissertation argumentiere ich, daß das hybride Genre des romantischen Realismus eine Untergrabung humanistischer Geschlechtsrepräsentation durch die in Opposition stehenden Anforderungen des Liebesromanes und des sozialen Realismus ermöglicht. Die gegensätzlichen Anforderungen an einen Text können als generische Kollision in einer Figur und/oder einer Erzählung beschrieben werden. Beispielsweise kann sowohl die phantasievolle Heldin einer Romanze als auch die pragmatische Frau des Realismus in einer einzigen Erzählung gefunden werden, in der Elemente beider Typen wiederum eine einzelne Protagonistin charakterisieren.

In Come in Spinner repräsentieren die Ärztin Dallas und die Managerin Claire „realistische" Charaktere wenn sie Deb und Guinea den Ratschlag geben, Ruhm und Romantik nicht einer stabilen, echten Liebe vorzuziehen.[6] Eine andere Ärztin Eve und der Sozialarbeiter Marc in Jungfrau versuchen, als Theas pragmatische Ratgeber zu fungieren und sie von romantischer Torheit abzuhalten.[7] Ähnlich findet auch „die mit beiden Füßen auf dem Boden stehende" Doreen in Say No to Death[8], daß ihre

[6] Cusack mit Florence James, Come in Spinner (London: William Heinemann, 1951. London: Cedric Chivers, 1963. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1966. A & R Classic Edition, 1973, 1981. Angus & Robertson Unabridged Edition, 1988, 1990, 1991. A & R Unabridged Classic Edition, 1994). Jagd nach Glück Übers. Olga und Erich Fetter (Berlin: Verlag der Nation, 1967).
[7] Jungfrau (Sydney: The Bulletin, 1936; Sydney: Penguin, 1989).
[8] Say No to Death (London: Heinemann, 1951. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1973, 1974. Berlin: Seven Seas Publishers, 1959). Und jeden Morgen neue Hoffnung Übers. Erich und Olga Fetter (Berlin: Verlag der Nation, 1961, 1970). Sun in My Hands (New York: William Morrow, 1951).

Schwester Jan romantischen Idealen verfallen ist. Entscheidend ist, daß alle drei Texte als Romanzen kategorisiert werden können, obwohl es Druck auf die Heldinnen gibt, die die Vorstellungen der idealen Liebesgeschichte eigentlich nicht zulassen. Durch den Schluß der Erzählung wird statt dessen eine Art reformierter „romantischer Liebe“ vorgeschlagen, die Cusacks Idee reformierter Ehe und heterosexueller Beziehungen widerspiegelt, in denen Frauen nicht länger untergeordnet sind.

In den Werken, die ich in dieser Arbeit als nicht erfolgreiche oder satirische Liebesgeschichten definiere, strafen sich die (Anti)Heldinnen Brenda, Tempe und Roslyn selbst für ihre romantischen Illusionen, die sie in persönliche Desaster führten, während die androgyne Schriftstellerin Alexandra Pendlebury (mit Spitznamen Pen) ihre eigene Weiblichkeit aufgrund ihrer Abwehr gegen eine Liebesverbindung in Frage stellt.[9] Ein männliches Beispiel ist der starke, romantische Held gegen den weichen Durchschnittsmann - eine Opposition, die wiederholt in Cusacks Texten auftaucht. In den meisten Fällen allerdings überwältigt der Realismus die romantische Erzählung an dem Punkt, an welchem die Durchschnittsmänner dem an sich überlegenen, herausragenden Helden zahlenmäßig überlegen sind.

Für diese Dekonstruktion von Geschlecht ist es zudem wichtig, die Rolle von Homosexualität im Text zu untersuchen. Lesben gehören offensichtlich nicht in die heterosexuelle Logik populärer Liebesromane und auch die homosoziale Liebe kommt selten in realistischen Erzählungen der Nachkriegszeit vor. Ähnliches gilt für die Kategorie Rasse/Ethnie oder die Sexualität schwarzer Frauen, die weder in westlichen Liebesgeschichten signifikant ist, noch in sozial-realistischen Texten weißer Autoren dargestellt wird. In Kapitel drei zeige ich, daß die Anwesenheit der schwarzen Frau oder der Lesbe die binäre Zweigeschlechtlichkeit noch weiter verwirrt und verwischt. Innerhalb der Erweiterung meiner Analyse dieser

[9] Brenda aus The Half-burnt Tree (London: Heinemann, 1969. London: Mayflower Books, 1971. Richmond: Marlin Books, 1977). Der Halbverbrannte Baum Übers. Olga und Erich Fetter (Berlin: Verlag der Nation, 1972, 1973. Berlin: Verlag Volk und Welt, 1982). Fortsetzung in Roman-Zeitung (1982): 392. Tempe aus Black Lightning (London: William Heinemann, 1964. Melbourne: Readers Book Club Edition, 1965. Richmond: Marlin Books, 1977). Wie ein Schwarzer Blitz (Berlin: Verlag Volk und Welt, 1973). Fortsetzung in Roman-Zeitung (1973): 278. Roslyn aus A Bough in Hell (London: William Heinemann, 1971). Pen aus The Sun in Exile (London: Constable, 1955. Richmond: Marlin Books, 1977).

„marginalen“ Subjekte beziehe ich mich auf Literaturkritik von Lesben und Schwarzen. [10]

Im Sinne dieser Argumentation kann man alle Novellen und Theaterstücke Cusacks als romantische Erzählungen bezeichnen, die in Sozialrealismus eingebettet sind. Eine Dekonstruktion von Geschlecht in Cusacks romantisch-realistischen Texten zeigt die Doppelbewegung in den Texten: das liberal humanistische Projekt des Individuums als unabhängig Handelndes in der Gesellschaft wird einerseits bestätigt, während zur gleichen Zeit die Unmöglichkeit der Selbstverwirklichung weiblicher/männlicher ProtagonistInnen
gezeigt wird. Kann also Geschlecht in diesen konventionell strukturierten Texten nicht stabilisiert werden, ist es schwierig, ein statisches, komplett entwickeltes Selbst zu inszenieren, das ungebrochen durch andere Subjektivitäten und marginale Perspektiven in der Gesellschaft existieren kann. Dieses Argument wird ähnlich auch auf Cusacks Repräsentation der schwarzen Frau und der Lesbe angewandt, um das Funktionieren von rassistischen Diskursen und Heterosexismus im Australien der Nachkriegszeit aufzuzeigen.

Mein theoretisches Argument folgt generell dem poststrukturalistischen Gedankengut der letzten zwanzig Jahre, insbesondere der feministischen und postmarxistischen theoretischen Kritik auf diesem Gebiet, die das stabile Selbst, den liberalen Humanismus und den weiß geprägten Feminismus mit dem Ziel in Frage gestellt haben, Frauen erneut als Klasse oder soziale Gruppe zu formulieren und zu konstruieren sowie differenzierte Formen individueller Subjektivität zuzulassen.

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[10] Cherie Moraga und Gloria Anzaldúa, Hrg., This Bridge Called My Back: Writings from Radical Women of Colour (New York: Kitchen Table, 1983); Eve Fesl, Conned! Eve Mumewa D. Fesl Speaks Out on Language and the Conspiracy of Silence, A Koori Perspective (St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1993); Sally Munt, Hrg., New Lesbian Criticism: Literary and Cultural Readings (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992); Adrienne Rich, “On Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” und Monique Wittig, “One is Not Born a Woman,” Hrg. H. Abelove et.al. The Gay and Lesbian Studies Reader (New York: Routledge, 1993) 227-55. 103-09.

Ergebnisse

In der Zeit des Kalten Krieges war der Durchschnittsleser zwar an sozialen Problemen interessiert, sehnte sich jedoch zugleich nach Liebesgeschichten. Folglich versuchte die hybride Gattung, die diesen Leserkreis bedienen wollte, die Beziehungen zwischen den Geschlechtern zu stabilisieren, wie es der (heterosexuelle, weiße) Liebesroman und der polemische soziale Realismus verlangen. Die Analyse von Heatwave in Berlin und von Joys politischem Erwachen und ihrer Selbstverwirklichung in meinem zweiten Kapitel demonstriert, wie geschlechtsspezifische Theorien vom humanistischen Subjekt funktionieren.[11] Frauen galten als politisch ignorant, ihre Einflußnahme war auf den häuslichen Bereich beschränkt. Cusacks Frauen gelang es jedoch häufig, sich von diesen Erwartungen zu befreien und aktiv an gesellschaftlichen Veränderungsprozessen mitzuwirken.

Selbst Nebenfiguren, wie Matron Cutts (Picnic Races), Doreen (Say No to Death) und Luella Dayborn (Heatwave in Berlin) machen sich die männlichen Sphären zueigen und entsprechen damit nicht den Erwartungen an ihr Geschlecht.[12] In The Golden Girls und Morning Sacrifice, Theaterstücke mit ausschließlich weiblichen Charakteren, haben die manipulierenden Anti-Heldinnen Angelica und Kingsbury mit der finanziellen und wirtschaftlichen Kontrolle über Frauen die männliche Machtquelle schlechthin an sich gerissen.[13] Der konventionelle Liebesroman Southern Steel enthält ebenfalls Frauenfiguren, die versuchen, ihren Einfluß auf die öffentliche Sphäre geltend zu machen, sei es durch ihre eigene Tätigkeit und finanzielle Unabhängigkeit oder durch ehrgeizige Einflußnahme auf die Karriere des

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[11] Heatwave in Berlin (London: William Heineman, 1961. London: Pan Books, 1961. Melbourne: Readers Book Club Edition, in association with The Companion Book Club, London, 1962. London: Chivers Press, 1985). Solnce-eto esce me ise Dimfna K'jusak (Moscow: Izdat/Pravda, 1990). Fortsetzung in den französischen Zeitungen, 1961. In der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik: "Im Westen nichts Neues?" Schauspiel nach Motiven des Romans "Heißer Sommer in Berlin" von Dymphna Cusack. In russischer Sprache. Dramatisches Theater der zeitweilig in der DDR stationierten Streitkräfte der UdSSR. Saison 1966/67.

[12] Picnic Races (London: William Heinemann, 1962. Melbourne: Readers Book Club Edition, in association with The Companion Book Club, London, 1963. Richmond: Marlin Books, 1978).

[13] The Golden Girls: A Play in Three Acts (London: Deane & Sons Ltd, 1955). "Morning Sacrifice," Three Australian Three Act Plays (Sydney: Mulga Publications, 1943) 179-259. Morning Sacrifice

Ehemannes.[14] Trotzdem trägt das aktive Individuum in der Literaturtheorie der Nachkriegszeit vorwiegend maskuline Züge. Die Literaturkritik im anglophonen Sprachraum ist hauptsächlich beeinflußt von Sartres Existentialismus, von Lukacs Realismustheorie, dem Marxismus Althussers, vom Russischen Formalismus, dem amerikanischen New Criticism, von Saussures Semiotik und Barthes poststrukturalistischen Interpretationen. Diese Theorien gehen alle von der Maskulinität des Subjekts aus, keine von ihnen diskutiert die Frauenfrage ausführlich.

Wie diese Dissertation deutlich macht, war Cusacks Feminismus zum Teil ambivalent. Obgleich Joys politisches Erwachen ihre Selbstverwirklichung ermöglicht, ist ihr Verhalten doch weit entfernt von der autonomen Lebensgestaltung früherer Frauenfiguren, wie in Jungfrau und Morning Sacrifice. Denn Joy, eine australische Frau der mittleren Bevölkerungsschicht, läßt sich, wie auch einige andere Protagonistinnen in Cusacks Texten, zu einem intellektuellen Protegé von Männern/eines Mannes machen.
In Heatwave in Berlin kritisiert Joy zwar die „gehorsame deutsche Frau", es gelingt ihr jedoch nicht, die 'Moderne Frau' zu repräsentieren, die sich in den Dreißiger Jahren herausbildete und in Frauengestalten wie Marc (Jungfrau), Gwen (Morning Sacrifice), Doreen (Say No to Death) und Vicky und Pen (The Sun in Exile) wiederzufinden ist. Wie Joy gehören auch die Frauen des Marie Antoinette Schönheitssalons in Come in Spinner zu einem Frauentyp, der die widersprüchliche Stellung der Frauen repräsentiert, die sich nach ihrer Emanzipation durch die erste Welle des Feminismus erneut von traditionellen Geschlechterrollen, Vorstellungen von Weiblichkeit und biologischer Determiniertheit eingeengt fühlen.

Picnic Races, Say No to Death und Southern Steel verwenden außerdem nationale Typen, um die humanistischen Gedanken der Leser und die politischen Fragestellungen der Zeit des Kalten Krieges zu repräsentieren. Meine Analyse der Rezeption dieser Romane konzentrierte sich auf die Interaktion kultureller (Stereo-)Typen mit vorherrschenden Diskursen, die zu einer übereinstimmenden

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(Sydney: Currency Press Theatre Series Acting Edition, 1986). Aufführung: International Women's Playwright Conference, Adelaide, 1994.

[14] Southern Steel (London: Constable, 1953. Richmond: Marlin Books, 1977). "Wolkern über Newcastle," Fortsetzung in Für Dich: Illustrierte Zeitschrift für die Frau 1946-1990, Deutsche Demokratische Republik.

Hervorhebung der Authentizität, Schärfe und Bedeutung der Texte führte. Die Palette der regional und international rezipierten britischen, australischen und französischen Zeitungen, die Cusacks Werk rezensiert haben, illustriert den Umfang von Cusacks Popularität und Einfluß in der englischsprachigen Welt. Nichtsdestotrotz ist einigen Kritikern und Literaten der Anachronismus bei vielen von Cusacks Protagonisten nicht verborgen geblieben, so verkörpert zum Beispiel die Familie von Muhler (Heatwave in Berlin) in überspitzter Form viele beliebte Klischees, Vorurteile und auch das Mißtrauen gegenüber den Deutschen im Europa der Nachkriegszeit.

Wie ich im vierten Kapitel darstelle, scheinen Cusacks Frauen zwischen den Illusionen des Liebesromans und den Härten des Realismus gefangen zu sein. Figuren wie Alice in The Sun is Not Enough werden häufig weiblichen Modellen der Emanzipation wie Pen in The Sun in Exile gegenübergestellt.[15] Wie im vierten Kapitel unter "Postwar Gender Roles" dargestellt wird, scheint Alice all die Konflikte zu verkörpern, die jene Frauen erleiden, die den sozialen Diskurs des Liebesromans zu ihrem eigenen machen, selbst dann, wenn sie ihre Torheit zugeben und ihrem Verlangen, jemand anderer sein oder ihrer Situation entkommen zu wollen, Ausdruck verleihen. Ich habe Janice Radways These erweitert, um zu erklären, wie die konventionelle Liebesgeschichte die Frustration und Verzweiflung dieser Frauen, typischerweise Vertreterinnen der Arbeiter- oder Mittelklasse, wiedergibt. Zugleich dient der Text jedoch auch dazu, jene Leser zu beruhigen, die allzu kritisch mit den Beziehungen zwischen den Geschlechtern ins Gericht gehen.

Radway argumentiert, daß die romantische Erzählung die Funktion habe, Frauen in ihrem Glauben zu bestärken, daß ideale Liebe und Ehe nicht nur erreichbar, sondern auch das erstrebenswerteste Ziel für Frauen sind. Durch die Differenzierung von Cusacks romantischen Erzählungen im ersten Teil des vierten Kapitels mache ich deutlich, wie die mißglückten und parodistischen Romanzen den Genrekonventionen der Liebesgeschichte, die die Erzählung bestimmen, scheinbar entgegenläuft. Weiterhin stelle ich fest, daß die meisten von Cusacks Frauen sich der beruhigenden, bestätigenden Funktion der Liebesgeschichte bewußt sind, auch wenn die Protagonistinnen der Heldin der Liebesromane ähnlich sind. So ist es logisch, daß in

den mißglückten und parodistischen Romanzen die romantisierten Protagonistinnen der idealen Liebe sehr skeptisch gegenüber stehen. Trotzdem wollen sie das historische Konzept der Romanze nicht völlig aufgeben, wie in den Figuren des Arztes Dallas in Come in Spinner und des Dilletanten Marc in Jungfrau zum Ausdruck kommt.

Tabelle 1 konzentriert sich auf romantische Erzählungen, die entweder klar den gattungsspezifischen Merkmalen des Liebesromans folgen bzw. auf solche, die aufgrund der Desillusionierung, der Selbstverwirklichung und des politischen Erwachens der Heldin keinen idealen Ausgang finden. Es ist von Bedeutung, daß beide Gruppen romantischer Erzählungen in Tabelle 1 gleichzeitig eine deutliche Gesellschaftskritik darstellen, also auch die genrespezifischen Merkmale des polemischen sozialen Realismus enthalten. Ich habe argumentiert, daß die mißglückten und parodistischen Romanzen trotzdem als Liebesgeschichten gewertet werden sollten, da der Versuch der Heldin, ihre 'einzig wahre Liebe' zu retten, von äußeren Umständen, wie Geschlechts-, Rassen- und Klassenzugehörigkeit zunichte gemacht wurde. Ungeachtet des Ausgangs der Erzählung ist der Realismus also effektiv in dieselbe eingebunden.

Beide Gruppen enthalten Protagonistinnen, die zwischen widersprüchlichen Sehnsüchten und Realitäten hin und her gerissen sind. Trotzdem gelingt es ihnen, ihre Persönlichkeit zu festigen und Kontrolle über ihr Leben zu übernehmen, sei es durch die Entscheidung für die Ehe, dafür, den Partner zu verlassen oder für ein Leben mit dem Geliebten. In Come in Spinner repräsentieren Guinea, Deb und Dallas, australische Frauen mit verschiedenen Talenten und Möglichkeiten, diese verschiedenen Entscheidungen. Sie alle sind geformt und beeinflußt durch den gesellschaftlichen Diskurs des Liebesromans einerseits und durch die harte Realität der Kriegszeit andererseits. In ähnlicher Weise symbolisiert das Trio in Jungfrau die widersprüchlichen Anforderungen der Gesellschaft, die vorherrschende Moral und die Verlockung, eine 'Moderne Frau' zu werden. Wie meine Untersuchung von Thea, dem 'Della Robbia Kind' gezeigt hat, waren diese drei Frauen der dreißiger Jahre

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[15] The Sun is Not Enough (Hawthorne: Gold Star Publishers, 1972. London: William Heinemann, 1976).

unterschiedlich ‘geschlechtlich markiert’, denn sie gehörten nicht demselben Geschlecht an.

„Femme fatale“ und „brave Ehefrau“ können sich als gegensätzliche Typen innerhalb eines Erzähltextes finden, wie in Say No to Death und Southern Steel. Bei einer Analyse der Konstruktion von Geschlecht bzw. Gender in diesen Nachkriegstexten wird klar, daß die Art und Weise, wie ein einziger Protagonist verschiedene Typen in sich verkörpert, die Vorstellung eines einheitlichen identifizierbaren Geschlechts unmöglich macht. Das Spektrum einer vielfachen Geschlechtlichkeit umfaßt die vielfältigen Erfahrungen von Ethnizität, (Homo-)Sexualität und die verschiedenen Kämpfe um Macht und Wissen, die die Subjektivität ausmachen. Das war mehr als die Annahme bestimmter Geschlechtsmerkmale für Weiblichkeit, denn jedes Individuum reagierte unterschiedlich auf den Gender-Diskurs. Jedes Individuum stellt ein Wesen dar, welches nicht notwendigerweise weibliche Züge tragen muß, wie Kapitel 5 zeigt, wo diese Diskussion in Richtung von Sexualität und Rassenzugehörigkeit erweitert wird.

Tabelle 2 erweitert meine Beobachtungen im Zusammenhang mit der ersten Klassifikation und unterteilt Cusacks Texte weiterhin in erfolgreiche und gescheiterte ‘Haupt’-Liebesgeschichten. Ich stelle dar, wie sekundäre Liebesgeschichten den primären zwischen Heldin und Held entgegenlaufen. Das Resultat dieser Analyse ist, daß die Liebesgeschichte nicht in einer einzigen Figur oder einem Erzählstrang enthalten sein muß, sondern daß die Konventionen des Liebesromans, wenn sie mit dem Realismus gemischt sind, eine Art ‘Multi-Erzählung’ produzieren. Selbst wenn die Heldin selbst ihre einzig wahre Liebe nicht findet, eine oder mehrere der Nebenfiguren können durchaus Glück und Erfüllung in der Liebe finden. Umgekehrt finden sich in Texten, in denen die primäre Liebesgeschichte erfolgreich endet, eine Vielzahl von unbedeutenderen romantischen Geschichten, die mißlingen. Man könnte argumentieren, daß das Scheitern der Liebesgeschichte ein Ergebnis ihres Realismus ist. Ich halte es für sinnvoller, auf die Kulturkritik hinzuweisen, die diesem hybriden Genre inhärent ist, auf seine Verbindung von sozialen Problemen und dem Pragmatismus der Frauen, anstatt einen Text als realistisch zu definieren, nur weil er kein romantisches Ende aufweist, oder weil es ihm nicht gelingt, ideale Liebe und Ehe darzustellen.

Typisch für Cusacks Melodrama ist, daß die Heldinnen sich mitunter sogar für Selbstmord entscheiden, wie in den romantisch realistischen Texten Jungfrau, Morning Sacrifice, The Sun is Not Enough, Black Lightning und A Bough in Hell. Einige von Cusacks Frauen fühlen sich aufgrund der Anforderungen an ihre Sexualität und der Beschränkungen durch ihre Geschlechtszugehörigkeit so sehr in die Enge getrieben, daß sie lieber Selbstmord begehen als weiter zu kämpfen. Frauen litten oft unter der Doppelmoral, der gegenüber Cusack konsequent eine progressive Haltung einnahm, indem sie Schwangerschaftsunterbrechung auf Wunsch der Frau und weibliche Promiskuität unterstützte. Tatsächlich schien die Autorin sehr verärgert über die Unterdrückung der Frauen. Sie bestand wiederholt darauf, daß Frauen selbst darüber entscheiden sollten, „welche Art von Mensch sie sein wollten."[16] Cusack vertrat die Ansicht, daß die Frauen der Nachkriegszeit gefangen waren zwischen der „praktischen Haremsidee" und latenten Vorstellungen von Ritterlichkeit. So waren Frauen ständig definiert und eingeschränkt durch ihr Geschlecht, ihre Anpassung an die Vorstellung von Weiblichkeit und weiblicher Sexualität.

[16] Aus ihrer Sendung, „Calling All Women," Rundfunk 2GB, Sydney, 1944. Die Abschrift: MS4621/7/1, Dymphna Cusack Archiv, Nationalbibliothek Australiens, Canberra.

DYMPHNA CUSACK (1902 - 1981): A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF GENDER IN HER ROMANTIC REALISTIC TEXTS.

CHAPTER ONE **3**

i) Introduction *3*
An Australian Woman Writer of the Cold War 3
"The Kind of Human Beings We Want Women to Be" 5

ii) Existent Research *10*
Current Scholarship on Cusack and her Books in Print 10
Conflicting Appraisals: Recent Australian Literary Criticism 14
Notes on Methodology: Feminist Cultural Studies 21

iii) Bestsellers in the East and West: An International Author *23*
Cusack's Publishing Record: Multiple Editions 1936-1994 24
The Literary Historical Context in Australia 26

CHAPTER TWO **29**

i) Genre Defined by Discourses *30*
Postwar Discourses: Genre and the "Average Reader" 30
Ideology and the Author 38
Liberal Feminism and the Woman Subject 44
Transcript: Interview with Florence James 44

ii) Humanist Representations *52*
Australianness and National Cultural Types in Picnic Races 52
Politics as Realism: Heatwave in Berlin and German Types 59

CHAPTER THREE **67**

i) Genre Defined by Her Reception *67*
"Fact or Fiction?": Heatwave in Berlin 67
"A Great Love Story" and Political Intervention: Say No to Death 75
"Feminine" Popular Romance and "Masculine" Social Realism: Southern Steel 84

CHAPTER FOUR **96**

i) Women Caught Between Realism and Romance *96*
Cusack's Texts Differentiated: an Extension of Radway's Thesis 96
Table One: Ideal and Failed Romances 98
Table Two: Primary Love Story Succeeds or Fails 103
Parodic Romances: the White Heroine in Cusack's Black Narratives 108
Postwar Gender Roles: Suburban Alice in The Sun is Not Enough 113
Women's Complicity with Romance in Comets Soon Pass and Heatwave in Berlin 118

ii) Deconstructing Femininity *125*
Unintelligible Genders: Come in Spinner, Picnic Races, Say No to Death and Southern Steel 125
Illustrations: Bicentenary Editions of Come in Spinner and Pioneers on Parade 128
Confounding the Binary: the Female Trio in Jungfrau 134
Love and Romance in Jungfrau: Constituting Thea and Marc as Subjects 138

CHAPTER FIVE **142**

i) Race and Racism *142*
Picnic Races, Black Lightning, The Half-Burnt Tree and The Sun in Exile 142
Illustrations: Book Covers of Cusack's "Aboriginal Novels" 149
The Black Woman as Agent in Black Lightning and The Half-Burnt Tree 152
Unintelligible Genders and Race: Zanny in Black Lightning 154

ii) Sexuality *158*
A Homosocial Romance? Women Loving Women in The Sun in Exile and Jungfrau 158
The Threat of Lesbianism in The Golden Girls and Morning Sacrifice 163
Australian Masculinity: Real (Heterosexual) Men Becoming Whole 169

CHAPTER SIX **179**

i) Humanist Values *179*
Feminist Positions in Literary History 179
"There's Got to be a New Deal for Women", Cusack 184

ii) Her Place in Australian Cultural History *185*
Transcript: Interview with Florence James 185

iii) Conclusion *190*
Ideological Discourses and Social Reforms 190
Subjects as Types, Women as Agents 192

APPENDIX **200**

A: Extract on the Writing of Say No to Death from Norman Freehill's Biography 200
B: Contents of the Dymphna Cusack Archive at the National Library of Australia 201
C: Media Interviews with Dymphna Cusack in the German Democratic Republic 202
D: Extract from the Catalogue of an Exhibition on Women's Labour in the GDR 203

BIBLIOGRAPHY **204**

i) Primary Sources *205*
Novels, Plays and Travel Writing 205
Collaboration 207
Essays, Articles and Interviews 208

ii) Secondary Sources *210*
Archival Material 210
Selected Reviews 211
Works Cited 213

Acknowledgements *226*

CHAPTER ONE

i) Introduction

An Australian Woman Writer of the Cold War

In her lifetime, Dymphna Cusack continually launched social critiques on the basis of her feminism, humanism, pacificism and anti-fascist/pro-Soviet stance. Recalling her experiences teaching urban and country schoolchildren in A Window in the Dark, she was particularly scathing of the Australian education system.[1] Cusack agitated for educational reforms in the belief that Australian schools had failed to cultivate the desired liberal humanist subject:

> Neither their minds, their souls, nor their bodies were developed to make the Whole Man or the Whole Woman - especially the latter. For girls were encouraged to regard their place as German girls once did: Kinder, Küche, Kirche - Children, Kitchen and Church. (104)

I suggest that postwar liberal humanism, with its goals of equality among the sexes and self-realisation or "becoming Whole", created a popular demand for the romantic realism found in Cusack's texts. This twentieth century form of humanism, evident in new ideas of the subject found in psychoanalysis, Western economic theory and Modernism, informed each of the global lobbies for peace and freedom that followed the destruction of World War II.

Liberal ideas of the individual in society became synonymous with the humanist representations of gender in much of postwar, realistic literature in English-speaking countries. The individual, a free agent whose aim was to "improve the life of human beings", was usually given the masculine gender. He was shown to achieve self-realisation through a commitment to the development of "mankind", either materially or spiritually. Significantly, the majority of

[1] Dymphna Cusack was a high school teacher of English until 1944, when a grave illness made her a permanent invalid and forced her to dictate entire manuscripts for the rest of her writing career.

Cusack's texts diverge from this norm by portraying women as social agents of change and indeed, as the central protagonists.

Although the humanist goal of self-realisation seems to be best adapted to social realism, the generic conventions of popular romance also have humanist precepts, as Catherine Belsey has argued. The Happy End is contrived through the heroine's mental submission to her physical desire for the previously rejected or criticised lover. As Belsey has noted, desire might be considered a deconstructive force which momentarily prevents the harmonious, permanent unification of mind and body because the body, at the moment of seduction, does not act in accord with the mind. In popular romance, however, desire usually leads to a relationship or proper union of the protagonists.

In Cusack's words, the heroine and hero become "whole men and women" through the "realistic" love story. Thus romance, like realism, seeks to stabilise gender relations, even though female desire is temporarily disruptive in the narrative. In the end, women and men become fully realised characters according to the generic conventions of the love story or the consummation of potentially subversive desire. It stayed anxieties associated with women seeking independence and self-realisation rather than traditional romance which signalled a threat to existing gender relations.

I proposed that an analysis of gender in Cusack's fiction is warranted, since these apparently unified, humanist representations of romantic realism belie the conflicting aims and actions of the gendered subjects in this historical period. For instance, when we examine women's lives immediately after the war, we can identify in both East and West efforts initiated by women and men to reconstruct private/public roles. In order to understand how women were caught between "realism and romance", I plan to deconstruct gender within the paradigm of this hybrid genre.

By adopting a femininist methodology, new insights may be gained into the conflictual subjectivity of both genders in the periods of the interwar years, the Pacific and World Wars, the Cold War, the Australian Aboriginal Movement at the time of the Vietnam War, as well as the moment of second wave Western feminism in the seventies. My definition of romantic realism and the discourses that inform it are examined in chapters two and three. A

deconstruction of femininity and the female subject is pursued in chapter four, when I argue that Cusack's romantic narratives interact in different ways with social realism: romance variously fails, succeeds, is parodic or idealised. Applying Judith Butler's philosophical ideas to literary criticism, I argue that this hybridisation of genre prevents the fictional subject from performing his or her gender.[2]

Like the "real" subject - actual women in society - the fictional protagonist acts in an unintelligible fashion due to the multifarious demands and constraints on her gender. Consequently, the gendering of the sexed subject produces a multiplicity of genders: Cusack's women and men are constituted by differing and conflicting demands of the dichotomously opposed genres. Thus gender and sex become indefinite through their complex, inconsistent expression in the romantic realistic text. In other words, the popular combination of romance and realism leads to an explosion of the gender binary presupposed by both genres. Furthermore, a consideration of sexuality and race in chapter five leads to a more differentiated analysis of the humanist representations of gender in postwar fiction. The need to deconstruct these representations in popular and canonical literature is recapitulated in the final chapter of this Dissertation.

"The Kind of Human Beings We Want Women to Be"

Cusack's work has produced much anxiety about its place in relation to the Australian literary canon. While academics have largely dismissed its significance, newspaper and journal reviewers have cautiously considered its ambiguous appeal as popular though serious fiction. Literary journalism's stance may be typified by the remark: "Anyone who likes a romantic story which has enough quality about it to lift it out of the "light

[2] Butler has extended former theories of sexes assuming gender traits: "but because this process is in no sense fixed, it is possible to become a being whom neither man nor woman truly describes. This is not the figure of the androgyne nor some hypothetical "third gender", nor is it a transcendence of the binary. Instead, it is an internal subversion in which the binary is both pre-supposed and proliferated to the point where it no longer makes sense" (127). Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York: Routledge, 1990).

reading" category will find this [Picnic Races] a most acceptable book".[3] As I have argued in chapter two, the generic classification of Cusack's writing is integral to understanding the humanist representations of men and women in this example of postwar fiction. It is also important for literary theory to analyse what happens to gender in the text when it is constituted by hybrid genres and implicit socio-political discourses.

The following statement by Cusack encapsulates the tenets of my argument which aims to deconstruct the humanism of the sex/gender binary. In her comment on gender roles under fascism and in postwar democracies, Cusack maintained with much irony:

> The fascists are quite logical, but in the democracies with our misleading banner of political rights for women, there's still a tremendous amount of confusion about the *kind* of human beings we want women to be, what contribution we expect them to make to the community, the amount of responsibility they're expected to carry in return for their rather "mythical rights". We're caught between two ideas, both a hang-over from the past before labour-saving devices or votes for women were thought of - between the practical harem idea and the idealistic notions of chivalry.[4]

I have attempted to investigate Cusack's assertion above, that we are caught between "two ideas". Its corollary is that women are caught between "practical" and "idealistic" gendering concepts. I have done so by examining representations of femininity and the female subject in the text.

According to the generic conventions, the "practical" woman is usually found in social realism while "idealistic" femininity belongs to romance. I argue that if both practical and idealistic concepts form a single character and/or narrative, then the gendered sub-ject no longer has a unified, intelligible gender. The women and men in Cusack's texts, as well as the readers themselves, remain "caught between two ideas" that promulgate fixed notions of gender identity, indeed predetermine the ability to belong to either sex.

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[3] British review of Picnic Races which described the novel as a "well-written romance" (Surrey Comet 10 Feb. 1962). Reviews in the UK vary from a "memorable experience...bringing to life the social patterms of a community" ("Pleasant Trip Down Under," Evening Express 21 Feb. 1962) to a "lively dramatic comedy on the social plane" (Guardian-Journal 15 Feb. 1962).

[4] Cusack's wartime radio programme, "Calling All Women," Transcript, 1944. MS4621/7/5.

Cusack's conviction expressed in the quote above is reiterated in her collaborative work Come in Spinner, when the "unfaithful wife" Deb and the successful doctor Dallas discuss the Modern Woman, her sexuality and morality.[5] Dallas claims that in the early twentieth century the majority of women were still "domestic drudges" while the rest were "kept for display".[6] The doctor's attitude could perhaps explain Cusack's use of the romantic narrative: Dallas believes romance has been reduced to an indicator of wealth and the "harem tradition", which has lead to the "degradation of a once lovely word" (330). Dallas elaborates on the corruption of romance in modern society, which Deb mistakes for an anti-romantic position:

> "My complaint about human relationships, as the films and the cheap magazines present them, is that they destroy the real material basis and substitute a cash arrangement by which the larger the fortune Cinderella manages to snare into matrimony, the higher the romance. Of course it's all part of the harem tradition. Wealth is power and it buys beauty and youth."
>
> "If you had your way," Deb broke in, "There wouldn't be any romance in the world at all." (op.cit)

If women are caught between the pragmatism of "snaring" a wealthy husband and the delights of latent chivalry, then how do they negotiate discourses of romance, femininity and sexuality? There seems to be a protest against the commercialisation of romance, explained as the cheapening of high cultural values that grant women a measure of integrity, that is, the ability to find genuine love regardless of wealth, beauty, youth and power. It is perhaps a conservative position opposed to popular romance which was perceived as corrupting a noble, female ideal and deluding contemporary women. We return again to Cusack's precepts of liberal feminism and of social reform that leads to equality of the sexes without abandoning "our" cultural heritage of the quest for true love. Such a positions also suggests that gender relations could be improved if the precepts of liberal humanism were to be followed, that is the "real" material basis of human relationships is to love one another without pretence and be productive, conscientious members of society.

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[5] Geoffrey Dutton considered Dr Dallas MacIntyre the "most original and almost alarmingly convincing" character in Come in Spinner: "a sucessful professional woman who kept the style and looks of an elegant woman of the world, while at the same time attaining professional and intellectual distinction. Her talk with Deb in the middle of the book is a sharp comment on much of the behaviour of the women in the book" (195). Australian Collection (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1985).

[6] Dymphna Cusack and Florence James Come in Spinner unabridged edition, (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1994) 330. The original, censored edition was published in London by William Heinemann in 1951. In East Germany it was called Jagd Nach Glück [Hunting Luck] trans. Olga and Erich Fetter, (Berlin:

Dallas is the only woman with a profession in Come in Spinner. The rest work in the hospitality industry, wartime industries or the beauty salon. The successful, respected doctor is depicted as the one character who has the talent, leisure and intellect to reflect on such matters as love, truth and beauty, whereas the other working women must con-tend with the double standards of wartime morality in the most pragmatic ways pos-sible. The rapidly changing society is part of their daily experience and requires a con-tinual adaption of their femininity to the new demands on their gender. This contrasts with the security and stability of Dallas' life. Her statement on women's sexuality and status has a dogmatic ring: "it is only in the last century or so that romance has been degraded to mere sex titillation. For the women of pre-industrial days, the domestic arts were a fulltime job, as they were for our grandmothers" (330).

Is Cusack/James/Dallas suggesting that women should desire a nostalgic form of romance in the manner of Austen, the Brönte s or the historical romance? Deb asks the same question to which Dallas rather evasively explains that women should no longer have a market value merely as wives of wealthy men or, more commonly, as domestic labour (330). Modern women ought to be granted more respect and benefit more from science. Dallas also explains that they should work less which would increase their leisure and time to spend with their families. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that Cusack, like many of her female protagonists, never seemed to abandon the notion of romance. In the extract from Come in Spinner above it was conceived of as women's cultural heritage, a feminine tradition and ideal that should be maintained despite the Modern Woman's advances in the workforce, her pragmatic views and "realistic attitude" to life. As I shall illustrate in the next section on "Love and Romance in Jungfrau", Marc assumes the same position as Dallas, which perhaps illustrates a continuity of Cusack's ideas on women, romance and realism.

In Come in Spinner the doctor Dallas and the manager Claire represent "realistic" characters when they offer advice to Deb and Guinea, who falsely seek glamour and romance instead of a steady, genuine love. Another doctor Eve and the social worker Marc in Jungfrau attempt to act as Thea's pragmatic advisors and shield her from romantic folly. Similarly, "down to

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Verlag der Nation, 1967.) Come in Spinner was also published in West Germany and Italy, besides being translated in many other European and Scandinavian countries.

earth" Doreen claims that her sister Jan has fallen prey to romantic ideals in Say No to Death. Significantly, all three texts can be categorised as romantic narratives regardless of the pressure on the heroines to forgo romance. What is proposed by the narrative's conclusion is, instead, a type of reformed romance, in keeping with Cusack's idea of reforming marriage and heterosexual relations so that women would no longer be subordinated. In what I shall later define as failed or parodic romances, the (anti)heroines Brenda, Tempe and Roslyn chastise themselves for their romantic illusions which have led to personal disasters while the androgynous writer Alexandra Pendlebury, whose nickname is Pen, calls her own femininity into question because of her aversion to forming an attachment based on love.

A masculine example would be the strong, romantic hero versus the weak, ordinary man which is an opposition that is repeatedly portrayed in Cusack's texts. In most cases, however, realism seemingly overpowers the romantic narrative when the ordinary, "average" men outnumber the "superior", extraordinary heroes. Important to this deconstruction of gender is the functioning of (homo)sexuality in the text. Clearly the lesbian does not belong to the heterosexual logic of popular romance while homosocial love is rarely represented in postwar realistic fiction. Similarly race, or the sexuality of the black woman, is neither signified by popular romance nor is she adequately depicted in the social realistic texts of the period. As I shall demonstrate in chapter three, the presence of the black woman and the lesbian further confound and confuse the gender binary. I have relied on black and lesbian contributions to literary criticism in order to extend my argument to these "marginal" subjects.[7]

Thus all of Cusack's novels and plays might be considered to be romantic narratives which are embedded in or formed by social realism, as I shall argue in the following chapters. A deconstruction of gender in Cusack's romantic realistic texts illustrates how the liberal humanist project of the individual as agent in society has been confirmed while, at the same time, demonstrating the impossibility of the female/male protagonist's self-realisation. As I shall argue, if gender cannot be stabilised in these conventionally structured texts, then it is difficult to proffer a static, completely developed Self that remains unchallenged by other

[7] See Cheríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., This Bridge Called My Back: Writings from Radical Women of Colour (New York: Kitchen Table, 1983); the Aboriginal critic Eve Fesl, Conned! Eve Mumewa D. Fesl Speaks Out on Language and the Conspiracy of Silence, A Koori Perspective (St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1993); Sally Munt, ed., New Lesbian Criticism: Literary and Cultural Readings (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

subjectivities and marginal perspectives in society. As I shall conclude, such an argument may also be applied to Cusack's representations of the black woman and lesbians in order to display the functioning of postwar discourses of racism and heterosexism in Australia. Thus my theoretical argument follows in the train of the last twenty years of poststructuralist, feminist and postmarxist theoretical criticism which has called the Unified Self, liberal humanism and the white priorities of second wave feminism into question with the aim of formulating anew women as a class or social group and proposing differentiated forms of individual subjectivity.

ii) Existent Research

Current Scholarship on Cusack and her Books in Print

To date, there is no monography or book-length study of Dymphna Cusack and her fiction. Marilla North has been researching Cusack's life and work since 1978 and the resultant biography will be published in 2001. The impetus for North's research was her participation in the filming of Come in Spinner which took a decade to complete.[8] The project involving Cusack's co-writer of the novel, Florence James, had been initiated by feminist filmmakers in the late seventies. Although North completed a Masters Degree on Cusack, James and Come in Spinner in 1991, she has placed her thesis under an embargo. North has published one finding of her work, "Come in Spinner - An Addendum" with Florence James. The detailed synopsis provides readers of the new, unabridged edition with a guide to its intricate plot structure and, more importantly, reveals which extracts or "immoral scenes" were censored in the original publication.

In spite of Cusack being frequently referred to in literary histories and essays on Australian literature, there is only one scholarly biographical publication: Debra Adelaide's short

[8] Information provided during a telephone interview with Marilla North in December 1998, Australia. Allen & Unwin plans to publish North's forthcoming biography of Cusack, Norman Freehill and Florence James. Cusack's letters, edited by North, will be published by the University of Queensland Press in 2000.

introduction to Cusack's posthumous autobiography A Window in the Dark, and the entry on Cusack in Adelaide's bibliography on Australian women writers, both published in 1991. Interestingly, this record of Cusack's teaching career from 1928 to 1944 was published by the National Library of Australia in conjunction with the Literary Fund provided by the internationally popular Morris West, thus placing Cusack in similar position to West whose commercial success as an Australian best-selling author has also been largely ignored by literary critics. A Window in the Dark received many positive reviews in the national media, yet scholarship on Cusack's reputation as a novelist has not flourished (see "Selected Reviews" in the bibliography). The the only scholarly reviews of Cusack's autobiography are by the well-known historian, Humphrey McQueen who thought the manuscript had been rescued from "undeserved oblivion" (43) and the positive appraisal by literary critic Laurie Clancy (1992, 9).

Norman Freehill, Cusack's journalist and "travelling companion", wrote the first biography of Cusack in 1975. With extensive quotes by his wife and superfluous descriptive passages by Freehill, the (auto)biography is a sketchy, biased account of her life and work. It is, however, useful to the researcher as a primary source concerning her reception and the writing process of each novel, catalogued chronologically according to which country they were living in at the time of their world travels during the Cold War and the sixties. Dymphna also illustrates Freehill's communist convictions - he was an active member of the Party - while Cusack's recollections and memoirs are by comparison politically neutral. Typically, Freehill passes judgement on a country's government or person's politics from a Communist perspective whereas quotes by Dymphna demonstrate a more judicious stance and, unfailingly, an expressed interest in the "human or individual" concerned in the social situation. For example, her autobiographical travel books Holidays Among the Russians and Chinese Women Speak use the form of personal interviews or oral history to compare conditions for women in Australia with that of female workers, professionals and politicians in communist countries.

Australian feminist literary criticism frequently discusses Cusack in relation to a particular cultural period or the genre of social realism.[9] Drusilla Modjeska and Dale Spender have

[9] See Joseph and Johanna Jones, "Postwar: Exile and Hope," Australian Fiction (Boston: Twayne Publishing, 1983) 76-79; Carole Ferrier, ed., Gender, Politics, Fiction: Twentieth Century Australian Women's Novels (1985; St Lucia. U of Queensland P, 1992); Susan Cullen, "Australian War Drama: 1909 to 1939," Masters Thesis, U of Queensland, 1989.

pointed to Cusack's unique significance not only for women's writing but for Australian literature in general. Modjeska, in her literary historical critique of Australian female writers from 1925 to 1945, states that Cusack's first novel Jungfrau is "a prototype for the feminist novel in the interwar period" (3) and she devotes several pages to the novel's challenge to public morality of the day (226-228). Similarly, Richard Rossiter places Cusack's Jungfrau in a tradition of women's novels that depict the supposed "moral taint of sexuality" and the way it represses young women in modern Australian society (84).

Since the forties, most bibliographies of Australian literature as well as several contem-porary international bibliographies of literature in English include an extensive and detailed entry on the life and work of Ellen Dymphna Cusack (Miller 132-33; Yates 193; Gaster 228; Blain, Clements and Grundy 256).[10] Furthermore, the most notable Australian literary histories all discuss Cusack in relation to the fifties' debate surround-ing social realism, socialist or polemical writing and novels of the postwar period.[11] Individual essays of note include those by Frances de Groen on authorial and textual gender relations in Cusack's play Comets Soon Pass, while Susan Pfisterer-Smith discusses Cusack in her feminist deconstruction of Australian theatre historiography.

Vic Lloyd has published an article on Cusack's 1942 women-only play Morning Sacrifice, as well as an entry on Cusack for The Companion to Theatre in Australia which was published in 1995. His Masters thesis titled "Conscience and Justice: A Study of Values in Conflict in the Novels and Plays of Dymphna Cusack" and Helen Thompson's "Dymphna Cusack's Plays" remain the only postgraduate dissertations exclusively devoted to the Australian author. Lloyd's thesis places Cusack in a tradition of "writers of conscience" who expressly wished to influence their readers through the didactic message of the text, that is, the characters should be role models of responsible citizens embracing democracy, pacificism and the global fight

[10] This is a selection from the forties to the present day. Other bibliographies include Joy Hooton and Harry Heseltine, Annals of Australian Literature, (1970; Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1992) which lists Cusack's work chronologically. See also: Martin Duwell, Mariann Ehrhardt, Carol Hetherington, eds., The ALS Guide to Australian Writers: a Bibliography 1963-1995, (1992; St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1997) 72-73; John Arnold and John Hay, eds., Bibliography of Australian Literature Project: List of Australian Writers 1788-1992, vol. 1, (Melbourne: Monash U, 1995) 117.

[11] See J.K Ewers, Creative Writing in Australia (Melbourne: Georgian House, 1962); Geoffrey Dutton, ed., The Literature of Australia (1964; Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1974); Leonie Kramer, ed., The Oxford History of Australian Literature (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1981); Laurie Hergenhan, ed., The Penguin New Literary History of Australia (Ringwood: Penguin, 1988); Bruce Bennett and Jennifer Strauss, eds., The Oxford Literary History of Australia (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1998).

against social injustice. He sets up a dualistic paradigm for her fictional protagonists whereby the development of their own social conscience leads them from the illusory world of false values to the politically acceptable one of real or authentic values.

Although the paradigm generally rests on class differences, Lloyd briefly discusses the protagonists' enlightenment in terms of gender: the misguided woman of romance with illusory values of glamour who develops into a proper protagonist of realism with authentic ideas of love rather than following her "false" impulses (see chapter two, "Liberal Feminism and the Woman Subject"). Lloyd has also provided the introduction to a nineties' edition of Pacific Paradise, (1955) republished by the academic journal Australasian Drama Studies in 1991. Irmgard Peterssen, in her Doctoral Dissertation on images of Germany in Australian literature, has a chapter on "Australian Travellers and Their Responses to the German Culture Area" in which she critiques the reception of Cusack's European bestseller of 1961, Heatwave in Berlin. Peterssen's assessment of Cusack's partisan views on the east-west division is vehement in its defence of West Germany and inference that the best-selling novel was largely based on propaganda. I discuss this appraisal in chapter two in the section "'Fact or Fiction'? Heatwave in Berlin".

Cusack's name has not disappeared from the Australian popular consciousness as the reviews of the unabridged editions and reprints of the collaborative novel Come in Spinner and its film adaptation by Nick Enright and Lissa Benyon clearly demonstrate.[12] Since its screening on television, Come in Spinner, like its predecessor Caddie, the Story of a Barmaid, which was made in 1975 and is based on an "anonymous" Sydney woman's autobiography edited by Cusack, shares a permanent place in the tradition of folkloric Australian films with classics such as Phar Lap and Gallipoli. In fact, Enright's and Benyon's screen adaptation of Come in Spinner won an Australian Film Institute Award (AFI) and is still widely available on video cassette in Australia. Cusack's first published novel, Jungfrau (1936) was republished by Penguin Books in 1989, despite it having been out of print for 53 years. In the interwar period, which ironically was dominated by women writers, Jungfrau had even won a

[12] For reviews of the unabridged novel, see Carmel Bird, "No Longer Shocking," Australian Book Review 111 (1989): 34; Kerryn Goldsworthy, "Unalloyed, Unabridged Joy in Saga of Sydney," The Weekend Australian 27-28 May 1989: 9. For reviews of the film see Ina Bertrand, "Come in Spinner - Two Views of the Forties," Journal of Australian Studies 41 (1994): 12-23; and Joan Morris, "A Week in the Life of War-Time Sydney," The Canberra Times 25 Mar. 1990: 27.

prestigious literary prize awarded by the Bulletin which was once heralded as the creator of Australian national identity and literature, contemporary criticism has rightly criticised the journal for its sexism and racism.

In the thirties, the subsequent moral outcry and Jungfrau's failure to be republished has been considered evidence of the suppression of pioneering, controversial literature by women in Australia (Hawthorne qtd Wright, 84). Since its reprinting, it has received much attention by feminist scholars and journalists alike, and was even adapted for stage by Jonathon Hardy whose play was published under the original title in 1997.[13] The Sydney publisher Currency Press not only published Hardy's adaption of Jungfrau, but had already reprinted another of Cusack's plays, Morning Sacrifice (1942), as part of its Current Theatre Series.[14] In chapters four and five, I examine this remarkable all-women play whose continued production demonstrates that Cusack has made a significant contribution to Australian theatre.[15] Nonetheless, the continued interest expressed by Australian literary journalism in Cusack's play has not led to any scholarly essays on Morning Sacrifice, apart from Lloyd's mentioned above (see "Selected Reviews" in the bibliography).

Conflicting Appraisals: Recent Australian Literary Criticism

In 1981, the national broadcaster, the ABC, published the transcripts of radio interviews with well-known Australian women in a series called Coming Out! Women's Voices, Women's

[13] The play Jungfrau was performed by the Playbox Theatre Centre of Monash University in 1997 in Melbourne and was republished the same year by Currency Press with funding from the Australia Council for the Arts.

[14] Morning Sacrifice (1942) was performed by the Griffin Theatre Company in Sydney at the Stables Theatre in 1986. It was directed by Ian B. Watson; the stage adaptation of Jungfrau was also directed by an Australian man, Aubrey Mellor.

[15] After having won the the Western Australian Drama Festivals Prize in 1942, Morning Sacrifice was first performed by the Festival's theatre company at the Repertory Theatre in Perth. It was first pub-lished in 1950 by the Australasian Publishing Company. In 1989, Morning Sacrifice had a season at La Mama's

Lives. Rigg and Copeland noted in the preface to the interview conducted by Pamela Williams:

> Dymphna Cusack was not only a well-established writer but she also earned a reputation as a rebel who spoke out at every opportunity against social injustice. In this conversation [broadcast 6 months before she died at 80] she talked with great wit and verve about her battles with the establishment, her commitment to women's rights, her trip to China - but first about her life as a student in the 1920s. (59)

As I have already described in this chapter, Cusack was a public figure; an author and an activist whose speeches, talks and interviews were of great interest not only to her readers but for Australians generally. Described as a rebel and being of Irish ancestry, this petite, "frail" woman represented several national cultural types herself: the anti-authoritarian fighter for justice as well as the witty racconteur who is able to converse with people of all classes.

The feminist literary critic Dale Spender, in the first literary history of Australian women writers, has called for more scholarship on this Cold War author:

> Dymphna Cusack was a gifted and great writer whose contribution has not been given the attention and status that it clearly deserves. The work of Dymphna Cusack, the impact of her writing on Australian audiences and her commentary on the Australian way of life, her concern with injustice on an international scale and the representation of these views and values in her work, could constitute a worthy and necessary chapter for study in Australian cultural history. (Writing, 271)

Feminist literary critics in Australia, England and North America are generally in agree-ment with Spender's assessment and have praised Cusack's work for its uncompro-mising, realistic depiction of women's status in society. The author's commitment to pacificism, human rights and equal opportunity was expressed by her activism as well as the topics of her novels, plays and non-fiction. As I have outlined above, Cusack was an influential figure in Australian popular culture in the postwar period, yet she has rarely been mentioned in her country's works on cultural history.

In her anthology of Australian women's writing, Spender regretted not being able to include some of "Cusack's powerful prose" ("Rescued" 36). The feminist critic did, however,

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theatre in Melbourne. As a result, the Melbourne Theatre Company decided to produce it again in 1991. A production by the State Theatre Company in Adelaide followed in 1994.

include the 1945 play Call Up Your Ghosts, another Cusack collaboration with Miles Franklin, which laments the lack of public interest for and publishing support of the fledgling corpus of Australian literature. Nevertheless, some critics have opposed a renewal of interest in Cusack's writing career and her international profile as a cultural critic. Since the seventies, Australian literary criticism has generally dismissed Cusack's work as melodramatic, romantic and popular. Subsequently, there has been little scholarship on her contribution to Australian postwar culture. One explanation for this lack of academic interest is as follows:

> Cusack is admirable for her social concerns and her confrontation of both women's sexuality and what she calls in Jungfrau the "reckless squandering of human possibilities in society's injustices to women". Recent attempts to resurrect her reputation and treat her as a major novelist, however, will also have to take into account her crude and literal-minded treatment of moral dilemmas and the liberal doses of romantic drama with which she smothers them. (Clancy 160)

Laurie Clancy acknowledges the value of Cusack's feminist and progressive commit-ment, yet he opposes a reassessment of her fiction that would place her unequivocally in the Australian literary canon. She may have been considered one of Australia's most prominent writers during the Cold War, but her work should be categorised as that of a "minor novelist", given its reliance on popular romance, simplicity or lack of complexity that would render it a high culturalor canonical text.

The influential literary critic and author Geoffrey Dutton praised the collaboration with Florence James, Come in Spinner, as the "first major feminist novel" in Australia. Like Clancy, Dutton expresses a cautious admiration of Cusack's writing ability:

> It is not often that one can disregard the style of a novel for the sake of its con-tent, but this is true of CIS. If there is often a breathless banality in the writing, and the men, in particular, sometimes speak like characters in a bad film, there is also a genuine quality in the book that comes from a feeling of humanity, humor and a wide knowledge of how different sorts of women lived in Australia towards the end of World War II. ("The Australian Collection", 195)

Again there is an anxiety to demarcate the literary canon by pointing to the flaws in Cusack's (and James') writing, even though Dutton's definition of "breathless banality" remains unclear. Yet the contribution of the novel to a national culture, or a popular-ised "knowledge of how different sorts of women lived" is acknowledged by the male critic.

The assertion that the men "speak like characters in a bad film" points to a repeated criticism of Cusack's romantic realistic texts that they failed to pyschologise or to present the protagonists "in depth" or credibly. This is a key point to my argument that when social realism fails to convince - the characters become seemingly filmic - they are in fact romanticised. Conversely, when Come in Spinner, for example, is read primarily as a romantic narrative, its characters nonetheless fail to live up to the generic demands of romance because social realism constrains or detracts from the idealised "love story".

Until now, feminist critics have been anxious to defend Cusack as a "literary" author, rather than accepting her popular cultural status and appraising the broad influence of her bestsellers. For instance, Frances de Groen qualifies her praise of Comets Soon Pass: "If the play's main strength lies in the vigorous cut and thrust of the dialogue, the melodramatic plot, with its unashamedly contrived and coincidental structure, presents problems" (94). Problems for whom? In the mass media genres of blockbuster films, television soap operas and Mills & Boone romances, formulaic writing is not problematic for the audience and reader. Instead, melodrama, contrivance and coincidence fulfils the expectations of the consumer of these genres by necessity.

Australian literary criticism by women has continued to draw attention to Cusack's political commitment and the fact that she had an unquestioned reputation as an international author of standing in her lifetime. As Debra Adelaide's comments:

> Her commitment to education was unshakeable. Her participation in current affairs was genuine and active. Her politics were idiosyncratic but her alliance with political issues, such as opposition to sexism and other forms of discrimination, was beyond question.
>
> And, above all, Dymphna Cusack had in abundance two qualities which balanced each other: humour and humanity; which is why she made such an outstanding teacher and became such a splendid writer. (22)

As I will argue in chapter two, Cusack's politics were indeed idiosyncratic, although they did consistently follow definite positions, such as anti-fascism, pro-communism, and Australian cultural nationalism. It is important to note here that Cusack's life is usually considered to have

been controversial; the author was unashamedly committed to "ideological" causes which she represented in her writing.

Her collaborator and friend Florence James has also pointed to the seriousness of Cusack's work, rather than its romantic, popular aspect. The Australian circle of well-known women writers whose correspondence has been edited by Carole Ferrier, frequently discussed Cusack and her successful career.[16] Miles Franklin was another collaborator and close friend who acted as a mentor for the young Cusack. In a letter to Katherine Susannah Prichard, Franklin commented: "Dymphna provides one bright spot. She is still booming up the aisle of success" (in Ferrier 327). Franklin maintained Cusack's success was partly due to her courage and self-confidence in forcing the British publishers to pay her more than ten per cent on Australian sales (in Ferrier 299). Franklin noted that "it was her great luck in being refused by everyone here and getting to London" (in Ferrier 280). Even though the cultural nationalist envied Cusack's pluck in winning the dispute over royalties, she admired Cusack as a competent writer of Australian texts: "I rejoice at her success at every turn, and advise her not to return till she has attained full prestige abroad and is invulnerably dug-in" (in Ferrier 290). Thus women writers seemed to be vulnerable to the vagaries of literary criticism in Australia, and as Franklin remarked, a literary reputation could only be secured with international recognition.

Prichard agreed with Franklin that Cusack was a promising woman writer of the next generation: "Just been writing to Dymphna, to congratulate her on Southern Steel. It's a fine piece of work, I think, don't you? She gives a very well-drawn picture of Newcastle during the war: so many different characters shrewdly and delicately defined: lovely scene-painting" (in Ferrier 328). Another of Franklin's frequent correspondents, the communist writer Jean Devanny, was more critical of Cusack's stature as a contemporary Australian author. After reading Southern Steel, she categorised Cusack as a lesser writer than Franklin, Prichard and Eleanor Dark.

> Have just read Southern Steel. Immensely interesting, but still Dymphna gets her sale by obscenities. But I don't care about that, if only she gets the sale. For her stuff is *good*. I don't think she is a really talented writer, Miles; it took this third book to

> make it truly apparent... She is frightfully exaggerated in her portrayal of the sexual impulses of women, at least that is my opinion. She is not in the same class as you and Kathie and Eleanor; about as good as Ruth Park I think. (in Ferrier 324-325)

Nevertheless, Devanny thought the commercial success of a woman writer in itself was worthy of praise, despite Cusack's inaccurate depiction of women's sexuality. In her reply, Franklin disputed that Cusack gets her sales by obscenities and informed Devanny, "D is now on final draft of another novel [The Sun in Exile]. It will be the real test" (in Ferrier 358). Thus Australia's most famous Cold War women writers were eager and genuine in their commitment to contemporary Australian literature. Their continual review of one another's work demonstrates an interest in their gender above the efforts of their male contemporaries. This collective support points to a sense of feminism continued from the first wave suffragettes who were extremely well organised and successful in Australia at the turn of the century.

Drusilla Modjeska has grouped Cusack with other Australian women writers according to their professed politics (for example, antifascism) and the cultural influences of the time. She groups the novels of Dark, Barnard, Eldershaw, Tennant and Cusack together because "they interrogate how women can operate in the structures of marriage and sexual morality" (149). Modjeska, however, fails to differentiate between the women writers. By contrast, Carole Ferrier recognises that each individual author had a necessarily ambiguous relation to the political discourses of the period.

> Many of the women writers discussed here, threw themselves into an exaltation of the Australian which obscured for them the fact that they were living in a class society that was also deeply racist and anti-feminist. The contradictions between aspects of nationalist, feminist, racial, and socialist ideologies found complex expression - being sometimes clarified, sometimes obscured - in the work of Miles Franklin, Katharine Susannah Prichard, Jean Devanny, Nettie Palmer, Kylie Tennant, Dymphna Cusack, and others... (Gender 7)

Ferrier suggests that cultural nationalism or a celebration of Australianness served as a blinker to more entrenched patterns of sexism and racism. This is evident in Cusack's Picnic Races which vacillates between patriotic pride expressed in terms of community or Australianness,

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[16] Carole Ferrier, ed., As Good as a Yarn with You: Letters between Miles Franklin, Katharine Susannah Prichard, Jean Devanny, Marjorie Barnard, Flora Eldershaw and Eleanor Dark (Melbourne: Cambridge UP, 1992).

and the condemnation of the extreme racism towards Aborigines and immigrants in the "typical" country town.

Ferrier, like Susan McKernan and Pat Buckridge, considers the fifties to be a period of committed literature, when writers were clearly aligned with the Right or the Left, or at least expected to be. Ferrier herself evaluates the women writers according to a clear delineation of political positions and discourses. She comments: "Kylie Tennant and Dymphna Cusack show much less political certainty while still in many ways writing within a similar tradition which they perceived as essentially Australian" (op.cit). What exactly is political certainty when women writers of the postwar period are discussed? Do writers, like journals such as the socialist Overland and the conservative Quadrant, express political certainty in their work? Should they be expected to? Rather than attempting to consolidate Cusack's various political positions evident in her work, I have concentrated on the inconsistencies and the contradictions which are both informative and exemplary of this period of literary history.

Cusack is primarily remembered as a communist writer:

> ... Cusack's novels would have sold better in her own country if she had not been so heavy handed with leftist propaganda. She was sometimes criticised, commented the Mirror, for airing her political views at the expense of the story and was regarded by most Australians as a communist.
>
> Cusack's political sympathies are certainly obvious in her work, but in the novels, at least, do not at all detract from the story. The suggestion that Australians, unlike Europeans, are averse to the expression of political views in novels is fascinating and surprising, but should not, perhaps, be discounted. (Anthony 10)

Marion Anthony has rightly disputed the charge that Cusack's commitment detracted from the narrative. I suggest that if Cusack's views had been truly at the expense of the story, then she would have ceased to obtain publishing contracts year after year in Australia and in Europe. Anthony explains the paradox by pointing to a problem within a national readership: an aversion to polemical fiction in Australia because it is disturb-ing in its realistic, cultural critique.

Rather than attempting to diminish her reputation as an international, best-selling author, Australian literary criticism ought to remember the achievements of her political, leftist writing. As this Dissertation demonstrates, Cusack's work was received as an indicator of popular

sentiment, political beliefs and liberal humanist inclinations to "better the world". For example, in 1962 she travelled to Vienna and was an outspoken participant at the World Gathering of Women for Disarmament; her views on the meeting were reported by the communist magazine Women of the World in an interview with Cusack in East Berlin.[17] Cusack was also involved in the Authors' World Peace Appeal, and reported on her experiences in Europe which had been "exhausted by two wars".[18] More than 400 contemporary authors in England, Europe and the USA signed the following statement:

> We writers believe that our civilisation is unlikely to survive another world war. We believe that differing political and economic systems can exist side by side on the basis of peacefully negotiated settlements... We condemn writing liable to sharpen existing dangers and hatred... (4)

Ironically, Cusack's bestseller Heatwave in Berlin, might be considered a text which "sharpened" prejudices remaining from World War II thus ensuring its popularity in Great Britain and France (see chapter three, "Fact or Fiction?").

As Dale Spender has noted, Dymphna Cusack was a postwar writer of "powerful prose" and an example of how authors may combine personal activism, "light reading" and "serious messages" in fiction and drama. The effects of these conflicting generic elements on characterisation, indeed, on the gendering process, will be examined in chapters four and five. Chapters two and three continue the appraisal of the contra-dictory positions of critics and reviews that have been introduced in this section, with regard to my definition of romantic realism.

Notes on Methodology: Feminist Cultural Studies

[17] "... is the Motto of Dymphna Cusack." [title of photocopied article in the NLA archive is incomplete] Women of the Whole World 5 (1963).

[18] Dymphna Cusack, "Open Letter to Writers," Meanjin 48 (1952):4. 84-85.

I have chosen a Cultural Studies approach to Cusack with an emphasis on feminist methodologies.[19] This Dissertation is a deconstructive analysis of her work as an histor-icised cultural object, a text in itself rather than assigning the defensive appellation of literature. Cultural Studies is a way to move past traditional limits of literary history in English Studies by incorporating reflexive theories on subject construction, identities and fiction. Unlike conventional literary criticism, there is an emphasis on history as genealogy and novels as intertextual products. I maintain that the polemical aims of Cultural Studies enables an integration of many feminist premises, for example, the need to continually address sexual discrimination in language, education and the workplace.[20]

I have not endeavoured to produce a *Rezeptionsanalyse* in the tradition of Gadamer and Jauss nor that of Janice Radway in her pioneering contribution to the study of women, popular culture and romance reading in 1984. Although I have relied on several ethno-graphic interviews with Cusack's translators in East Germany and former acquaintances, I decided to remain within the parameters of close textual reading of her novels, non-fiction, reviews, media interviews and articles. My aim is not to dispute the value of empirical data on a specific readership, rather it is to position Cusack as a figure in discourse thereby offering a new evaluation of textual constructions of gender and race. As I have argued above, a focus on genre and gender theory enables a debate about the pyschic (subjectivity) and social "realities" (lived experience) of feminine and masculine subjects without giving either aspect preeminence.

Both Tania Modleski and Catherine Belsey have provided a genealogy for the contem-porary popular romance that stems from mid-Victorian literature. They regard the realistic romances of Charlotte Brönte and Jane Austen as obvious progenitors of modern romantic conventions. Modleski has pointed to the interactive element of reading romances in the twentieth century which permit women to express repressed anger and hatred. At the same time, popular romances simultaneously perform a con-tainment of women's frustration with oppressive

[19] For my theoretical influences see Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell, eds., Feminism as Critique: On the Politics of Gender (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987). See also Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore, eds., The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism (London: MacMillan, 1989).

[20] See my Honours thesis, "The Moment of the Australian Journal of Cultural Studies: Interdisciplinary Knowledge and Practice in Australia" (1994) held in the Fryer Library, University of Queensland. See also "Feminism and Cultural Studies: Pasts, Presents, Futures," Off-centre: Feminism and Cultural Studies eds. Sarah Franklin, Celia Lury and Jackie Stacey (London: Harper Collins, 1991) 1-20.

gender relations.[21] This could explain the ambivalence of the narratives that I have categorised as vacillating between ideal and failed romances in chapter three (see Tables One and Two in chapter four). Modleski has defended her Cultural Studies project, one of the first to assess women's mass culture, with a repudiation of feminism's lack of interest in the genre: "If the popular-culture heroine and the feminist choose utterly different ways of overcoming their dissatisfaction, they at least have in common the dissatisfaction" (26).

Similarly, Belsey justifies her analysis of modern romantic fiction by demonstrating how the love story in Western culture has an intertextual ubiquity that is not confined to mass production of pulp fiction and blockbuster films. She traces Mills & Boone mass romances to the canonical works of Chrétian, Malory, Tennyson and Donne.[22] Belsey deconstructs the love story in Western culture and points to the disruptive force of desire which prevents the humanist promise of wholeness, or the joining of mind and body, being attained by the romantic heroine.

I maintain that this counterproductive or illusory purpose of the love story, which is a way of becoming whole despite the disruption of desire, is evident in Cusack's definition of romance. She asserted that love "should be a by-product of life as we live it: a fusing of mind as well as of heart".[23] It seems that love provides a means for the promised attainment of the Whole Self, that is, a fusing of mind and body. Cusack's formula is clearly drawn from a humanist concept derived from Cartesian dualistic thinking which has been critiqued by poststructuralism since the sixties. Rather than focusing on the deconstructive force of desire in the text, I have investigated the destabilizing effects of hybrid genres, in this case, romantic realism, on the sex/gender binary.

iii) Bestsellers in the East and West: An International Author

[21] For a critical evaluation of Modleski's feminist work on romantic fiction, see the discursive essay by Kim Clancy, "Tania Modleski, Loving with a Vengeance," Reading into Cultural Studies, ed. Martin Barker and Anne Beezer (London: Routledge, 1992) 119-33.
[22] Catherine Belsey, Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).
[23] See the hagiography by Norman Freehill, Dymphna,with Dymphna Cusack (Sydney: Thomas Nelson, 1975) 179.

The Feminist Companion to Literature in English describes Ellen Dymphna Cusack as a "novelist, dramatist and travel writer who was a "teacher for more than 20 years". Furthermore, "she broadcast on education and women's issues, and worked for women's groups and the peace movement from the 1930s... A prolific writer whose work was translated into 15 other languages" (Blain, Clements and Grundy, 256). The biographical statements published in the theatre programmes of the productions men-tioned above, repeat the general opinion given in the bibliographies on Australian literature: "Cusack is one of the most widely translated Australian authors and has been remembered as an eloquent, caustic voice against cultural subservience" (Hardy, v). Cusack's obituary in Notes and Furphies collaborates these records of her success as an author of international repute: "Most of her books were written as she moved about the world and her books have sold eight and a half million copies in the Soviet Union alone. Until recent years, she had to go there to spend royalites. Altogether her books were published in 34 countries" (7). Nevertheless Cusack's reputation as a novelist has been largely ignored by literary criticism regardless of her bestseller status and its concommitant implications for constructing the Australian canon.

Cusack's entry into the international publishing market came with Come in Spinner. Although it was the result of a longstanding collaboration with Florence James, Cusack has usually been referred to as the single author. Despite this repeated mistake, Florence James did not publicly insist on her co-authorship and the collaborative text helped to create Cusack's international reputation as an Australian author or "cultural export". In fact, James aided her lifelong friend in securing further publishing contracts with William Heinemann in London, where she was working as a part time editor. Thus Come in Spinner launched Cusack's writing career in Western Europe and, given its controversial reception in Australia, it became a hallmark for other Australian writers on the Left.[24]

[24] In 1954, the Australian radio station 3UZ was forced to take a serialised version of Come in Spinner off air after listeners objected to its immorality. The station was afraid of losing its broadcasting license because it had received over 700 calls and letters concerning the explicit abortion scene in the novel. The editor of Meanjin, Clem Christensen, defended the broadcast (Letter 12 July, 1954. MS4621/1/150).

In Europe, the British press William Heinemann Limited published most of Cusack's work up until the seventies, beginning with Come in Spinner and Say No to Death in 1951. Heinemann also published Holidays Among the Russians and Black Lightning in 1964, the latter being an extension of her critique of racism in The Sun in Exile (1955), this time set in Australia and dealing with Aboriginal subjectivity and the Black Movement. Her post-referendum novel, The Half-Burnt Tree (1969) is another example of Cusack's intervention into notoriously racist cultural politics in postwar Australia, encapsulated by the "White Australia Policy". The last work of Cusack's published by Heinemann was her novel A Bough in Hell (1971) which depicts a middle-class woman's struggle with alcoholism. Another British publisher, Cedric Chivers, took over the Cusack copyright from Heinemann when it reprinted Picnic Races and Say No to Death in 1972 and 1973 respectively as well as a posthumous edition of Heatwave in Berlin in 1985 in London.

Steady throughout the fifties and sixties, Cusack's popularity in England had waned by the seventies. Ironically, it was in this decade that she enjoyed renewed popularity in Australia. The largest Australian publisher, Angus and Robertson, reprinted Say No to Death (1951, 1974) and issued new editions of Come in Spinner (with Florence James 1973, 1981). In 1977, Marlin Books, an imprint of Hutchinson of Australia, instigated a Dymphna Cusack "revival" by reprinting five of her most popular novels: Black Lightning; The Half-Burnt Tree, Southern Steel, The Sun in Exile and Picnic Races. Marlin Books followed its new Cusack editions, which comprised a third of their adver-tised fiction list in 1977, with the reprinting of Picnic Races. This text, dedicated to Cusack's "pioneering ancestors" had been in print for 18 years in a period when the government had changed from Menzies' Liberal Party conservatism to Whitlam's Labor Party socialism.

As mentioned in the last section, the late eighties witnessed a recovery of Cusack's first, feminist novel Jungfrau (1936) as well as the reprinting of the collaboration with Miles Franklin Pioneers on Parade for the Australia's Bicentenary (1938,1988). A third work of Cusack's reappeared in the controversial year of the Bicentenary; the uncensored edition of Come in Spinner. The Australian publisher Angus & Robertson later released the 1988 unabridged text as a "Classic Edition" in 1990. The "Australian Classic" edition has been reprinted up until

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Katherine Susannah Prichard also wrote to 3UZ about the novel by "so distinguished a writer as Ms Cusack" (Letter 1 June, 1954. MS4621/1/148).

1994 with an introduction by the co-author Florence James. Come in Spinner had been heavily censored before its first publication in 1951 and this aspect of the novel's production and continual reappearance as a translated text and a major, government-funded film warrants further Cultural Studies analysis of its reception and significance in Australian society and literature.

The Literary Historical Context in Australia

Who was Ellen Dymphna Cusack? Born in 1902 of a working-class, though landed, family, she had a nomadic childhood. She was sent to live with different relatives because of problems at home and eventually became a boarder at a German Catholic convent school, St Ursula in Armidale (Freehill 14, 20). The "pioneering" Cusacks had been in Australia for several generations, although the family name belongs to the Irish gentry, stemming from the Anglo-Norman nobility, de Cusack, who arrived in Ireland with Henry II (Freehill 177). In adulthood, Cusack relinquished Ellen and opted for her middle name, Dymphna, which means "poetess" in Celtic and originates from Irish mythology. She began to write at an early age, writing regularly for magazines and newspapers under a pseudonym while at Sydney University, where she completed a teaching degree in the form of a Bachelor of Arts with Honours in History and English.

After her first notable publishing success Jungfrau, Cusack was invited to join the elite literary group, the Fellowship of Australian Writers, in the late thirties. In the fledgling FAW, Cusack became acquainted with the established writers of a self-proclaimed and publicly acknowledged Australian literary canon: Miles Franklin, Christina Stead, Louis Esson, Dame Mary Gilmore and Katherine Susannah Prichard. Florence James recalls:

> When I returned to Sydney in 1938, I joined Dymphna and her friends in a little group of keen Australian writers who were fired with Miles Franklin's burning conviction that without an indigenous literature people can remain aliens on their own soil. An unsung country does not fully exist nor enjoy adequate exchange in the inner life. (1994, vii)

Unlike the earlier literary nationalism represented by Miles Franklin and the circle of realist authors promoted by Nettie Palmer, I would suggest that Dymphna Cusack was a modern patriot, an example of the urban Australian writer of realistic texts with an enduring, popular appeal. As a figure in the Australian popular imagination, Cusack has much in common with other women writers of her era.

As outlined in the previous sections, Cusack is largely remembered as a popular writer of the Australian Left who was publicly committed to addressing social injustices in her fiction, plays and journalism. In this respect, Cusack was representative of her literary contemporaries who, during the Cold War years until the early seventies, were engaged in conflicting political discourses: those of liberal humanism, Modernism, socialism, Australian nationalism, republicanism, anti-communism, anti-fascism and pacificism.[25] For the purposes of this Dissertation, I have adopted Susan McKernan's definition of liberal humanism and social(ist) realism in the Australian context of the Cold War period in order to place Cusack alongside her contemporaries and in relation to specific schools and genres of writing (14). Although she was undeniably a cultural nationalist, I have suggested that Cusack aspired to a liberal humanist world view which was pronounced in her autobiographical travel writing and non-fiction.

Cusack did not adopt an unequivocally anti-modernist stance, unlike her contempor-aries, the radical nationalists and Leftist writers, who opposed Modernism for being elitist and aligned with Fascism (McKernan 13). Literary modernism was thus deemed incompatible with democratic Australian nationalism. Similarly, the conservative artists and writers rejected the "anarchistic aesthetics" of Modernist writers.[26] By contrast, Cusack's vein of liberal humanism was an assertion that literature should be a popular medium in which ideas could be exchanged in order to effect political change. Unlike other social realist writers of the time, she did not subscribe to an aesthetic programme of reinstating nineteenth century forms of realism and salvaging "the English tradition" in Australia.[27] I suggest that she was a cultural nationalist

[25] Drusilla Modjeska, Exiles at Home: Australian Women Writers 1925-1945 (Sydney: Angus & Robert-son, 1981); Susan McKernan, A Question of Commitment: Australian Literature in the Twenty Years After the War (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989); Carole Ferrier, ed., Gender, Politics and Fiction: Twen-tieth Century Australian Women's Novels (1985; St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1992).

[26] Cusack indirectly criticises the anti-modernist platform in Australia with her representation of the Professor of English, Glover in Jungfrau (1936).

[27] Susan McKernan argues that the Cold War years in the early fifties revived a Leftist Australian nationalism. However by the 1960s, with "the breakdown of Cold War polarities" and the onslaught of the

in the tradition of Miles Franklin, although Cusack was herself "internationalist" in the way she catered for European and Soviet socialist readerships. This is despite her statements to the contrary and repeated criticism of Australian literary scholars for being "internationalists" rather than supporting an "indigenous canon" of writing in their own country ("Cultural Cringe" 79; qtd Freehill 188).

Cusack's career and personal correspondence demonstrate a sustained sympathy for the Soviet Union, especially in the decisive period from 1956, the year of the Hungarian Uprising, to 1968, with the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. Nonetheless, Cusack did not join the Communist Party of Australia nor did she publicly claim to be a socialist. She was neither a member of the widely influential, communist Realist Writers' Group in Australia nor did she formally practice the literary edicts of Stalinist socialist realism. Cusack shared, however, the communist writers' interest in the working-class and, in typically republican fashion, much of her work depicts the "ordinary Australian" with an anti-authoritarian, egalitarian character. Cusack tapped into the traditional Australian myth of convict rebelliousness while the history of her own Irish ancestry reinforced her barely hidden contempt for the British class system with its assumed projections of cultural superiority on its former antipodean colony.

Typical of her egalitarian stance, she commented on the disparity between high culture and populist subjects: "I'm a realist. I feel there is enough tragedy and drama in an ordinary suburban cottage to make half a dozen Hamlets and Othellos. But every type of writing that interprets the community, in whatever way, is enormously valuable" (qtd Realist). The "Common Man" continually portrayed in realistic, anti-metaphysical Australian literature of the fifties and sixties was a genre despised by the "great Australian novelist" Patrick White and his adversary, the influential cultural critic and poet A.D. Hope. Fears of mediocrity of content and form have also been expressed by

numerous scholars since the establishment of a literary canon in Australia. Thus a reluctance to promote "every type of writing" and its populist subject the "community" can be traced throughout Australian literary criticism.[28]

Vietnam War, the Australian Left had become anti-nationalist (13). A Question of Commitment: Australian Literature in the Twenty Years After the War (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989).

[28] Stephen Murray-Smith is exemplary when he discusses the limitations of the Australian "novel of protest". The Literature of Australia, ed. Geoffrey Dutton (1964; Ringwood: Penguin, 1974) 438-39.

In the context of these literary traditions and cultural criticism, Cusack was a singular author in her choice of subject: the urban setting instead of the eternal Bush; the Modern Woman instead of the celebrated Australian Man; the Aboriginal dissident instead of the black victim. For each of these innovative, neglected subjects of city dweller, woman and black activist, Cusack also represented the conventional celebration of the heroic bushman, the strong, enlightened male who was usually an intellectual who instructed females, as well as the stereotyped portrayal of Aborigines suffering hopelessly under institutional racism. This is discussed further in chapter two, "Liberal Feminism and the Woman Subject" and relates to the general concerns of this Dissertation: the contradictions inherent in hybrid genres, use of national (stereo)types and an ambivalent, authorial position on matters of gender, romance and sexuality.

CHAPTER TWO

i) Genre Defined by Discourses

Postwar Discourses: Genre and the "Average Reader"

In this section, the overarching Cold War discourse of capitalism versus communism, of East and West, is connected to the paradox of the international author with "universal" appeal who is, at the same time, a singular, patriotic representative of her native country. As we shall see, these disparities in her reception are also an indication of the type of reader, character and text which Cusack's work incorporates. The "Average Reader" in industrial countries of the postwar period seemed to have favoured romantic heroes whose agency did not detract from the conventional love story. The personal development of the protagonists, their self-realisation in the form of their political awakening, represents a humanist aesthetic if not the common practice of liberal humanism in the form of the demand for universal human rights and anti-nuclear lobbies after World War Two. These global concerns often assumed the *Leitmotif* of Cusack's novels, plays and travel books; her texts thus addressed a broad, international readership. The many interviews with Cusack from the fifties to the seventies all testify to her widespread popularity.[29]

As defined in the previous chapter, Cusack's form of liberal humanism regarded the individual or "Man" as an agent of change; humans who could fully realise their poten-tial and "become whole men and women" while still working together for "the advance-ment of the mankind" and world peace. In the Cold War era, this pre-modernist ideology was retained by the middle-class of most industrial Western nations as well as the Marxist constituents of many industrially underdeveloped Communist countries. After the devastating battles and wartime atrocities in Western Europe and the Contin-ent, readers of more than thirty nationalities seemed to have insisted on sameness rather than difference, on the commonality of tastes in literature and its "realistic" reflection of life, as Cusack herself claimed. I suggest this attitude was reinforced by cultural nationalism in Australia where Modernism and difficult or

[29] See folder MS4621/14, Dymphna Cusack Archive, National Library of Australia, Canberra.

experimental prose were often disparaged as being elitist and therefore not appropriate for the egalitarian values of "real" Australian literature, as discussed in the previous chapter.[30]

More importantly, the generic form of social documentary was combined with the more fanciful and entertaining generic elements of popular romance. I argue that this hybrid genre apparently united "ordinary people" in both East and West by representing and endorsing "the kind of world they wanted":

> In the last 13 years she had visited 31 countries where she had found people were the same in their reaction to literature, life and the kind of world they wanted. People of all countries who wrote her after reading her books had repeatedly drawn her attention to this fact. [31]

The "people of all countries" suggests the populism behind postwar liberal humanism not only contained in Cusack's texts, but also permeating the response of her readership and evident in the gratifying fan mail which she received from readers in both socialist and capitalist countries up until the seventies.[32] I suggest that the hybrid genre of romantic realism represents a populist wish for romantic protagonists who were nevertheless "heroic agents" able to negotiate twentieth century political reality. I suggest that agents also had group or community identities exemplified by the romanticised expression of a national character. These cultural types are formed by discourses, as will be discussed in part two of this chapter, "Humanist Representations".

It seems that postwar bestsellers in English frequently disseminated a consensus on universal values. In fact, a stringent code of morals informed the new determination of
Man after World War II.[33] This set of moral strictures were advanced in popular forms of fiction which were factual rather than lyrical. It seems that there was an obvious if unwritten consensus on "both sides of the Iron curtain" as far as idealistic matters such as world peace,

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[30] For the opinion that lyrical prose is elitist and therefore anti-nationalist, see the Adelaide Advertiser interview which described Cusack as "the diminutive writer who championed the blue gum tradition and the intelligible writers who were breaking away from the fashion of obscure writing for a clique" (7 Mar. 1964).

[31] "Valley Storehouse of Social Material: History Strong in Tales," The Mercury 15 Aug. 1963.

[32] The obituary in Artlook, stated Cusack's death marked "an end of an era". Confirming her widespread popularity in Australia and abroad, the journal noted: "She was a fluent and courageous public speaker, and nearly until the last two years of her life, was in great demand as guest speaker not only to literary societies but to many interested in public affairs." Artlook 7.12 (1981): 9.

disarmament, democratisation and anti-fascism were concerned.[34] Cusack utilised pressing social themes and controversial topics as fictional content while her skill as a novelist enabled her to incorporate current political discourses in simple prose that, with its lack of complexity or ambiguity, appealed to culturally diverse readerships. For example, her concern with the world peace movement, of which she was an active participant, was most apparent in her internationally acclaimed stage play Pacific Paradise (1955).

As a writer who constantly referred to her readership, Cusack committed her fiction and journalism to the development of a body of Australian literature that could be taught in both secondary schools and universities. According to Cusack, there was an urgent need to inculcate a sense of Australianness, history and identity in the next generation (qtd Freehill 189). She argued that the school system should be immediately and drastically reformed so as to promote independent, critical thinking amongst the postwar youth, claiming Australian children were as brainwashed as their counterparts in both Eastern and Western countries (Window 104). Cusack maintained that in the years preceding the second World War, Australian children had been

> conditioned to accept without question our colonial position in an imperial world that was already dying. They were fashioned to fit into a social and economic system that had already failed, as the Depression and the methods of fascism and Nazism in coping with it, showed (op.cit).

Such a statement is typical of Cusack's literary and journalistic interventions in the public sphere. Furthermore, the statement renders her postcolonial, in many ways republican position, apparent. In her essays, critiques and interviews, Cusack continually challenged Australians to break with the colonial past so as to become a modern postcolonial nation that would possess a distinctive national identity and cultural pride.

Dymphna Cusack's widespread reputation as a bestseller in Western Europe and in the Soviet Union was recorded in an article published by one of Australia's most influential literary

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[33] In the East, the self-fulfilled individual working for socialism was called the "allseitig entwickelte sozialistische Persönlichkeit", the "all-round developed socialist personality" (95). Chris Weedon and Glenn Jordon, Cultural Politics: Class, Gender, Race and the Postmodern World (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

[34] On Cusack's involvement in the Writers' World Peace Appeal (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament), see Vic Lloyd's interview with Florence James (363). Lloyd, "Conscience and Justice: A Study of Values in Conflict in the Novels and Plays of Dymphna Cusack," Masters Thesis, U of Queensland, 1986. Cusack recorded the same concern after having spoken to "communists" during her travels in the late fifties. Dymphna Cusack, Holidays Among the Russians (London: William Heinemann, 1964) 233.

journals, Meanjin, in 1965. The profile was written by Monica Stirling who was also an assistant to Cusack's literary agent for Western translations, Madame Odette Arnaud (Freehill 77-79). Stirling claimed:

> PROBABLY NO AUSTRALIAN WRITER [sic] today is more widely read than Dymphna Cusack, whose novels and plays have been published in twenty-five countries, serialised, staged, televised or broadcast in another five, and who has achieved the unusual combination of literary merit and topical relevance. Her popularity abroad - including the many countries within the socialist bloc - is all the more remarkable in that she has never belonged to any political party and is fiercely proud of her own country. (317)

The key terms of the author's profile are revealing in terms of established dichotomies in literary criticism: Cusack's professed non-partisan stance which contradicted her staunch cultural nationalism and socialist sympathies; her international readership despite the Australianness of her texts; her popularity as a best-selling writer and the numerous literary prizes, awards and grants she received from literary institutions. Furthermore, Cusack's work was classified as both high culture ("literary merit") and as low culture ("topical relevance").

By the end of her career, journalists had noticed the discrepancy in Cusack's literary reputation at home and abroad:

> Dymphna Cusack is possibly the only Australian novelist who gets film star treatment - but not in her own country. "When I'm in Russia, I discover what it feels like to be a film star. People hop out from behind bushes with cameras or bunches of flowers, or come knocking at the door for autographs."[35]

In the Sydney Morning Herald interview quoted above, Cusack is unashamed of her popularity and even described an event which ironically places her work in the bestseller category of "airport novels", a derogatory generic term for pulp fiction: "At Orly Airport in France Miss Cusack was asked to sign 5 000 copies of her books for airport personnel" (op.cit). As this chapter shows, Cusack "returned home" after her world trips, buoyed by her fame in socialist and West European countries while the Australian media and literary critics either celebrated her success or remained bemused by her successful writing career abroad.

[35] "The Novel Way to Film Star Treatment," Sydney Morning Herald 13 Mar.1972: 8.

Cusack seemed to be proud of the diversity of her readership. Referring to the incident at the French airport above, she informed the Australian press: "'I signed books from one end of the social scale to the other,' she said, 'from Algerian cleaners right through to executives.' The realisation that her books 'cut right across frontiers and left no frontiers at all' was what made the occasion particularly memorable" (op.cit). As I have mentioned in chapter one, Cusack's concern with overcoming differences, indeed the dissolution of them ("no frontiers at all") was characteristic of her autobiographical statements.

Cusack was acutely aware of political and cultural differences, particularly when it came to gender relations as her commentary in Holidays Among the Russians demonstrates. Her travel books Chinese Women Speak and Illyria Reborn continually point to the social reforms in these communist countries which have enabled women to break free of centuries of traditional patriarchy and within decades become employed mothers, single professionals, university-educated or skilled in trades. In doing so, Cusack records the minutia of everyday existence that at the same time illustrates the many differences to Western European practices, from clothing, housekeeping and language to a variety of other cultural practices.

Pacific Paradise, a three act play is set on an imaginary Pacific island and is a blatant, still highly relevant, protest against nuclear testing and nuclear armament. A series of international awards and public acclaim in both East and West ensued, including an invitation to Beijing and the broadcast of the radio adaption of Pacific Paradise in England and Australia. The play has retained its appeal in the latter country as demonstrated by the fact that it was republished in the nineties.[36] Pacific Paradise was enormously successful in Russia where Cusack had become a household name.[37] This polemical, provocative play clearly relies on the genre of popular romance (the love story between the princess and the pilot) which develops parallel to the tension surrounding the planned atomic tests, the island's complete evacuation, the climax of Laloma's sacrificial suicide as well as the power of global protests against governments and the military. The world-acclaimed play is yet another example of Cusack's writing which

[36] Pacific Paradise. Introd. Vic Lloyd. (St Lucia: Australasian Drama Studies, 1991).

[37] Freehill comments: "We saw Pacific Paradise produced in Arenburg and Heatwave in Berlin in Moscow… It is as a result of the great success of her two plays no less than that of her novels that Dymphna is - so the Russians say - the most popular contemporary foreign writer in the Soviet Union" (106). Dymphna (Sydney: Thomas Nelson, 1975).

contained and propounded conflicting ideologies with the express goal of appealing to the "average reader" or audience.

It was translated and produced in Japan, Brazil, Argentina, China, Russia, Egypt and Indonesia.[38] Pacific Paradise was performed to much public acclaim in Australia, New Zealand, the USA and England. It continued to be translated globally: into several lan-guages in India, into Icelandish, Dutch, German, Polish, Czech and Slovak, Hungarian, Korean, Albanian, Romanian, Uzbek, Ukrainian and Bulgarian (Interview, Theatregoer 15). Despite its overwhelmingly positive reception, I consider Pacific Paradise to be a conservative, unreflected expression of romanticised (post)colonialism. The text's melodrama led to it being criticised for its sentimental literary style, its "pasteboard characters, propaganda types and Hollywood theme" by The Australian Quarterly.[39] Yet as Vic Lloyd has commented, the setting represents the average reader's "common idyll under threat of utter destruction" while the plot involves a conventional romance and the global politics of postwar pacificism and disarmament (318-19).

In a striking gesture of British colonialism, Queen Victoria has "given" the island of Moluka to the gallant sea captain who surreptiously save the islanders from famine and disease. Simon Hoad is his grandson, now ruling the island with his native wife. Hoad lords it over his mixed race family (who are of course the island's nobility) and the indigenous inhabitants are his subjects. His reign is considered a symbolic stand against the bigger masters: the Western scientists, military leaders and politicians. The text creates sympathy for Hoad's Christian colonial rule and provokes outrage over atomic testing in the Pacific; the institutions and responsible governments are dubbed the "Atomic Control Board" and "Inter-Atom".

Despite this textual ambivalence - in this instance, the political convolution of the terms peace and colonisation - Cusack's work met with recognition of her talent as "a storyteller" by such cultural institutions as the Gorky theatre company, French publishing houses as well as the British and Australian Broadcasting Corporations. The climax of the drama is the marriage ceremony of the island princess and the Western pilot during the planned countdown for the nuclear bomb that will destroy their island. The islanders, however, have continuously

[38] For an account of its production and publication history, see Theatregoer 3.1 (1963): 14-15.
[39] Australian Quarterly 28 (1956): 125-26. Note that it was the middle of the Cold War.

appealed to a global audience by radio, broadcasting their petition and arousing protests worldwide. The island is saved by political activism and the romance attains its "Happy End" in idyllic and exotic surrounds. The play's appeal to the average reader of the Cold War was resounding on "both sides of the Iron Curtain."

In East Germany, Cusack's books were mostly translated and promoted by Olga and Erich Fetter. It seems the couple were considered by Cusack and Freehill to belong to their "Berlin Family."[40] The national women's magazine in the German Democratic Republic, Für Dich, Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Frauen, [For You, an Illustrated Magazine for Women] published Southern Steel as a serialised novel. In the early seventies, Erich Fetter interviewed Cusack for Für Dich in which she commented: "Ich gehe von Tatsachen aus, und ich ziele auf Tatsachen; Phantasie ist für mich das Arbeiten in und mit der Wirklichkeit" [I begin with the facts, I aim at them; imagination for me means working in and with reality]. Fetter asserts that Cusack's aim was to write in the realistic genre of instructive, factual though entertaining fiction or *Unterhaltungsliteratur* ["light reading"] which at the same time demonstrated her social commitment: "spannenden und zugleich aufklärisch gesinnten Unterhaltung, getragen von gesellschaftlicher Verantwortung" [interesting/entertaining reading, at the same time disposed to didacticism, motivated by social responsibility].

In the sixties, the Australian literary critic T. Inglis Moore considered the reliance "on the reality of hard fact" and the "cynicism of disillusionment" to have resulted in a lack of romance in Australia fiction. According to Inglis Moore "there were no great love stories in Australian literature", therefore Australia could not claim to have its own school of Romanticism (118). Since Moore's discussion of realism and romance, there
has been very little scholarship on this subject. Realistic novels are generally criticised for being sentimental if the love story takes preeminence. Feminist critics have usually discussed the sexual politics of romantic fiction by Australian women writers and have not addressed the issue of genre as such or why women's writing is relegated to romance rather than realism.

[40] Cusack visited and lived in East Berlin around seven times from the fifties to the seventies. Cusack and Freehill considered East Berlin their "second home". They had many friends and acquaintances in the GDR's capital city, evident in Cusack's correspondence and the autographed editions of her work in the special Cusack collection at the Humboldt University Berlin, where Cusack had contact with scholars such as the anthropologist, Professor Frederick Rose. Cusack's intellectual circle extended to Potsdam, where she worked on several novels. The Fetters, still residing in Berlin, retain the German copyright for all her translated, published novels and manuscripts that she submitted to presses in East Germany.

On the contrary, feminist literary criticism has treated such canonical, "feminist" works as Miles Franklin's My Brilliant Career and Christina Stead's For Love Alone as autobiographical realism and have not adequately discussed the novels' relation to popular romance, the ubiquitous love story and the significance of the discourse of romance for women writers.

Cusack's husband and biographer, the financial journalist and amateur author Norman Freehill, maintained that she was a "Romantic Realist" stating

> her books are social documentaries and they are thoroughly documented. Referring to this aspect of her books, Miles Franklin wrote to her in 1953: "People may hate what you write, but you are so thorough in your research that they never dare say it's wrong" (2).

I suggest that Cusack's work attempts to extend the postwar tradition of "hard fact" and "cynical disillusionment" characteristic of Australian realism by blending the love story into the narrative. In this way she was able to reach a wider audience and become pop-ular with her assumed "average readers" in Australia and abroad.

I suggest that her "successful" and even the "failed" realistic romances, as I have categorised them in chapter four, provided an optimism necessary to cope with the everyday pressures of the Cold War which instigated the global appeal for peace and disarmament. "Ordinary people" living on both sides of the Iron Curtain obviously sought reassurance in writing that offered the liberal humanist promise of self-realisation, to become "whole men and women", regardless of the political regime and the continued gender hierarchy.

As we shall see in the next chapter, the postwar love story provided reassurance that existing forms of masculinity and femininity were ultimately beneficial to women regardless of their subjective experience or objective cultural critique of those gender relations. Thus a deconstruction of the women and men in Cusack's texts in terms of competing generic demands of realism and romance should render these gendered sub-jects more complex than the constitutive humanist discourse has allowed. Furthermore, if it can be argued that Cusack's women and men are "caught between realism and romance", then a fixed gender identity, indeed the sex/gender binary upon which these genres are predicated, may be called into question.

Ideology and the Author

Cusack often aired her conviction that ideology had played a role in the shaping of the Australian literary canon in the postwar era. She consistently claimed that her own work had been purposely neglected by Australian literary scholars and deliberately left out of the university curriculum, along with other leftist writers ("Cultural" 79). She saw a connection between the employment policy of the university system, the belated establishment of a Chair of Australian Literature, and the regularly suppressed discourses of republicanism and socialism in Australia:

> Our University Australian Literature Chair was founded just after the Korean War. Of course anyone with Left ideas never got into the universities. We had some good teachers of literature like Inglis Moore and A.D.Hope, but there was no attempt whatsoever to explain the superb wave of republicanism in the nine-teenth century that swept through such a large group, beginning with Charles Harpur and all the Bulletin people. They were socialists and republicans.[41]

Cusack was one of the first highly influential Australian postwar authors, both interna-tionally popular and locally recognised, who pointed to a lack of historical analysis in Australian literary criticism and to speculate on the politically motivated reasons for it. Furthermore, she attempted to draw the discourse of republicanism in Australia into literary criticism and grant it the significance it has had on authors since the turn of the century. The suppression of an ongoing debate about Australia becoming a republic may also have been a reason for the reluctance to promote and teach Australian literature in the education system until well after the Cold War.

In the late seventies, the Zeitschrift für Amerikanistik und Anglistik [Journal for American and British Studies] editor Dr Helmut Findeisen sent a letter to Cusack in Australia, asking her to write a longer version of her published intervention in the debate surrounding the Morcom

[41] Pamela Williams, "A Sense of Worth: Dymphna Cusack," Coming Out! Women's Voices, Women's Lives eds. Julie Rigg and Julie Copeland (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1985) 59-60.

Report.[42] The article "The Cultural Cringe in Australian Universities' Study of Australian Literature", later published in Social Alternatives in Australia 1979, is a careful assessment of the development of Australian literature and the formation of a canon.[43] Cusack insisted that the Australian attempt to consolidate high cultural texts in a canon has been based on political experience and ideological discourses. In a letter to Findeisen in Leipzig, Cusack gave her own view of Australian literary scholars and the political orientation of the universities, stating that "academic attitudes to our literature are of a pro-colonial nature." Cusack had expressed these opinions on the formation of Australian literature much earlier in an article published in one of the largest East German newspapers, Sonntag.[44] Already in 1952, she had claimed a left-wing tradition for Australian literature which had always taken "ordinary people" as its subject. Furthermore, she discussed the work of socialist and leftist writers who were already established in the literary canon, listing Lawson, Prichard, Franklin and Esson as examples.

Despite her promotion and discussion of "left-wing" writers, Cusack did not write according to the dictates of Stalinist socialist realism. I maintain that Cusack's work draws on the Australian literary tradition of *social* realism and radical democracy rather than following the socialist realist genre practised until the late fifties in Australia and in the GDR until *die Wende* ["the turning point"] in 1989. Cusack's work, however, does have much in common with this genre given its melodramatic plot, didacticism and self-realisation of the individual or the romantic couple whose purpose in the narrative is to better society. Cusack was widely read in the USSR and enjoyed as much acclaim as her colleague, the communist Katherine Susannah Prichard, who remained loyal to the Soviet Union and its policies until her death.[45] It would, however, be too simple to explain the selection and/or approval of Cusack by the cultural apparatus of the Communist Party by categorising her work as socialist realist or the writer herself as a Communist.

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[42] See correspondence with the Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik editor, Dr Helmut Findeisen in Leipzig. 25 July, 1977. MS4621/25/14.

[43] "The Cultural Cringe in Australian Universities' Study of Australian Literature." Social Alternatives 1.5 (1979): 79-83. Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik 2 (1978): n.p. Elfrida Morcom's report sparked a controversy in the early seventies about the latent "inferiority complex" or "cultural cringe" of literary critics who would not support the nation's literature and excluded Australian authors from the English canon.

[44] "Im Lande der Eukalyptus und Mimosen: Probleme der australischen Literatur," Sonntag: Wochenzeitung für Kulturpolitik, Kunst und Wissenschaft 49 (1959): 16.

[45] Dorothy Hewett, "Excess of Love: The Irreconcilable in Katherine Susannah Prichard," Overland 43 (1969): 27-31. Hewett also points out that Prichard would never hear a word of criticism of the Soviet Union (31). Prichard supported the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, even though she did challenge the expulsion of Party intellectuals after the Hungarian revolution (op.cit).

Cusack was not a member of the Communist Party of Australia nor did she officially join a party abroad. She and her socialist husband Norman Freehill were, however, long-time members of the Soviet Writers' Union and were both involved in setting up the GDR-Australia Friendship Society in the seventies. Cusack publicly insisted on her non-partisan stance, possibly in reaction to Freehill's public involvement with the Communist Party of Australia and that of the USSR. In a review in the widely circulated East German women's magazine, Für Dich, Norman Freehill is described by Erich Fetter as a former employee of the newspaper, Tribune, "dem Organ der Kommunistischen Partei Australiens" [the instrument of the Communist Party of Australia]. Furthermore, Cusack's husband and constant travelling companion "war langjähriger Präsident der Gesellschaft für australisch-sowjetische Freundschaft" [a longtime President of the Australia-USSR Friendship Society].

Cusack clearly had socialist sympathies and identified herself as "a Leftist writer", a vague, political allegiance which she later claimed had served to harm her literary reputation in her home country ("Cultural" 79-83). As mentioned previously, Marion Anthony has speculated that since Cusack was considered to be a Communist in Australia, this reduced her status even though her work was on bestseller lists in Europe (9-10). Cusack seemed to alternate from accusing literary critics of deliberately leaving her out of the Australian canon because of her "leftist views", to being complacently assured of her reputation as "an international author" (op.cit). For instance, in her capacity as the President of the Fellowship of Australian Writers, she wrote to Kylie Tennant in order to correct the latter's public assertion that "Cusack was a Marxist".[46] In a slightly conceited manner, Cusack explained that such a "smear" could not damage her reputation because it was "established", "but it smears the Fellowship", an organisation of lesser known authors. Cusack insisted on her non-partisan stance, "One cannot renounce what one has never espoused!", unlike Tennant, "People like you who joined the Communist Party and got out for their own reasons..."[47]

[46]Letter to Kylie Tennant. 14 Aug. 1969 MS4621/1/247.

[47] The Communist Party of Australia severed its connection to the Soviet Union when it denounced the USSR's crushing of the Czecho-Slovakian uprising in 1968. Many intellectuals, disillusioned and critical after the Hungarian and Czech uprisings, left the CPA whose membership was reduced to only 2 500 by the seventies. However in 1971, 400 members left the CPA to re-establish the pro-Moscow Socialist Party of Australia. See Alistair Davidson, "The Communist Party of Australia," The Australian Encyclopaedia. vol. 2 (Sydney: The Grolier Society of Australia, 1977) 77-80.

The issue had been of great importance to Australian writers since the Liberal Party instigated its 1950 inquiry into the granting of Government literary scholarships to communists, with Cusack claiming in 1969 that "As matter [sic] stand it is now publicly known that the granting of Commonwealth Literary Fund Fellowships is determined by past or present Communist Party membership".[48] During the Cold War, Australian intellectuals experienced their own form of McCarthyism under the leadership of the royalist Prime Minister Robert Menzies which was encapsulated by the Petrov Affair. Thus it was important to Cusack to distance herself from Communism. In retrospect, she has been accused of having pandered to the Soviet Union and having been dangerously uncritical of Stalinism, as the well-known, "conservative" literary critic Peter Coleman has argued in his public condemnation of Prichard, Cusack and Freehill.[49]

In his 1998 report, Coleman claimed that the enormous success of Australian writers in the USSR had been more of a state hoax, given that royalties were apparently paid regardless of sales. He even asserts that the curtain calls at popular Australian plays were pre-arranged. In the latter instance, he mentions the fame of Cusack's plays produced by the Gorki Theatre in Moscow (op.cit). By contrast, the Australian literary critic and Meanjin editor Clem Christenson attended the premiere of Heatwave in Berlin at the Gorki Theatre and maintained that Cusack was indeed a celebrity in Russia. He described the eleven curtain calls about which Coleman is sceptical as a "spontaneously enthusiastic reception given by a packed house" and admitted that he was overawed by the popular success his of compatriot. The audience's response to Heatwave in Berlin was so enthusiastic that Christenson confessed that he was "proud

to be Australian."[50]

Irina Golovnya, who adapted and translated Heatwave for the Russian stage, confirmed Cusack's popularity with the Russian public many years later in an interview with the Sydney

[48] Letter to Kylie Tennant. 14 Aug. 1969. MS4621/1/247.
[49] Peter Coleman, "Writers See Red in Propaganda Blue." The West Australian 29 Aug. 1998: 8.
[50] "To say I was thrilled, and proud to be an Australian, is to put it mildly. A brilliant night, the kind one reads about but is seldom privileged to share with author and cast. In a sense it was Dymphna Cusack's crowning achievement" (395). Clem Christenson,"Fathers and Sons," Meanjin Quarterly Sep. (1965): 394-400.

Morning Herald.[51] Cusack has also been discussed in the context of Australian literary contacts to the USSR.[52] A.S. Petrikovskaya maintains that after Katherine Susannah Prichard and Alan Marshall, Cusack was one of the most popular English writers in the USSR (234). Katherine Susannah Prichard was the most celebrated Australian writer in the Soviet Union; her Working Bullocks was the first Australian work to be translated after the Russian Revolution and she remained a correspondent for Soviet journals as well as a facilitator for Soviet-Australian literary relations (217-18).[53] Dorothy Hewett collaborates this: "In the Soviet Union she [Prichard] was regarded as a kind of divine being" (31).[54] Petrikovskaya not only lists the Australian authors published in Russian and English (221), but also those who visited the Soviet Union in the post war era: Olga Masters, Manning Clark, Barbara Jeffries and Geoffrey Dutton among them (233).

I suggest that Cusack wished to keep up a public pretence of liberal humanism, yet the content, form and ultimate success of her work belie her socialist sympathies. She was a cultural critic, significantly a critic of her own "capitalist" country even though she most often argued in terms of postcolonialism and national cultural pride. The reviews in East Germany were concerned with the depiction of human relationships in a corrupt Western society or the GDR maintaining the "moral high ground"[55]: "Ihre Erzählung (Der Halbverbrannte Baum) ist ein trauriger Bericht über die auf Egoismus reduzierten menschlichen Beziehungen in der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft" [her narrative (The Half-Burnt Tree) is a sad report on human relations reduced to egoism in capitalist society].[56] Similarly, the interviews in East Germany "Rendezvous Unter den Linden" and the review "Wolken über Newcastle" ["Clouds over Newcastle", Southern Steel] repeat Cusack's apparent endorsement of the GDR regime and emphasise the parallel between her work and the East German *Kulturpolitik*.

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[51] Sian Powell, "Oz-Lit in Moscow," Interview with Irina Golovnya, Sydney Morning Herald 19 Jan. 1991: 44.

[52] A.S. Petrikovskaya, "Literary Contacts: Australian Literature in Russia and the Soviet Union," Russia and the Fifth Continent: Aspects of Russian-Australian Relations ed. John McNair and Thomas Poole (St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1992) 210-238.

[53] Henry Lawson was also favoured and became familiar to Soviet readers (*op.cit.* 219).

[54] Dorothy Hewett, "Excess of Love: The Irreconcilable in Katherine Susannah Prichard," Overland 43 (1969): 27-31.

[55] "The claim to occupy the moral high ground would remain a key dimension of East European cultural politics and would indeed play an important role in popular disillusionment with the system" (92). Chris Weedon and Glenn Jordon, "Marxist Cultural Politics in Eastern Europe: The Case of the German Democratic Republic," Cultural Politics: Class, Gender, Race and the Postmodern World (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) 91-111.

[56] Helmut Baldauf, "Rechenschaft für die Menschlichkeit: Der halbverbrannte Baum," Neue Zeit [New Times] 16 Aug. 1972.

Cusack supported the USSR by regularly contributing to influential newspapers such as the international Soviet Woman and the literary journal for British and American Studies in the GDR, the Zeitschrift fur Anglistik and Amerikanistik. In the many interviews with Cusack in the Soviet press, she is quoted as merely repeating the official party line on economic, agricultural and cultural developments in communist countries.[57] For instance, Cusack's "Letter to the Youth of the GDR", published after her last visit to East Berlin, repeats the party's rhetoric on Western imperialism, colonialism and (anti)fascism.[58] It remains unclear whether Cusack did in fact uncritically support the cultural policies of the Soviet Union. Given the strict control of the press and everyday censorship, it is plausible that her statements were embellished or edited by communist journalists.

Petrikovskaya attributes Cusack's particular success in the Soviet Union to the hybrid genre of her work, romantic realism. He noted that the element of "social commitment" required by the Communist literary aesthetic was combined with "sentimental and simplistic plots" (225). He makes an important distinction between Cusack's romantic narratives and popular romance: "But her works differ markedly from the love story to which they owe so much in their attempt to link the little world of the women characters to the world at large"...(224). Petrikovskaya correctly points to the relation of romance to Cusack's realism, although he does not quite escape placing the former as subordinate to the latter with the corollary that the feminine "little world" is inferior to the masculine "world at large". As I will argue in the last section of this chapter, reviewers and literary critics have been inclined to ascribe a gender to these genres.

A number of incongruities arise when considering Cusack's position in Australian liter-ary history. Despite her tremendously large circulation in the East and her open praise of the new socialist societies she personally visited, Cusack was frequently supported by state-funded bodies in the West, including the government media institutions such as the ABC and the BBC. I suggest that Cusack's life and work remain a remarkable chal-lenge to the political conservatism of the fifties in postwar Australia. Anti-communist sentiment was symbolized by Robert Menzies' Liberal Party government and its open stance of American-style

[57] See the East German trade unions' journal in English, an article by Charlotte Heitzenröther, "An Australian in the GDR," FDGB Review 4 (1972): 28-29; "Ein Leben aus dem Koffer," Par 12 Feb. 1961 (MS4621/16/15).
[58] Dymphna Cusack, "Letter to the Youth of the GDR," Neue deutsche Literatur 7 July (1973): 17.

Macarthyism which attempted to police cultural production in Australia after the War.[59] The Russian Spy Case is perhaps exemplary of the way Australia was turned into an arena for the Cold War in the southern hemisphere.[60] I suggest that the opposition "West versus East", becomes undone by Cusack's biograph-ical trajectory, given her clear alignment with "Eastern" Communism and her simultan-eous reliance on Western political discourses, namely liberalism, feminism and post-colonial nationalism.

Liberal Feminism and the Woman Subject

As noted by Lloyd below and discussed in the next section on "Feminine Ignorance: Joy's Self-Realisation and Political Awakening", Cusack's feminism appears to have been ambiguous with respect to certain female characters in her novels and plays.

Transcript: Interview with Florence James

> Vic Lloyd. There is a character who comes into other novels, though it seems he is not in Spinner. This is the young male who acts as the catalyst for the political awakening of a young girl. Usually a girl from a rich background who is politically unaware. Greg in Pioneers on Parade, and more significantly another Greg in Picnic Races is this kind of creation. Joy in Heatwave in Berlin is the kind of girl figure who needs to learn wisdom. How does this fit in with her ideas? Should I call them feminist?

[59] The Communist Party of Australia (CPA) was banned from 1940-42 under wartime emergency powers. Menzies' postwar Liberal Party government attempted to ban the Communist Party again but were narrowly defeated in a national referendum in 1951.

[60] The Petrov Affair is an important signifier of national Cold War politics when Conservatives alleged that the CPA, the Australian Labor Party as well as various academics and writers were involved in espionage for the Soviet Union. The trial had a bearing on the Liberal Party's electoral victory in the early fifties.

> Florence James. It's not really for me to comment on these characters in her other novels. But Dymphna herself was certainly a feminist, we both were. She cared deeply for the protection of the rights of women in every sphere, in the home as well as in the workplace and in social attitudes and practices. Her fight to gain equal pay and opportunities for women teachers is well known. (qtd Lloyd 359)

I would dispute Lloyd's suggestion that Cusack's texts primarily depict politically unawakened females awaiting the intellectual stimulus of a man whose wisdom and nurturance encourages her self-realisation. This type of woman in Cusack's work is, in fact, outnumbered by her more independent, self-assured, intellectual counterpart: the professional female doctor, social worker or teacher (see chapters four and five).

Cusack generalised her indictment of middle-class, female Australians to women of all industrialised countries. Black Lightning, adapted for television by a female playwright and directed by a woman, was broadcast in Prague for the socialist celebration of International Women's Day. In a letter to the female producer of Black Lightning, she commented on the International Women's Day celebrations: "It linked me with the women of the world who are fightning [sic] for the things we stand for. I think it is most important that a woman who is engrosed [sic] in the usual trivia of feminine life in the West should come by accident and despair to playing a real role in Society."[61]

Cusack evidently supported the Communist form of women's emancipation as well as the postwar remnants of first wave feminism in Australia. As the former East German literary critic Eva Kaufmann and the sociologist Irene Dölling have noted, the term "feminism" cannot be applied to equal opportunity policies nor to women's activism and political representation in the German Democratic Republic.[62] Paradoxically, Cusack wrote for the Soviet Woman as a liberal feminist from the West whose socialist sympathies were apparent.[63] For instance, Cusack sent congratulatory statements for State anniversaries in the USSR including "the Soviet victory over fascism" and for International Women's Day which was commemorated by Soviet Woman. As further evidence of her commitment to the Aboriginal Movement in

[61] Letter, 8 Oct. 1976. MS4621 Box 19 Folder 16.
[62] Interview with Dölling, Universität Potsdam, 1998; Eva Kaufmann, "Women Writers in the GDR, 1945-1989," Postwar Women's Writing in German-speaking Europe: Feminist Critical Approaches, ed. Chris Weedon (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1997) 169-209. 170.
[63] Soviet Woman was published in 12 languages including Arabic, Bengali, Spanish, Hindi and Japanese.

Australia, Cusack sent the Soviet Woman an article on Aboriginal children in 1978: "It is a depressing situation... their condition physically and mentally is due to the way we have treated them since we came to this country."[64] Her novels on racism are discussed in part two of chapter five.

I suggest that Cusack's liberal feminism was closely tied to her humanism, with the ensuing belief in a universal human type of man and woman:

> Miss Cusack has come back with news of the emancipation of women every-where. "'The elected president of Uzbekistan, a Moslem republic of the USSR, is a woman. Mrs Yagda Nasriddinova,' she said. 'She is an engineer married to an engineer. They have two children. Women are the same all over the world. She got her little girl to play the piano for me, and recite, in English, Baa Baa Black Sheep'".[65]

Thus Cusack maintained that her readers, like women, were "the same" world wide. The above quote is a further example of Cusack's failure to criticise conventional gender roles of motherhood and childraising; she believed working women should still be responsible for the household and the family's well-being.[66]

Her travel books on Albania, Illyria Reborn and Holidays Among the Russians are devoted to the subject of contemporary women as well as how women's lives had changed since the communist revolutions. Significantly, the historical status of women is Cusack's continual theme in her travel writing, and is most obvious in Chinese Women Speak. Monica Stirling explained how Cusack's "anti-bomb" play, Pacific Paradise, led to her extended stay in Mao's China:

> Pacific Paradise was successful all over the world and gained for her an invita-tion from the China Peace Committee. So in June 1956 she flew across Siberia to China. Contact with China fascinated and stimulated her. She is no innocent abroad - she wants to know the facts and makes sure she gets them. She spent eighteen months collecting material, travelling 20 000 miles (in the process gaining a working knowledge of Chinese), and then set up a Chinese household and wrote Chinese

[64] Letter to the editor of Soviet Woman, "Nelya". 21 Sep. 1978. (MS4621 25/12).
[65] "Festival Focal of Endeavour," Adelaide Advertiser 5 Mar. (1964): 6.
[66] See her travel book Chinese Women Speak in which Cusack repeatedly comments on the professional success of her interviewees who were still feminine and committed to their domestic duties. (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1958). Auf eigenen Füßen: Frauenschicksale aus China. Trans. Ingeborg Dronke. (Berlin: Verlag Volk und Welt, 1961).

> Women Speak. I found it interesting to compare this beautifully written book with Simone de Beauvoir's La Longue Marche. It had an enthusiastic reception in England where it was a Book Society recom-mendation and was serialised in five daily newspapers and widely translated. (322)

I suggest that this text is a rich source of information about Chinese women in the post-war period. Cusack transcribes interviews in detail and with vivid description of clothing, gestures, personal and social attitudes, though the reader must take into account that these interviews were filtered through an interpreter.

The broad range of women and their occupations (weavers, factory workers, managers, royalty, public servants and market women), leads one to the belief that Cusack actually met her subjects spontaneously and without interference from Chinese officials. The severe degree of state control of the media and surveillance of foreigners creates some doubt, however, that the numerous chance meetings with "ordinary" Chinese citizens were all unplanned or at least, unmonitored. The content of Chinese Women Speak supports this doubt since there are seldom voices critical of the communist regime: the women speak in terms of "before and after" the revolution, with the aftermath being an incomparable improvement in living standards and abolishment of harmful customs and sexist traditions.

Yet Helen Palmer's review of Chinese Women Speak unequivocally praised Cusack's reporting on women's rights and social reforms in communist China.[67] By contrast, in Western countries, "not only has equal pay not arrived: the principle is still being debated…" (op.cit). In terms of the credibility of Cusack's interviews, she notes that the author's reporting is "alert and sensitive" and maintains that the "Before and After" formula represents "a turning point in the mind" (op.cit). Palmer admires the women interviewed: "There is nothing stereotyped about the raw material of their lives, or the verve and gusto with which they thrust forward" and like Stirling, she compares Cusack's effort at documenting gender relations in communist China with de Beavoir's The Long March.

How are Cusack's women positioned in relation to liberal feminism? How are they constituted as subjects? The latter is an ongoing concern of this Dissertation; the former is a peripheral though important question. Feminism as a movement or twentieth century political

concept is rarely mentioned in Cusack's texts. In The Sun in Exile, the Pendlebury sisters' British cousin is cause for their arrest. "Hot-headed" Louise is a "militant suffragette" and persuades Virginia to participate in a feminist demonstration. Their conservative, wealthy Australian father bails them out of the prison in London and is enraged by their foolishness. "Getting involved" is the didactic "message" that Cusack promoted in her work - personal activism would mean a better world in both East and West. Thus her characters, typical of Carole Ferrier's comment in the last chapter, were "involved" in a number of political discourses, as spokespeople for community opinions, even if these were seldomly explicitly feminist ones.

For example, the doctor Dallas in Come in Spinner is herself a Modern Woman; she is a widely respected surgeon and intellectual. Yet she does not mention the difficulties and sexism she may have faced being a pioneer in gender relations at her workplace. Instead Dallas voices a class critique of the wealthy whose privileged position allows them luxuries during wartime. Commenting on the ease with which the beauty salon at the Hotel South Pacific is able to acquire equipment, she exclaims: "Sunlamp! Somebody at the SP must have a lot of influence somewhere - or is it the black market? Our physiotherapy department has been held up for months waiting for a lamp, among other things" (324). Nevertheless Florence James has insisted that she and Cusack had feminist goals during the writing of the lengthy manuscript: "For us feminism was a goal to work for personally - the goal of equal opportunity and equal pay that would get rid of women's social and financial limitations" (qtd Lloyd 361). Perhaps the women writers were attempting to show individuals who had overcome these limitations even though equal opportunity had not yet been incorporated into government policy.

James is right in asserting that Cusack was outspoken and committed to feminism in a personal capacity. Despite her ambivalent stance towards conventional femininity and sexuality, she commented: "It's incredible what women will go through to appear beautiful in the eyes of men" (qtd Williams, 62). Her autobiographical stories and statements bear witness to Cusack's personal interventions. She opposed sexual exploi-tation of women, and recalled an incident during World War II in a Sydney restaurant when a "Yank" [American soldier] entered carrying a 16 year old, unconscious girl. Cusack and her friends went to the manager who refused to intervene, saying he would lose his clients if he attempted to help the girl. They then found a policeman and he apparently replied, "My dear young women, this is wartime

[67] Helen Palmer, Overland 15 (1959): 51.

and you can't interfere with the pleasures of soldiers" (qtd Williams 63). Cusack stated that she and James based the character of Monnie on this experience. Like Monnie's foster mother in Come in Spinner, Cusack in her capacity as a school counsellor, asked the judge in the Children's Court why the men who are found in brothels are not charged for prostitution. The judge threatened her with contempt of court and she reportedly answered, "Your Honour, that's exactly what I feel" (op.cit).

Thus Cusack seemed to be a fearless, unorthodox campaigner for women's rights who was ready to publicly challenge the authorities at every opportunity. When Lloyd suggests that "it is a kind of regression for two convinced feminists to build up a charac-ter like Claire" in Come in Spinner, James responded that she and Cusack had wished to represent "a whole range of women, regardless whether they would have been involved in the wider issues of feminism" (359). I suggest the author's professed feminism certainly indicates a general concern with women as the subject matter for novels, plays and travel writing, yet her reformist ideas on gender relations, typical of the period between first and second wave feminism, often led her to portray conservative women whose conventional femininity was reflected in the love story and influenced by the broader discourse of romance (see the illustrations from Pioneers on Parade and Come in Spinner in chapter four). The paradox of Cusack's work lies in the opposition of these seemingly "unemancipated" women and the "politically awakened, self-realised human" as will be discussed in the following sections.

In the interview extract quoted at the beginning of this section, Vic Lloyd challenged Cusack's collaborator Florence James as to whether Cusack's feminism was of a radical or more liberal strain. The rich girl he is referring to in Picnic Races is Eden who, after disappointment in love, finds herself the "Right Man", the cynical, abrupt Greg. Lloyd is in fact pointing to the contradiction of romantic realism. I maintain that postwar women's subjectivity was caught between paradigms concerning gender roles, femininity and sexuality. As a subject, she has emerged from political discourses of emancipation and humanism. Because her gender continues to be determined by these variable factors of changing roles in the workplace and home as well as the expectations of femininity, it cannot remain fixed nor is it preordained according to biology.

Similarly, Primrose in Pioneers on Parade symbolises the variable gendering of the woman subject. She originally aspires to marriage and a conventional, domestic life, though by the end of narrative, she has decided to become a bluestocking and study at university. Despite her wealth, she wishes to have a career and be self-sufficient, thus she reflects the emergence of the Modern Woman in Australian history.[68] In both narra-tives the Australian middle-class women desire a British aristocrat; central to these social satires is the "masculine" realistic depiction of class differences which, paradoxically, are resolved by the "feminine" love story. Thus popular romance apparently dominates the narrative, as I argue in chapter four when I differentiate Cusack's romantic realistic texts. I examine the proposition of gendered genres further in chapter three, using the reception of Southern Steel to illustrate my point.

Despite Cusack's and Franklin's express feminism, female sexuality is derided in Pioneers on Parade, as the mockery of the decadent English Lady Lucinda and her much despised daughter Lucy shows. The taciturn romantic hero Greg, in his hatred of upper-class women, calls them "neurotic hags", "degenerate" (208) and "putrid" (191). Lloyd in his discussion of Southern Steel suggests that this derision was possibly Cusack's method of illustrating gender oppression by pointing to the "frank truth" and leaving the onus on the reader to judge sexist male behaviour (152). I would concur with this argument because there are too many examples of "enlightened" men and "liberated" women in Cusack's work for the critic to assume that the author was merely reproducing oppressive gender relations. Cusack seemed to be exposing sexism in order to mount a challenge to it in the text and the reading process.

Undeniably, she maintained a feminist stance from her first novel of female friendship in Jungfrau to a A Bough in Hell, the story of an alcoholic and her recovery through a friendship with another woman. Cusack's feminism seems to have vacillated from a
radical to a more accepted liberal position that was concerned with social status rather than revolutionary notions of femininity and sexuality, with reforms rather than a rejec-tion of the roles ascribed to females of mother, "homemaker" and wife. Although Lloyd demonstrates an understanding of feminist critiques, he tends to privilege the working-class woman over women

[68] See Marilyn Lake, "She could live happily without a husband or male relative. Among the outstanding triumphs woman has succeeded in gaining, observed a writer in the best-selling Australian Women's Weekly in 1933, the improvement in the prestige of the single woman is undoubtedly the most important." 247. "Depression Dreaming," Creating a Nation 1788-1990, Patricia Grimshaw, Marilyn Lake, Anne McGrath, Marian Quartly (South Yarra: McPhee Gribble, 1994) 231-254.

of other classes. He asserts that Loreen in Picnic Races, Deb in Come in Spinner and Roz in Southern Steel are a certain type of Australian woman. He classifies them as poor women who exploit their husbands and use romance/marriage to rise above their class (142).

For Lloyd, female ambition in these texts signifies a loss of an authentic identity since the women give up class loyalty for the false values of another class or "apolitical" world. Lloyd considers this class conflict in terms of masculinity and femininity: Roz's excessive ambition has "emasculated" her husband by excising him from his family and background (op.cit). I would disagree with this finding because Bart is affirmed in his masculinity through his "passionate affair" with Myee. Roz represents a woman's attempt to control her circumstances beyond the domestic sphere and this does not necessarily lead to the emasculation of the men around her. Instead, Roz's ambition might be understood as an infringement or encroachment on men's power which defines masculine strength and political, social influence.

In 1975, the International Year of Women, Cusack was elected "Woman of the Year" by the Australian Union of Women. As I have argued at the end of this chapter when I discuss Joy's political awakening and self-realisation in Heatwave in Berlin, the author seemed to issue a challenge to Australian women to strive for equal rights as their counterparts in the West and especially in the East had done throughout the Cold War. Cusack has generally been classified as a feminist writer, even though nearly all of her work relies on the conventional love story and "conservative" romantic conventions. Jungfrau, a failed romance as I have defined it in chapter four, has nonetheless been described as the "prototype of the feminist novel in the interwar years" by Drusilla Modjeska (see chapter one).

Marc the social worker in Jungfrau comments on the double standards regarding women's sexuality and ascribed gender roles in the 1930s: "Women are cursed, all right. If you wither on the virgin stem you go all pathological; if you go off the deep end you get some foul disease: and if you marry and have dozens of young you die of exhaustion" (34). The novel is nonetheless a failed romance. Clearly, then, Cusack's romantic narratives are at the same time social, if not, polemical realism. More impor-tantly, many of her romantic realistic texts have, as their central concern, women's rights in the interim between the nineteenth century suffragettes and Women's Liberation.

ii) Humanist Representations

Australianness and National Cultural Types in Picnic Races

In this section, I propose that the "romanticised" characters in Cusack's "realistic" novels are often national cultural types. These representations or stereotypes may be traced from the discourses of radical nationalism and republicanism late last century. "Authentic Australian" attitudes, appearances and speech were indubitably exotic, or at least unfamiliar, for a European readership. Yet typed characters in such novels as Picnic Races and Pioneers on Parade still managed to convey a realistic portrayal of Australian society. In the following quote, Cusack insists on the truth of her characters. They not only represent national cultural types, but also competing claims to authentic identity or earned membership for the "community".

> At home people recognised themselves as types. The couple who served as models for Greg's parents had been - and still are - our friends. The family on whom the fictional Robbs were modelled - squatters deeply rooted for over a hundred years - were enthusiastic. They recognised its truth. They also recognised the new-rich newcomers who wanted to use the country for their social prestige and income tax exemption. (qtd Freehill 102)

The fact that "real" people recognised themselves in Cusack's fiction seemingly ensures "authentic" representation. The author's polemical castigating of the "new-rich newcomers" as the permanent wrongdoers, or the "baddies" of the township, creates a class attribute from the personality traits of anti-democratic, self-serving individuals.

One of the central conflicts in Picnic Races is the issue of community as an allegory for the new Australian nation. In the local pub, the town hall meetings and the private scheming of developers, the issues of emigration, the integration of non-British migrants and the acceptance of all races being eligible for the much prized Australian citizenship are continually addressed.

This could be interpreted as Cusack's postwar intervention against the White Australia immigration policy, as depicted in The Sun in Exile (see chapter three, "Race and Racism"). In both texts, the topics of racist immigration policies and national identity centred on race are discussed at length by the protagonists.

Picnic Races was favourably reviewed in both Australia and Great Britain. It was "Book of the Week" in the Australian Sunday Telegraph which insisted on the truth claims of the national cultural types: "The Australian bush is full of grand old characters and DC finds them all in a town she calls Gubba. Immense fun" (qtd Freehill 102). The Age in Melbourne congratulated Cusack on her "literary" text, remarking that she "has a lyrical vein in her descriptive writing controlled by careful and realistic observation. The scene she sets here is bright and clear. It is a delight just to sit back and contemplate it" (qtd Freehill 101). Thus in her native country Cusack seems to have obtained the recognition she sought; she was an Australian writer who could accurately render a picture of her society that at the same time was thought provoking, if not polemical. Her characters not only represented "real people", but also drew on liberal humanism in trying to depict a cohesive community in which individuals could easily become agents of change.

The literary critic of the Birmingham Mail, which consistently gave Cusack's work favourable reviews, suggested that the Australian woman writer belonged to the interna-tional league of contemporary authors: "Dymphna Cusack is outstanding among the many novelists of the last decades" (op.cit). Interestingly, Picnic Races was Cusack's first attempt at a comic novel as a solo novelist. She had collaborated with Miles Franklin on the satire Pioneers on Parade and her other collaboration Come in Spinner was her second humorous novel until the appearance of Picnic Races. In the United Kingdom, the generic shift from critical social realism and the serious love story was noted by the Oxford Mail. The reviewer was "pleased to see a writer who usually deals with grimmer subjects, choose for a change one that gave the opportunity for a light-hearted frolic" (op.cit).

The majority of the British newspaper reviews found Picnic Races a light, romantic and well-written comedy.[69] As the Cambridge Daily News put it: "More than anything else it has a ring

[69] See reviews of Picnic Races in the London Sunday Telegraph (18 Mar. 1962); Books and Bookmen (Mar. 1962); Daily Worker (26 Apr. 1962); Nottingham Guardian-Journal (15 Feb. 1962); Surrey Comet (10 Feb.

of authenticity".[70] I would like to return to my assertion about the exotic nature of Australian characters or "romanticised" cultural types for an European/British audience. This becomes evident in a selection of the favourable reviews of Picnic Races. The novel was thought to be "a world of its own" and a "light whimsy of Australian small town life".[71] More importantly, many British reviewers placed Cusack in a new trend of contemporary literature - the growth of Australian fiction. The Aberdeen Evening Express noted positively in its review of Picnic Races: "There has been a pleasant infiltration of Australian writers to the British literary field during the past few years, opening up to readers a new experience of a wonderful country down under and its people".[72]

The British media had evidently noticed a trend concerning the growth of Australian literature. Taking a patronising view of the novels imported from the former colonial Dominion, the Express & Star in Wolverhampton commented: "Miss Cusack is one of the rising generation of Australian writers, and whoever knew an Australian to write or talk about anything other than Australia?"[73] In a similar vein, the South Wales Evening Post remarked in its review of Picnic Races: "Australia must now be one of the greatest fiction-exporting countries in the world. Here is yet another novel about Australia by an Australian".[74] Thus Cusack's prolific career of novel writing and plays were seen to represent the emergence of a national literature, a coming of age in one of the remotest parts of the Commonwealth, given the condescending tone of some British reviewers.

Another factor of her European reception, is the exclusive publication of Cusack's work in England by William Heinemann Limited. The large British publisher had rights for nearly all of her novels up until the 1970s, as I have discussed in chapter one, "Cusack's Publishing Record: Multiple Editions 1936-1994". Cusack wrote several articles on the reasons for Australian authors having to rely on the British publishing industry.[75] She claimed that this dependence on success in England resulted from a form of colonial exploitation of Australian

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1962); Glasgow Evening Times (27 Mar. 1962); Aberdeen Press and Journal (26 May 1962); Cheshire Observer (10 Mar. 1962); London Universe (6 Apr. 1962).

[70] 15 Feb. 1962.

[71] Cardiff Western Mail n.d. MS4621/15/409; Dublin Sunday Independent 22 Jul. 1962.

[72] 21 Feb. 1962.

[73] 12 Feb. 1962.

[74] 11 Aug. 1962.

[75] Dymphna Cusack, "Best-sellers Don't Pay," Meanjin 51.4 (1952): 406-10; "The Writer and the Book in Australia," The Australian Author July (1974): 5-8.

authors, given the poor copyright payments and laws gover-ning "local" publications. As late as 1974 Cusack claimed that the writer did not receive sufficient publicity in Australia because publishers and booksellers retained the attitude "Australian Novels Don't Sell" ("The Writer", 7).

In 1968, a bookshop in Sydney, Morgan's, attempted to stir interest in Australian litera-ture and scholarship by advertising "A Selection of Important Books". An advertise-ment entitled "Dymphna Cusack's Latest Books" in the Sydney Morning Herald referred to the new releases The Sun is Not Enough and Illyria Reborn. Morgan's made the following appeal: "Long appreciated abroad. Here is a chance to show an Australian author that she is appreciated here as well."[76] Thus Cusack's status as a best-selling author overseas was deployed in the bookstore's advertising in order to appeal to the public's patriotism. People were urged to support Australian literature by purchasing the novel of an author recognised abroad but not sufficiently "appreciated" in her own country.

In spite of its emphasis on the "local" or the concept of community in Australia, Picnic Races attempts to stage the impact of international, intellectual debates and historical conflicts through its characterisation. Matron Cutts, for instance, is the outspoken head of the local hospital, who survived a Japanese prisoner of war camp. Consequently, she volubly supports her immigrant colleague, the German Jew Dr Hermann, drawing on their common experiences of persecution and suffering in a public denouncement of Fascism: "when Hermann was prostrated with a neuritic complaint that had its origins in the torture chambers of Dachau, she blistered the world of fascism - whether German or Japanese - in a vocabulary second only to O'Donnell in variety, and excelling his in virulence" (85).

Despite the originality of her character, Matron Cutts is only mentioned in the narrative. She is characterised as being "in Gubba's mind a cross between Florence Nightingale and a female dictator" (84). The township considers Matron Cutts a formidable woman because of her frightening political analysis, physical strength and powerful efficiency in running the hospital. Similarly, the town librarian is depicted as a liberal humanist who stocks the classics in contemporary and early literature, including non-fiction across the political spectrum (117).

The local bus driver Archie Merritt, is an outspoken socialist and even names his service The Red Route. He is drawn into ideological arguments with Jack McGarrity, who respects the socialist for his commitment to the community and obvious, patriotic sentiment, despite his radical, Bolshevik opinions.

> Twenty years before McGarrity had stigmatized Merritt as a Bolshevik, a focus of political infection, a subverter of Gubba's youth and an agitator who went round red-anting the hundred miles of country that he traversed daily, since to each passenger and every household he gave free a running commentary on the world's events.
>
> Merritt retorted by always referring to McGarrity as a middle-of-the-roader, a reformist, a social democrat, which to Gubba's perpetual mystification, he apparently considered the lowest term of abuse. (110)

In contrast to McGarrity and his Laborite stance, Mike O'Donnell represents the tradit-ional values typical of Australian farmers and their historically conservative political platform forwarded by the Country Party of Australia cum National Party.

From a feminist perspective, the most disappointing aspect of this whimsical novel is the minor role women play. As in Pioneers on Parade, upper-class women are characterised as decadent, interested only in fashion, social status and material security (113). The romantic heroines are the intellectual and moral protégés of their heroes. The town's leaders and intellectuals are predominantly men, to whom the dialogues, monologues and "political agency" also belong. This is in keeping with Lloyd's observation in the previous section, that Cusack's positioning of women as the protégés of men renders her feminism questionable. I wish to point to the contradictions in women's subjectivity during the postwar political climate in which many left-wing women writers and liberal feminists expressed ambivalent views on the subject of women, their (human) rights and actual status in society.

In 1955, Cusack began work on Picnic Races which was first published six years later. Her notes for the manuscript were written over the preceding thirty years. The lengthy conception and the writing period were personally meaningful for Cusack: "If I wrote Picnic Races light-heartedly it was because I enjoyed re-creating the brighter side of what was basically my family background and characters that had played a part in my life. Though the book was in a sense autobiographical, the story is fictional" (qtd Freehill, 100). For instance, Mike

[76] Album. MS4621/14/1.

O'Donnell and Jack McGarrity are based on Cusack's uncles, from her mother's and father's sides respectively.

Her mother's brother supported the Conservatives and had an intense dislike for Jack Cusack, a well-known Labor Member of Parliament for Canberra. Cusack had waited till the latter's death before she published the novel because she believed the MP would have sued her. Thus Cusack's ancestry - the book is dedicated to her "Pioneer Ancestors" - is meant to lend the text an indisputable authority and claim to authenticity. As Cusack stated many times in her career, she was an Australian who deliberately chose to write about her "roots", which appear in her work as a cohesive cultural identity, lending her characters authenticity as representative Australians or "real people".[77]

Despite the unifying humanism of her narratives, I suggest that Picnic Races offers the reader an illustration of world issues and Australian concerns by depicting a community in conflict over its own definition, cohesion, and diversity. The characters who represent political and social discourses in Picnic Races are in fact longstanding cultural types who signal easily recognisable and aspired to national traits such as forthrightness, stubborn pride, a rebellious and democratic spirit. Significantly, these types were readily accepted in England as a "lively cross-section of postwar Australian society in jovial conflict" that shows the "democratic tradition winning out", yet in Australia, literary journals demanded a more complex realism in order to "allow the characters to develop beyond a stereotype".[78] As this Dissertation attempts to show, it is exactly this textual conflict between (stereo)types which constitute "mass cultural" genres such as popular romance as opposed to the "credible, authentic" characters of social realism that confounds the representation of gender in Cusack's humanist-inspired work.

No doubt her embodiment in fiction of a much discussed and described national culture was entertaining for a foreign readership for whom Australia remained a mysterious fifth continent, if not still an outreach of the British Empire in many readers' minds. For example, The Scotsman praised Picnic Races as a "pungent satire" as well as for its use of idiom: "the

[77] "Gumleaf Brought her Home!," Sydney Morning Herald 12 Feb. 1963.
[78] London Daily Worker 26 Apr. 1962; John McLaren Overland 24 (1962): 51-52.

Australian vernacular is skillful and entertaining".[79] By contrast, the Australian Book Review claimed that the Australian slang in "this essentially good, short, funny book" had been overdone, even though it sounded "dinkum" or authentic.[80] Thus in Scotland the national types were accepted by an influential newspaper as being humorous reflections of an actual society, the realism not being doubted since satire permits a larger scope for invention. The ABR also regarded the use of the Australian vernacular as a measure of its authenticity, that it was "dinkum". The national book review suggested, however, that if Cusack had moderated the idiomatic speech of her apparently realistic characters, they would have been less typified and Australian readers would have found them more credible.

Clearly then, significant differences can be shown in the European and Australian interpretation of Cusack's "essentially Australian" texts, as demonstrated by the following account of the woman writer's exotic appeal and ability to raise curiosity about her origins. Even for her literary agent Monica Stirling, Australia seemed to represent the "Other"; an unknown, Antipodean land, that was an exotic, romantic though very much real antithesis to Europe:

> When the light-hearted yet caustic Picnic Races appeared within a year it received a welcome from critics that astonished her. "It is so Australian that I expected bewilderment rather than understanding," Dymphna said to me. But its descriptions of the *dolce vita* lived by certain wool millionaires delighted European readers. For me, it recalled the time in a village near Toulon when she kept us entertained with hilarious accounts of her pioneering forbears which were to form the basis of the book. Selection of it by two Australian newspapers Book of the Week and by the Australasian Book Society seemed to please her more than all her international recognition. "Australian as a gum tree", she quoted from one review. (323)

Cusack believed in fiction's potential to be "understood" cross-culturally because of the humanist desire for self-realisation (whole men and women) which would enable them to be effective agents in the real, political world. Like other cultural nationalists of her time, she professed a belief in an authentic, Australian identity which encompassed life-style, language, landscape, in short, every aspect of a unified culture that a text might represent.

[79] 10 Feb. 1962.
[80] Bernard Hesling, "Pass the Scissors," Australian Book Review 1 (1962): 84.

I suggest that Picnic Races was for Cusack an embodiment of Australianness to the extent that would have made it difficult for a "foreign" readership to accurately interpret the cultural signifiers. For the critics, the text was synonomous with an unmistakable, "natural" signifier of Australian identity, the gum tree. With regard to her European market or readership, one might speculate whether Cusack deliberately attempted to manufacture, even exploit, the "Otherness" of Australian culture. Her gratification that an Australian audience had praised the realism or authenticity of her fiction - her taking pleasure in local rather than international recognition, as Stirling reported - seemed to reassure Cusack that as a self-acclaimed cultural patriot, she was accurately representing her country in both her travels as an "Australian writer abroad" and in her writing "at home" for a native readership.

Politics as Realism: Heatwave in Berlin and German Types

Norman Freehill claimed that Cusack's Heatwave in Berlin was "the novel that brought her widest international recognition" (131). He explained that his wife had been provoked by the early release of war criminals convicted at the Nuremburg Trials, the negative experiences of Jews who returned to West Germany, ex-Nazis being allowed to emigrate to Australia and neo-nazism globally (131-33). In a profile on Cusack's life and work, Florence James discussed the validity of fictional types, particularly in Heatwave in Berlin and their relation to politics and realism. James suggested that Cusack's political commitment validated her polemical writing style:

> While her narrative gift remains as strong as ever, my personal regret is that the trend of her writing is towards an exhaustive - although brilliant - discussion of her theme by her characters, which often leads to their being typed for the purpose of illustrating different points of view.
>
> But if the social reformer sometimes swamps the creator of character, it would be small-minded in us not to acknowledge the full measure of her courage and the humanity of her purpose. Both are characteristics which mark some of the best writing coming out of Australia today.[81]

[81] Florence James, "The Fiery Australian," Books and Bookmen Feb. 1961.

Thus James justifies Cusack's tendency to cast her characters as types because it belongs to the Australian tradition of committed, idealistic literature. Social realism required "courage" and purposeful "humanity" in order to discuss pressing social themes in a conservative period, as described in the first part of this chapter.

As discussed in chapter one, Susan McKernan has identified liberal humanism as the dominant influential discourse in the postwar era, accompanied by the global lobbies for world peace and anti-fascism. Clearly James wished to defend her friend and collaborator from accusations of "political axe-grinding", as she put it, maintaining rather naively, that Cusack had "told the truth" therefore novels such as Heatwave in Berlin should not be dismissed as propaganda or in James' words, as a "political" text (op.cit). As I will show in the following section on the reception of this bestseller, Cusack and James were not alone in arguing that the politics of the novel were taken from "real life" in postwar East and West Germany. Reviewers suggested that Heat-wave in Berlin should be accepted as a realistic work, if not a social documentary.

Cusack and Freehill observed developments in West Germany and read the materials published there in order to gather material: "We saw every old Nazi documentary film we could see, interviewed many more people" (Freehill 133). Typical of Cusack's writing method, she assiduously collated reams of documentary material with the aim of rendering her text "authentic" and assure it of its claims to truth, as James has suggested above.

> A GDR [East German] journalist came to interview us. In turn we interviewed him. He wanted to know how we managed to get access to so much secret material. We answered "In West Berlin, in the newspapers, on the streets, in the radio broadcasts, in the material sold in kiosks. It was there for everyone to see - who wanted to see". (op.cit)

In an interview with Cusack's East German translators, the novel's claim to truth was disputed by Mrs Olga Fetter. She did not think that Cusack had spent much time doing research for the 120 page novel, since it was, in her opinion, a biassed account of the failure of denazification in West Germany. Fetter maintained that the novel was propaganda written to glorify the USSR.[82]

In a telephone interview with Fetter, she indicated the subtleties of propagandistic *Kulturpolitik* in East Germany: apparently Heatwave in Berlin as well as The Sun is Not Enough were not published in the GDR because the texts were too antagonistic towards the FRG which had provided financial grants for the annexed parts of Germany.[83] Indeed Heatwave in Berlin was never translated into German, neither in the East nor the West. The novel was, however, available in the mass Russian editions and the stage adaptation was performed in Russian for German and Soviet troops in East Germany. As the theatre programme for this production indicates, the narrative was altered in a way that transformed it into pure propaganda.[84] This issue of genre and the novel's reception will be taken up in the following section "'Fact or Fiction?' Heatwave in Berlin".

Freehill, in his typically melodramatic manner, makes his involvement in the production of the text clear: "In the years from '48 to '59 it was clear to us that the policy which had begun as containment of Communism was moving on to something infinitely more dangerous" (133). Evidently Freehill wished to invert the Cold War rhetorical fear of communism and the "domino effect" into an insidious threat of spreading fascism, which matched the general stance of Soviet countries towards the West. Consequently, Norman urged Dymphna to abandon her current projects and write a topical bestseller in order to intervene in international politics and Cusack states that Freehill's encour-agement was necessary to write the novel (op.cit). Her husband offered to act as her secretary and replace the dictataphone which Cusack usually relied upon.

In the manuscript of his biography Dymphna, the journalist Freehill suggests that there is a Western conspiracy that supports resurgent Nazism: "We did think that a book should be written to tell the world the truth about what was happening... something most Western newspapers did not publish, though information about it was in the files of every press office in

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[82] Transcript. Telephone interviews, Berlin 1997-1998.

[83] The Fetters translated The Sun is Not Enough for the women's magazine Für Dich, but the editors got "cold feet" about the story which resembled the abduction of the war criminal Schleier. Mrs Fetter claimed that the magazine did not wish to antagonise West Germany by "glorifiying" the abduction. Interviews, Berlin 1997-1998.

[84] "Im Westen nichts Neues?" Schauspiel nach Motiven des Romans "Heißer Sommer in Berlin" von Dymphna Cusack. In russischer Sprache. Dramatisches Theater der zeitweilig in der DDR stationierten Streitkräfte der UdSSR. Saison 1966/67. ["Nothing New in the West?" "Hot Summer in Berlin" by Dymphna Cusack, adapted for stage. In the Russian language, a drama for the Soviet troops stationed in the GDR. Season 1966/67].

the West."[85] This claim, however, was not made in the published text. Freehill also deleted: "Dymphna had long had a deep interest in the Divided Germany."[86] To the contrary, the published (auto)biography suggests that Cusack's interest was a spontaneous reaction to the extremity of European unrest concerning West Germany's re-armament.

Thus "real" or current politics at the end of the fifties - the defusing of the Cold War on the continent - were the stimuli for the text. Moreover it was the apparent failure of political action in the public sphere that motivated Cusack to intervene in public discourses on anti-fascism, anti-communism and pacificism. Because it addressed policies and discourses in both East and West, the novel attracted the attention of both "communist and capitalist" readers. Indeed the novel seems to have a historical place in the final, tangible division of Germany: Freehill reported that "two Berlin scenes" were broadcast on East German radio on the very "night the Wall went up and divided the city" (139). It is interesting to note that the East German government justified their construction of the Berlin Wall by calling it *die antifaschistische Mauer* [the Anti-fascist Wall], the erection of which Cusack and Freehill never criticised.

Thus the broadcasting of Cusack's novel demonstrates its unquestioning adoption of communist policy on supposed Western fascist sympathies and its positioning of the GDR as morally/politically superior, in its propaganda at least. As I have discussed in the preceding sections and in the last chapter, Cusack and Freehill were not only pro-Soviet, but also constant supporters of the German Democratic Republic for which they can be rightly criticised in their tacit, possibly naive support of Stalinism and Honecker's regime. Cusack wrote part of Heatwave in Berlin at the lakeside Writers' and Composers' Retreat at Schwielowsee, near Potsdam in 1959.[87] This was one of her many visits to the GDR during which she and her husband constantly praised the material progress and "the mental and spiritual change that had been wrought by a generation of anti-nazi education" (Freehill 132).

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[85] Manuscript drafts and galley proofs of Dymphna, a "joint autobiography" written by Norman Freehill with Dymphna Cusack, MS4621, Addition 11 May 1978. Box 18, Folders 9-13.

[86] (op.cit). Freehill wrote this on page 263, then scribbled out the paragraph in the galley proofs. He was convinced of a global cover-up of Neonazism. Freehill wrote in the published version: "Events in the past decade in West Germany, with the neo-Nazis coming into prominence effectively silenced those critics in her own country who refused to believe the truth. They produced items in the daily papers, questions in Parliament, and ABC Television features, in which the Australian inheritors of Hitler's ideology wore the Nazi uniform, swastika and all" (140). Freehill, Dymphna (Sydney: Thomas Nelson, 1975).

[87] This date is from the Freehill biography. An East German article records that the couple stayed at the Hanns-Eisler-Heim six years later. The report states that Cusack had "set up house" in Geltow in order to

Heatwave in Berlin was completed in the Czech Republic in a castle at Roztez that had been converted by the Soviets into a Journalists' Holiday and Rest Home. Cusack states that she used the setting to refine the German types in fiction: the castle had been home to a German Baroness and family of the lesser nobility in the seventeenth century. Freehill and Cusack describe how the fictional von Muhler family was created in the atmosphere of portraits, antiques and paraphenalia which they discovered in the castle.

> It was the only time Dymphna tackled a novel in the perfect setting. This family home of minor aristocrats might have been the East Prussian home from which the fictional von Muhlers had come. Its obsessions would have been the same, only theirs would have been focused on the German court, while the focus here was Vienna. They would have been Lutheran while here the chapel showed that they had been Catholic. Both would have clearly regarded God as the superior officer of their Ruler, German or Austro-Hungarian. (Freehill 135)

The novel depicts the father as patriarch of the family in Berlin, his son Horst, as a suc-cessful army officer and politician, and the merciless daughter-in-law Bertha, wife of the Nazi family's heroic son Adolf, whose memory they secretly worship inside a concealed shrine.

These family members are active in "rescuing" Nazi war criminals and persecuting former victims of the Third Reich. The mother and younger son represent resistance to this regime. Bertha sums up the doctrine of German Nazi masculinity: "We do not want our men to be nice" (37). German men should be warriors, stern and adored by their women. Like many postwar intellectuals who popularised an anti-fascist stance, Cusack repeatedly commented on Hitler's view of women as "recreation for the soldier", the foreboding German industrial expansionism, the threat of re-armament and the unresolved issue of guilt for war crimes. Like the nationalistic characters with class attributes in Picnic Races, the aristocratic von Muhler family is meant to symbolise German national cultural types.

In her analysis of Heatwave in Berlin, Irmgard Peterssen has comprehensively listed the "clichés of Germanness" represented by the von Muhler's individual characteristics: ceremonial stiffness and formality; the stifling and ghostly atmospheres; the patriarchal male

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work on an interesting novel. "Manche Komposition enstand hier," [Several Compositions were Created Here] Potsdam BNN Feb 8, 1965.

dominance and feminine submissiveness; the servility and the demand of filial obedience; the arrogance and brutality; the hero worship; the emphasis on sacrifice and blood; the political and military megalomania; the fierce anti-Semitism and anti-British feelings; the cold perfectionism and efficiency (124). Incorporating all these characteristics, the von Muhler men were, unsurprisingly, "Hitler's chief backers" who are now "respected and powerful in postwar West Germany" (op.cit).

Heatwave in Berlin was justifiably interpreted as a "social document" as the Jewish characters in the novel were based on "real people" whom Cusack knew personally. They acted as the models and impetus for the exposé of Neo-nazism in West Germany. Her acquaintances included a Bulgarian woman survivor of Ravensbruck, who had been incarcerated when she was sixteen. Her horrific experiences in the women's concen-tration camp near Berlin formed the protagonist Brunhilde (Freehill 134). Cusack wrote that the "spark" that had fused her experiences in West Germany together in narrative form, came when she met an elderly Jewish friend in a West Berlin café. She based Professor Schonhauser on him, his lamentable treatment in postwar Munich and his claim that old Nazis had been returned to high places so that anti-semitism continued, "I came back expecting to find the swastika the broad arrow of shame. Instead I found it a magic charm which today brings good fortune to all who wear it" (125).

Cusack describes in terrifying detail the German Professor's persecution in the concentration camp at Dachau while his Jewish wife was killed in Auschwitz. Drawing from her eyewitness accounts and reports from the Nuremburg Trials, Cusack depicts the appalling conditions and suffering at Dachau, Ravensbruck and Buchenwald.[88] The "realistic" reporting ventures into graphic sensationalism when Brunhilde tells her horrific story of cruelty and macabre operations by female doctors who used the women and children as "guinea pigs" in the most sadistic fashion. The narrative's melodrama peaks when the former Ravensbruck paediatrician, coincidentally a friend of the von Muhler family, attempts to operate on Joy's child during her absence from home. Her sister-in-law's unrelinquished Nazi beliefs are finally rendered transparent and provide the catalyst for Joy's political awakening and moral self-realisation.

The melodrama of Heatwave in Berlin was immediately recognised as being suitable material for a major, international film adaption. In 1962, an English film company attempted to finance the production of the novel; a second attempt involved an East German film company in co-production with partners in Great Britain and France. Freehill claims the interest of film companies "came to nothing" because distributing companies in Western Europe would not co-operate (op.cit). Thus the controversial politics of the novel succeeded in overriding its melodramatic potential as a filmscript, even though the project was ultimately abandoned due to the propaganda disguised as a romantic realistic novel.[89]

Two of the women in Heatwave in Berlin represent the East and West in a propagan-distic fashion: Karen, the East German spy is meant to represent the high living stan-dards of the German Democratic Republic since her appearance is glamorously feminine. In fact, her fashionable accessories and cosmetics aid her secret mission in the neo-Nazi bar in West Berlin when she uses her powder compact to take photos of the fascist gathering. The American Senator's daughter, Luella Dayborn, acts as a catalyst and fearless challenge to the Western Allies powerbreakers such as generals, ambassadors and politicians who, it is suggested, are corruptly promoting former Nazis for personal gain (14). These popular notions of Cold War spies and untrustworthy peacebrokers also relied on national cultural types.

Like the protagonists discussed in Picnic Races, the characters in Heatwave in Berlin incorporated many media clichés, popular opinions and racial stereotypes. Ironically, this runs contrary to the stated platform of liberal humanism in Australia whose intellectuals aimed to find commonality and establish tolerance, despite Cold War tensions and apprehension concerning former "enemies". This was symbolised by such organisations as the Author's World Peace Appeal for peace and other global associations that were based on pacificism, disarmament and anti-atomic testing.[90]

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[88] For an example of her graphic description of the concentration camps, see pages 128-29 in the novel.

[89] Regarding the failure to adapt Heatwave for film: "But it was 1961 and the distributors feared problems because friendly relations had been well established between the countries formerly at war." Cusack quoted in Olga Master's report on the filming of Caddie, an Autobiography of a Barmaid, "Charlady's Life Story: Bestseller will Become Movie," Manly Daily 13 Nov. 1974.

[90] Cusack's involvement with the Author's World Peace Appeal has already been discussed on page 18 in chapter one of this Dissertation.

Cusack insisted on the documentary truth or "facts" which she had personally witnessed: "We saw the play Ann (sic) Frank in East and West. In the latter the posters were smeared with swastikas. Wherever we could, we got first-hand stories from victims of Nazism" (Freehill 132). She referred to a West German film called the *Nürnberger Prozess* [Nuremberg Trials] which showed a well-known doctor of concentration camps now running a practice again as well as Oberlander, now a "Minister of the Bonn Parliament, who had during the war been in charge of the notorious German battalion *Nachtigall* which had to its account some of the worst atrocities in the Soviet Union" (Cusack qtd Freehill, 133). Cusack's and Freehill's personal experiences in East and West Germany are incorporated into the narrative. For instance, the young German liberal Hans refers to the Western production of Anne Frank in Wuppertal where "not enough Jews were gassed" has been painted on the posters (60-61); he also discusses the "State Secretary in Bonn" who was responsible for "Jewish Affairs" under Hitler (op.cit).

Not yet politically awakened, Joy insists that Oberlander must have been denazified or that such propaganda is from the "lunatic fringe", and points to the reparations and compensation offered by West Germany, for example, the money being given to camp survivors. She asks Hans which German would not be moved by the play and he asserts that many Germans do not feel guilty, "they feel fine" (59-60). Hans refutes Joy's "defence" of the FRG by stating that German youth are confused by the story of Anne Frank because "for most of them it's their first glimpse of this particular aspect of our history" (59). He then urges Joy to visit the *Kammerspiel* in East Berlin to compare the
East and West performances of Anne Frank; he also advises her to see the Berliner Ensemble's productions of Bertold Brecht's plays, especially the Rise and Fall of Arturo Ui.

Influenced by media reports about the GDR, Joy is at first reluctant to go to "the Zone" (op.cit). Although many aspects of Cusack's narrative ring true, such as confusion and shame about the immediate past as well as neo-nazi graffiti not being eradicated, there is very little acknowledgement of advances made by denazification in West Germany. Heatwave in Berlin's controversial claims to truth lead to the following generic questions: Was the narrative content "realistic" because it was political? Were the protagonists realistic or are they romanticised as national types in order to embody Cold War discourses in Europe and the antipodes? Instead of resolving these questions at this point, I wish to postpone a discussion

of genre and the subjects' constitution until chapters four and five, when I consider possible answers in terms of gender, sexuality and race.

CHAPTER THREE

i) Genre Defined by Her Reception

"Fact or Fiction?": Heatwave in Berlin

Significantly, most British newspapers were credulous of the insidious danger of Neo-nazism in West Germany and were willing to believe the dramatised conflict of Heatwave in Berlin.[91] The London Tribune stated unequivocally: "There are far too many indications from Germany today about the way the wind is blowing to show that this piece of fiction is all too clearly mirrored in fact. One can only hope despairingly that it is not already too late to reverse this appalling trend."[92] Furthermore, the Press and Journal treated the novel's descriptive embellishments as sinister, indisputable reality:

> The reader is left in no doubt that the author Dymphna Cusack has included much that is fact rather than fiction. The crowd in the smoky wine-cellar singing the Horst Wessel song, the locked room with its Nazi flag, life-size portrait of Hitler and tape-recordings of the *Fuhrer's* messages to his followers and the beating-up by young thugs of an elderly Professor of Music - all these, when set beside Press reports from Germany have the ominous ring of truth.[93]

The bestseller was largely received, then, as a warning against an immanent danger, not so much fascism internationally as the return of the last common enemy, the vengeful Germans. In Great Britain, the novel tapped into popular scepticism, mistrust and prej-udices that had not dissipated in the fifteen years since World War II. Many reviewers argued that the fictional representations of the novel matched the "actual" or "real" reports of events in West Germany.[94] Thus a distinction is maintained between "fiction and fact", the latter lending the former credibility and serving to convince the reader of the novel's claims to truth.

The Australian socialist journal Overland as well as non-socialist periodicals were also convinced of Heatwave in Berlin's truth and the novel's graphic factuality.[95] The Newcastle Herald, a regional newspaper in Australia, related its importance to global safety from fascism:

> Miss Cusack tells an exciting tale well, and at the same time sends out a warning to the Western World. No one doubts the reality of neo-Nazism, but it is up to the Free

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[91] Heatwave received unequivocal praise from the Cambridge Daily News (24 Feb. 1961), the Evening News (23 Feb. 1961) and the Daily Worker (23 Feb. 1961). The Northern Echo maintained Heatwave was "entirely credible" (3 Mar. 1961). The Scotsman (25 Feb. 1961), the Liverpool Echo (10 Mar. 1961) and the Daily Telegraph (10 Mar. 1961) praised the novel as an impressive bestseller, while the London Evening Standard stated it was as much a warning as a novel that "will give a disturbing feeling under English collars" (21 Mar. 1961).

[92] 3 Mar. 1961.

[93] 25 Mar. 1961.

[94] Oxford Times 24 Feb. 1961; Books and Bookmen Feb. 1961; Birmingham Mail 22 Feb. 1961; New Statesman 24 Feb. 1961.

[95] Joan Anderson, Overland 22 (1961): 54.

> World to see that it is kept down to a harmless minimum. Another Hitler would be too horrible to contemplate.[96]

Cusack's bestseller received enormous publicity in France. As in Russia, the novel was serialised in Parisian and provincial newspapers. It seems France and Russia shared a populist alarm and cynicism about the New Germany. As already discussed in chapter one, Heatwave in Berlin was broadcast and produced as a stage play throughout Russia and the Soviet countries. The BBC in England broadcast Heatwave in Berlin as a serialised radio drama while The Netherlands, Denmark and Norway translated it immediately.

The novel does not seem to have been reviewed in West Germany and as I have men-tioned in the last section, it was not translated into German in the East nor in the West. Freehill commented briefly on a West German readership which indicates that either English or Russian copies were available in the FRG: "Perhaps most important, even at this late date [1974/5], young West German students have written to Dymphna (via her publishers) asking her to write and tell them if the origins of the novel are true (Johann, in The Sun Is Not Enough, is based on them) for, as one of them added: 'It must not happen again'" (140). Freehill also claimed that Cusack had received a death threat from a British Nazi who was later imprisoned for an attack on Jomo Kenyatta in London (139-140). As a bestseller, Heatwave in Berlin clearly had a wide, controversial influence. Apparently Jacqueline Kennedy wrote to Cusack after having read the Canadian edition of the novel (op.cit). Heatwave in Berlin was never to be published in the United States of America, no doubt because of its assertion that American military leaders were colluding with former Nazis in order to maintain stability in Europe. Freehill believed that the novel's suppression was "a result of the Cold War" (op.cit).

Given the unwavering praise of Cusack's work in his biography, Freehill could be con-sidered her most dedicated publicist. Dymphna does not refer to any adverse literary criticism. Instead, Freehill takes the opportunity to tack as many favourable reviews together as possible. In his chapter on Heatwave in Berlin, entitled "Germany and Czechoslovakia", he quotes the British press:

> New Statesman, London: "It carries an impact of such violence that one closes the book trembling." Daily Telegraph, London: "Terrifying." Birmingham Mail:

[96] 19 Apr. 1961.

> "Immensely powerful book." Evening News, London: "Exciting, disturbing, unforgettable." Daily News, Cambridge: "It is superbly done." (139)

In contrast to the West, he summarised the success of Heatwave in Berlin in the East:

> In 1962 it was published in Moscow, in 1963 it went into a popular edition. This was in addition to its being broadcast, televised and dramatised for the theatre. For years the play has been running in the major cities of the Soviet Union and was played by Soviet troops in East Germany (140).

Thus Heatwave in Berlin seemed to have inundated the press and various media in the Soviet Union - from theatre to radio, mass editions and television. Noticeably Freehill consistently avoids an analysis of Cusack's reception in the East and West. He concen-trates on exceptionally good reviews which all point to her novels' strengths rather than their weaknesses. Such unwavering praise also reflects Cusack's own attitude to her work which rarely admitted the influence of political discourses or her possibly con-scious decision to cater for a "foreign", even a "communist" market and readership.

As I have commented elsewhere, the German adaptation for the Russian troops in the GDR inserted blatant propaganda to promote a pro-Soviet position. The critique of West Germany was much harsher while the praise of the Soviet's ongoing battle with fascism was in the foreground. Heatwave in Berlin is nonetheless remarkable for its uniquely variable form which seemed to have changed according to the kind of media from radio serial to a dramatic production for the military. As mentioned above, it was very nearly turned into a Hollywood-style film. Most importantly, Heatwave in Berlin functioned as an international, multicultural text that alternated between Soviet propa-ganda and a populist symbol of the British press. This text seemed to effectively mediate Cold War discourses still existing in both East and West.

The German-Australian literary critic Irmgard Peterssen and Cusack's translator herself, Olga Fetter, have speculated that the novel became popular because of its obvious distortion of the facts. For them, the novel is an almost insulting depiction of West Germans. Peterssen contradicts Cusack's accusations by recalling her own experiences of West Germany's attempts to denazify the military, education and government insti-tutions. Fetter made her comments to me as an East German, pointing out that Cusack's novel was released before the Wall was built. She supposes that many readers of this Soviet-approved novel (available in

English or Russian) could have traveled freely and see for themselves the conscientious reforms and critical awareness cultivated in post-war West Germany. Thus both Peterssen and Fetter not only dispute the novel's claims to truth, they undermine its apparently successful reception by calling on their own experience and actual reforms in West Germany.

In her Dissertation, Irmgard Peterssen considered Heatwave in Berlin to be a "gruesome image of West German society" and related the views of the novel to Cusack's and Freehill's political preference for the GDR as demonstrated in the (auto)biography Dymphna (125). Peterssen argues that those Germans who have a humane conscience (and among them are Stephen's grandmother, who suicides in the end, and the grand-son, who emigrates to Australia), are intimidated and threatened unless they live in East Germany, which is represented as being economically prosperous and morally superior (125). In the GDR, Peterssen maintains, debate about anti-semitism and Neonazism is suppressed, while it is the FRG that has promoted freedom of speech in order to develop an awareness of existing prejudices (126). As I have already discussed in chapter two, Peterssen insists on the anachronism of Cusack's images of West Germany and the clichés of the German types.

Peterssen criticises Cusack for her failure to show the FRG's commitment to denazi-fication, even though Cusack may have incorporated documentary and archival material into the narrative: "It is not only Stephen's family who are presented as a living pageant of Nazi monsters. West German society by and large is shown as an agglomeration of inhumanity, injustice and suppression of freedom" (124). Although Peterssen refers to the trials of war criminals in Germany and Australia, admitting the fact that some ex-Nazis had become scandalously successful, she considers it a political cliché that the von Muhlers are devoted to "helping war criminals to escape", much like the "distorted" depiction of the family's secret shrine to Hitler and their war heroes while their blatant promotion of neo-nazism remains unchecked by West German democracy.

Cusack draws a hopeless, "gruesome" picture of West German society. In its review of Heatwave in Berlin, the London Punch asked facetiously: "Can we and the Americans really have bungled things quite so badly a second time?"[97] Cusack must have been aware of the refutations of this image. In her archive there is a letter from a young German girl who

methodically contradicts Cusack; she informs the author that the history books in her German school do discuss the holocaust, and even though the existence of neo-Nazi organisations cannot be denied, the menace is not as widespread or immanent as Cusack would have it.[98] The schoolgirl asked Cusack if she had written such a novel "because she was anti-German?" I would suggest that Cusack retained a prejudice towards West German society long after the Cold War; she continually inferred that the East Germans were "better people", morally, culturally and politically.

On her eighth visit to the GDR in December 1971, Cusack unequivocally praised the reformed East Germany: "Sie haben nicht nur eine neues Land aufgebaut, sondern auch neue Menschen entwickelt."[99] [They have not only built up a new country, they have also developed new humans.] Again the liberal humanism of state socialism and its corollary in Cusack's romantic realism becomes clear. Cusack admired the "new socialist personality" who was "open", had "many interests" and valued culture highly. Ironically, culture meant "high culture" for Cusack, the popular writer, and for the *Kulturpolitik* of the East German officials: literature, art and music. There was little discussion of popular or mass cultural forms such as *Unterhaltungsliteratur* (bestsellers and light reading). The aim of the East German cultural policy was to distribute once bourgeois-owned and generated culture to "ordinary people", the workers and the formerly unprivileged sections of society.

In a lengthy travel article published in the national newspaper The Australian in 1971, Cusack depicts the GDR as a modern democratic paradise through a detailed descrip-tion of the sights near Unter den Linden, Alexander Platz and the notorious Berlin Wall.[100] Referring to the Potsdam Agreement whose aim was the growth of democracy, she compares "the two Germanies":

> And it is happening. We have seen it grow since 1959. Then the set faces and stiff manners, the regret of the "old wonderful Kaiser past" (never Hitler's), the whingeing over what they had suffered during the war (with never a word for the suffering Germany had caused) infuriated us.

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[97] 8 Mar. 1961.
[98] Letter from Dagmar Janczyk, Sep. 6, 1966. MS4621 1/195-197.
[99] Charlotte Heitzenröther, "Beindruckt vom Land und seinen Menschen: Die australische Schrifstellerin Dymphna Cusack besucht unsere Republik," [Impressed by the Nation and its People: the Australian Writers Dymphna Cusack Visits our Republic] Neues Deutschland [New Germany] 5 Jan 1971/72?.
[100] Dymphna Cusack, "A View from the East of the Wall," The Australian 5 June, 1971.

> Today, here in East Berlin, we have met the most smilingly helpful people we know anywhere. Apparently 25 years of democratic education has had its effect (op.cit).

Cusack concedes that there has been some progress made in West Germany but eulo-gises the East for successfully eliminating nazi and militarist doctrines. I have discussed Cusack's political stance in greater detail in chapter two. For the reception of Heatwave it is relevant to note that her criticism of West Germany was in accordance with British and French sentiments, even though her socialist sympathies were in conflict with Cold War discourses in Western popular culture.

In Great Britain, several newspaper reviews were sceptical of its bias and considered it to be a propaganda novel.[101] For example, one British reviewer called Heatwave in Berlin an "unobjective study of German social problems rather than a novel, but this ambiguity makes it difficult to assess".[102] The reviewer Leicester Cotton claimed "Miss Cusack's theme has run away with her at the expense of her characters, who have become not protagonists but puppets".[103] More importantly, Cotton identified the interplay of Communist propaganda and its anti-fascist stance which it used against the West.

> Without any personal or intimate knowledge of Germany today, the average reader will almost certainly be convinced - however mistakenly - that if the present tension over Berlin should flare into something worse, then the basic reason will be the re-surgence of Nazism. This has been one of the main themes of Communist propaganda for years (op.cit).

Similarly, another British reviewer Paul Pross thought "careless mistakes" marred the accuracy of the novel, while her "colors are too lurid. Even her translation of the Horst Wessell song is more gory than standard translations…though her description of German family life is accurate and penetrating, and her characters are convincing".[104] Thus Pross contradicts Peterssen, believing the German cultural types to be accurate, though he is careful to point to the prejudiced embellishments of the narrative.

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[101] Several ambivalent reviews were unable to decide whether it was "far-fetched and ultra-sensational" (Fleetwood Chronicle 13 Apr. 1961). Others hoped that it contained "more literary licence than of actual truth" (Birmingham Mail 22 Feb. 1961). The Oxford Times admitted there were "occassional hints of over-writing and too-easily accepted views" but was convinced by the text's "vivid, dramatic and disturbing" qualities (24 Feb. 1961).

[102] Durrant's Press Cuttings, MS4621/15/334.

[103] Leicester Cotton, "A Runaway Theme," MS4621/15/334.

[104] Paul Pross, "Neo-Nazi Movement in Berlin," Rev. of Heatwave in Berlin, MS4621/14/383.

Pross also identifies Cold War discourses which took the form of propaganda:

> Were she more restrained in her treatment of the Nazis, less ready to credit East Germany with eliminating the Nazi problem, the novel would be entirely believ-able. As it is, Miss Cusack poses an arresting question but fails to persuade the reader that she is not stirring up smouldering ashes to watch the flames anew (op.cit).

In Australia, the truth and factuality of the novel were generally granted credibility, although some reviewers were aware of the political nature of Cusack's exaggerated descriptions and use of national cultural types. For example, the Sydney Telegraph was convinced by the descriptions of Nazi atrocities but thought Cusack was "heavy-handed with the Leftist propaganda".[105]

Cusack certainly seems to have been in favour of communist cultural policies as she did not once discuss the issue of propaganda, nor did she criticise the Soviet Union at any point. This becomes evident in the interviews in the GDR in which she apparently praised the progress and success of industry and the creation of the "new human", who was the planned product of socialism (see Appendix C).[106] Except for her criticism of Poland where the people, like Italians, "swallow the dogmas of Catholicism and Communism without apparent indigestion", Cusack rarely commented on the propaganda of state socialism and its numerous failings as an enforced regime (Freehill 144-145). Unable to ascertain the accuracy of statements attributed to Cusack in interviews with her in East Germany, I have corroborated her absolute belief in the GDR's denazification cultural programmes in the Freehill biography. On a visit to East Berlin, Freehill quotes Dymphna: "It was not only the outstanding material progress that had been made that impressed us but the mental and spiritual change that had been wrought by a generation of anti-Nazi education" (132). She and especially Freehill who remained, after all, a lifelong member of the Communist Party, repeatedly praised the Soviet Union and the achievements of its satellites, as already discussed in the previous chapter.

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[105] Similarly, David Rowbotham Courier Mail discusses her "leftish" tendencies (13 May 1961) while Gavin Casey of the Perth Weekend News believed the text's content, even though he doubted there was "much hope for the future" in East Germany and the Soviet Union (3 Jun. 1961). The Brisbane Telegraph reviewer claimed Heatwave could have been a "winner" if the characters had not been so "tediously portrayed" whilst the "message about Neonazism is unrelievedly pounded home" (19 May 1961). The Hobart Mercury decided "more restraint and subtlety would have made this a much better and more telling novel" (27 Apr 1961).

[106] See also Dymphna Cusack, "A View from East of the Wall," The Australian 5 June 1971.

Heatwave in Berlin combined elements of filmic melodrama, the shocking archival material of the *Nuernberger Prozess* (Nuremburg Trials) and "factual evidence" of the failure of denazification in West Germany. The sales for Heatwave in Berlin reached two million in the Soviet Union and it became a bestseller in Great Britain and France. In Eastern Europe, after the considerable success of Cusack's Say No to Death, the sen-sational Heatwave in Berlin made Cusack a household name in Russia, Hungary, Romania and Poland. Like Prichard, Palmer and Judah Waten, several of Cusack's romantic realistic novels had already been translated in the USSR in the fifties. It is largely a social realistic text whose romance is to be found in the restoration of harmony to a complicated marriage. Perhaps Heatwave is best characterised as a political "detective novel" that was marketed and read as being a documentary or "irrefutable truth", that is, fact rather than fiction.

Despite its stereotypes, clichés and the contrived plot of a novel of suspense, Heatwave in Berlin contributes to an important aspect of Australian literature in its insistence on an Australian cultural identity whose original democratic values could be the solution to the supposed postwar European moral decline and political malaise. Cusack's narrative is clearly aligned with the Soviet Union's propaganda about resurgent Nazism in West Germany which detracts from its credibility as a humanist intervention in realistic, polemical fiction. The undiluted message of the text is too one-sided to adequately address the universal concerns of liberal humanism. Ultimately the novel's attempted verisimilitude fails and it is easy for the literary critic to dismiss this text as stereotyped and distorted fiction because of its obvious political stance. Yet as my discussion of the novel's reception in this section shows, the novel was taken seriously as a "warning" in Europe, North America and Australia. Indeed Heatwave in Berlin was interpreted and endorsed as an accurate, though frightening, depiction of contemporary German society.

"A Great Love Story" and Political Intervention: Say No to Death

"I want to communicate with people, so I write," Cusack explained in an interview in 1964 ("Writing"). The statement indicates the apparently simple motivation of the author to

establish a dialogue with the reader, an exchange of information. For Cusack, the novel or play was an opportunity to relate the individual to society, to offer her readers and audience a chance to place themselves in a social context. In the same article, she described Say No to Death as being the most popular of her books in Russia and the socialist countries. She plainly defined the genre of the novel as I have attempted to define it above: "a *combined love story and an indictment* of the treatment of tuberculosis patients in New South Wales sanitoriums" (op.cit, my italics). Interestingly, the novel had a great impact on the Russian reading public which seems to have appreciated it for its combined elements of the love story and a social indictment. This is evident in Cusack's transcription of the heated discussion amongst Russian workers following a reading of Say No to Death in a factory in Moscow where the genre and political aims of the text were apparently debated (Holidays Among the Russians 240-45).

Like Come in Spinner's polemic on abortion laws and prostitution as well as Morning Sacrifice's on equal opportunity, Say No to Death was another deliberate intervention into Australian cultural policy. It is a moving account of the tuberculosis epidemic in wartime Australia and the inadequate state of the New South Wales' public health system. The romantic realistic novel was a direct critique of the State and Federal governments, as the feminist utterances in the morally censored Jungfrau and the abridged editions of Come in Spinner had been. Apparently doctors at the tuberculosis clinics had urged Cusack to write the novel to serve as a catalyst to change government policy. In 1952, Dr John Hughes wrote to Cusack to assure her that the text had indeed become a crucial agent in state politics:

> Say No to Death has caused the biggest scandal of anything that has been pub-lished here for a long time. There were rows in Parliament about it, objections that it is the kind of book that will damage tourism. No one is exactly clear how or why. But it's doing the work for which it was written: it will revolutionize the treatment of TB in Australia. It looks as though something is actually going to be done about our criminally careless and casual habits by the application of new methods of treatment, the improvement of conditions in our sanatoria, and establishing free mobile clinics. (qtd Freehill 69)

Hughes, who was Head of the TB Section of the Department of Public Health, claimed that the staff running the mobile tuberculosis clinics in New South Wales were so appreciative of her intervention that they had christened the vehicles "Little Cusacks" (op.cit.).

The sales figures for Say No to Death were sizeable for the fifties and sixties: 750 000 was the reported total of sales by 1975 (Freehill 70). Say No to Death was originally published in London in 1951 with a first edition of 25 000, while in the Soviet Union, it was released in an initial "small" edition of 115 000 which quickly "sold out". A second edition of the same size went to print in 1964, and a third impression of 23 000 followed.[107] Like Heatwave in Berlin, Say No to Death was in print for a remarkably long period in Europe.[108] In 1952, Heinemann printed a second edition with a new cover quoting the initial eulogic reviews of Say No to Death by "well-known English critics".[109] Freehill noted ironically, the Australian critics and media then began to notice Cusack's polemical love story.[110]

The News in Adelaide publicised Dymphna Cusack's "story of success":

> … the prizewinning novel, Come In Spinner (written with Florence James) is now in its forty-sixth thousand, and is being translated into Dutch, Spanish and French… Say No to Death (under the title of The Sun in My Hands) is in its second impression in New York.[111]

It was with a degree of modest, patriotic pride that the South Australian newspaper stated: "but all this excitement hasn't prevented her from developing homesickness" (op.cit). It is interesting to note that Cusack continually underscored her Australianness by insisting on her homesickness despite the enviable glamour of her travels through more than thirty countries in the East and West. In the postwar period, there was certainly an exotic aspect to being an Australian in Europe. Cusack's representation of national cultural types, as I have discussed in the section on Picnic Races, enhanced the novelty of the author's origins. Paradoxically, Cusack became exotic in her own country as an Australian who was successful overseas. Thus her travels abroad were continually in the public eye since the "homecomings" and departures of "notable people" in the community were reported as news events in the local papers.[112]

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[107] "Black and White," The Herald 30 Mar. 1964: 3.

[108] In the next twenty-three years, Say No to Death appeared in seven different English language editions, from Australia and England to East Germany and the Soviet Union. Say No to Death was translated in Scandinavia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia (two languages), Hungary, Yugoslavia (two languages), Romania (two languages), Russia, Lithuania and Albania (Freehill 70). Note that the print run's breadth and diversity was a typical publishing practice in the Soviet Union.

[109] In 1973, Say No to Death was re-published by the British press Cedric Chivers for the London County Council Libraries.

[110] In 1967, Angus & Robertson reprinted Say No to Death under their Pacific Books label and in 1974, as part of their Australian "Classics" list.

[111] Yvonne Young, Adelaide News 25 Apr. 1952.

[112] See the interview in the The West Australian, "Page for Women". "Writers Return After 13 Years Overseas," (7 Nov. 1962). Staying with KS Prichard/Mrs Hugo Throssell in Perth, Cusack said "the people

The contradictory elements of social realism and the love story become evident in Cusack's account of how she came to write the novel. Cusack had at first refused Dr Hugh's request and the story of her passionate decision to write the novel upon the death of her close friend, whom she had nursed with her husband through TB, is moving rather than sentimental. It is a two page memoir taken from her biography that illustrates Cusack's research and writing methods, and more importantly, her utter commitment to record a story of "true life", her recurring theme of injustice done to "ordinary people" (Freehill, 66-68). Her personal experience of the couple's strengthened love, the husband's transformation into a devoted nurse and the ultimate poignancy of loss through illness and death is taken from this autobiographical experience (see Appendix A, "Extract on the Writing of Say No to Death from Norman Freehill's Biography").

Say No to Death was compared critically with HG Wells' Meanwhile and Smollett's Peregrine Pickle: "What Wells got away with Cusack cannot, because the internal quality of her writing and the sensitivity of her observation are quite inferior to those qualities in Wells".[113] Cusack was then compared with the German canonical author Thomas Mann since his Magic Mountain has similar content to SNTD. The reviewer maintains, however, that Mann's "finely wrought prose and impressive thought" cannot be compared with Cusack whose prose "is at home in the weekly magazines - of the better quality perhaps, but magazine fiction nonetheless" (op.cit). I suggest the critical opinion that SNTD is "magazine fiction" as opposed to literary prose, is superfluous when considering the text's projected audience. Arguably, Cusack was able to more effectively discuss the themes which Wells, Smollett and Mann attempted because of the simplicity of her prose. The aim of the author was to "communicate with people" and to deliver a specific, provocative message that clearly had a broad, resounding impact on the reading public. Thus her work was a hybrid of popular generic features and the more serious genre of social realism.

The Australian periodical the Bulletin was noted for its literary reviews on 'The Red Page'. According to the Bulletin reviewer, although SNTD was "extremely well told" and "humane",

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here seem to be a species apart" and that "Australia was the best place in the world". See also the article in the Sydney Morning Herald in February 1967 "And she really didn't have a thing to wear! Author is home again," (MS4621/14/1 Album).

[113] Austrovert 6 (1952): 6.

the novel "lacks broader and more penetrating sensitivity to be tragic enough for its theme of tuberculosis" (op.cit). The journal draws a distinction between high and popular literature, suggesting that a different standard should be adopted in order to assess this type of novel.

> But if you look at SNTD with the more generous eye of the reviewer of popular novels, asking for polished craftmanship rather than final excellence, there is no reason why you should not apply to it every word of praise which the English reviewers have given to Come in Spinner. (op.cit)

As I have been arguing, this might be the solution to assessing Cusack's work and placing it in the context of Australian literature. When her writing is considered well-written "light reading", then there is no need to defend its worth because it does not match the high cultural sources of Wells or Mann. This is an example of the limitations of traditional literary criticism and illustrates the benefit of a broader cultural analysis of popular women authors. I would dispute that a bestseller lacks "final excellence", given that the text should be assessed in terms of its cultural production, not the canon.

Cusack's foreign reviews frequently labelled her work as realistic and/or romantic - romantic in the sense of the convential love story rather than Romanticism. Say No to Death was described by an Austrian literary scholar Joachim Schulz as being "the most tender love story in Australian literature" (68). In fact, the East German press which specialised in publications in English, chose Say No to Death as "the first modern novel on our Seven Seas list to be written by a woman."[114] After having been granted this exceptional status, Cusack was thus introduced to the GDR by Seven Seas Publishers:

> Novels which have been acclaimed by book critics of three continents; theatre and radio plays which have been broadcast on world networks; a talent likened by some reviewers to Dickens, by others to Hemingway; hailed as "our best-known writer" by the Australian press… Dymphna Cusack is one of the most popular authors in her native Australia. (fly jacket)

Cusack's literary reputation and popularity seem to have been unquestioned in the Soviet Union. No doubt publicity surrounding her novels would have been carefully vetted and screened.[115] There was an obvious link between the East German reception and that in the

[114] The English language edition followed the German translation - Und Jeden Morgen Neue Hoffnung, trans. Fetters, (1961; Berlin: Verlag der Nation, 1970). Cusack and Freehill's visit to the GDR in 1959 was funded by the royalties from the English edition of Say No to Death and advances on Cusack's travel book Chinese Women Speak (Freehill 132). (Auf eigenen Füßen: Frauenschicksale aus China, trans. Dronke, (Berlin: Verlag Volk und Welt, 1961).

[115] Discussion with former editor of Verlag der Nation, Mr Klook. Telephone interview, Berlin, 1998.

West as the Seven Seas Press, by comparing Cusack with Dickens and Hemingway, was simply repeating the praise of certain British reviewers.

John Connell had written in the London Evening News that Say No to Death was "triumphant and Bunyanesque" and it reminded him repeatedly of another novel "about young love and sorrow in the aftermath of a great war, Ernest Hemingway's Farewell to Arms" (qtd Freehill 68-69). According to Connell, "it has the same simple, lyrical ele-mental strength and compassion, and, like Farewell to Arms, it is unforgettable" (69). The Birmingham Mail provided another eulogy of SNTD: "It ought to be viewed in the same light a century hence as we still regard the works of Dickens" since her ability to depict human emotions with great power and conviction has never been so brilliantly displayed" (qtd Freehill 69). Newspaper reviews in the UK did not think lightly of Cusack as a writer, unlike the Australian Bulletin's with its distinction between canonical literature and popular novels and Austrovert's negative comparison with Wells and Mann. To the contrary, many British reviewers compared Cusack favourably with canonical writers in the English-speaking world.

Of particular interest is the preface to the GDR English edition:

> a romantic, post-war novel with a social theme… [Bart and Janet] …are joined by tragedy in a romance that matches up to the best love stories in literature … he realizes a devotion that enables him to lift their bitter-sweet romance to the pinnacle of love… no one who reads Say No to Death can be left unmoved by its compassionate honesty and its utterly human love story. (Seven Seas Foreword)

There are humanist prerequisites for both genres of popular romance and social realism: the "social theme" does not prevent the narrative from incorporating the high cultural elements of "tragedy" and "romance" signified as the "pinnacle of love". It was praised as an "honest" account of two human's self-realisation through the love story, which was regarded as "one of the best in literature". According to the GDR press, Say No to Death is an "utterly human love story" which, as Cusack's statements on her readership at the beginning of this chapter indicate, enables the text to "cross all frontiers" in its ability to relate the "universal condition" of being in love.

The novel was, at the same time, considered to be a political text in East Germany. For example in the national newspaper Sonntag, the reviewer reiterated SNTD's generic

classification as "bittersweet romance that becomes a tragedy" and summarised the con-tent thus: "Weil du arm bist, musst du früher sterben!" [Because you are poor, you must die younger].[116] Two other East German reviews also placed Und jeden Morgen neue Hoffnung [And Every Morning New Hope] in the popular category of "tragic" romance, stating that the novel's underlying, humanist message led to the belief in the goodness of mankind.[117] Both reviewers claimed that Cusack's novel had been described by critics as "the best love story in Australian literature", the Stimme der Frau [Woman's Voice] even erroneously asserting that SNTD had a wide readership in Asia and the Americas. The review, in a predictably Marxist fashion, insisted on the universality of Cusack's characters; despite SNTD being set in an alien land, Australia, "the people are like you and I, with the same problems there as here."[118]

The book reviews in the Western women's magazines resembled those in the East: according to the Woman's Journal, Say No to Death is "tense and moving... the climax leaves a feeling of ecstasy shared".[119] This climactic overwhelming of the senses is the ultimate goal of the formulaic popular romance, as I have already indicated with my discussion of the literary critics Catherine Belsey, Janice Radway and Tania Modleski. The Australian Woman's World considered SNTD "a far better novel than Come In Spinner" and endorsed the general opinion of critics in the East and West that it "is a great love story, a great social document".[120] Thus no apparent contradiction in the genres romance and realism was perceived by these represenatives of the "women's press". Furthermore, the credibility of the characters, the verisimilitude of the narrative in all its sombreness and "tragedy", was generally confirmed by the British, East German and Australian reviews.[121]

The Daily Worker in London agreed with the women's magazines above that Cusack's characters were "finely and powerfully depicted and give the book an extremely moving

[116] Sonntag 39 (1962).
[117] Buecher-Post [Books-Post] May 1962.
[118] My translation Stimme der Frau 1 (1963). There is no evidence of Say No to Death having had an Asian readership, although the sales in the USA were quite high.
[119] Margaret Pope, "Books to Enjoy," the British Woman's Journal, Feb. 1952.
[120] Woman's World Melbourne, Feb. 1952.
[121] An unsourced review (it could be either a British or an Australian newspaper) in Cusack's album succinctly refers to the political discourse involved in the romantic realistic narrative: "A novel built entirely around a social injustice is a rarity, but with competence and courage Dymphna Cusack, in Say No to Death has presented the subject of the tuberculosis patient and, in a story of heroism, pathos and great sympathy, put the case for the sick civilian at the mercy of a Government" ("Novels With Intent," MS4621/15/437).

pathos and beauty."[122] British reviewer Sarah Campion stated it was more than "just another Antipodean love story" which in its "depth, seriousness and interest" became "almost unbearable."[123] Similarly positive, the Yorkshire Observer considered Say No to Death to be "essentially a love story - and a great one."[124]

Several Australian newspaper reviews, however, considered SNTD to be essentially a political text. The review in the Sydney Morning Herald acknowledges that "Cusack pretty plainly has a social message", although "as a novel it does not draw great strength from its characterisation."[125] It would be a "widely read and discussed Australian work, but it will be discussed from a variety of standpoints and not only on its literary merits" (op.cit). Nevertheless, Say No to Death was widely praised in Australia, and even had an impact in Far North Queensland: "Now she [Cusack] has clearly reached an exalted plane of literary craftmanship… Such talent is rare and deserves the encouragement of strong public support."[126] There seemed to be widespread acknowledgement of Cusack as an Australian writer who deserved more recognition "at home", as suggested by this regional acclaim.

Similarly, the Sydney Telegraph reviewer, who had also been a judge for the literary competition in which Jungfrau (1936) had won second place, unequivocally praised Say No to Death:

> It is not only the best work to which she has ever signed her name, but one which will give her a new significance in Australian literature… it is definitely fiction on a high plane… from an author who would now appear to have found her literary feet beyond all fear of future stumbling.[127]

Thus the praise of Cusack's second "solo novel" since Jungfrau - she had collaborated with James on Come In Spinner and Miles Franklin on Pioneers on Parade - seemed to seal Cusack's literary reputation. In the immediate postwar period, Cusack won acclaim and established herself as a fiction writer, despite adverse criticism regarding the credibility of the protagonists, that is, the romance supposedly detracting from the realism.

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[122] "Holiday Pick," Daily Worker 17 Aug. 1961.
[123] John O'London's Weekly 25 Feb. 1951.
[124] "A Moving Novel," Yorkshire Observer 11 Dec. 1951.
[125] L.V.K., "Melancholy Novel of a Scourge," Sydney Morning Herald? MS4621/15/436.
[126] "Literary Nook," The Cairns Post 26 Jan. 1952.
[127] 29 Dec. 1951.

Say No to Death was released as The Sun In My Hands in the United States. The protagonist Bart's transformation was understood to be "the quest for the idyll" by the American critic Isabelle Mallet. She placed SNTD in the romantic tradition: "Bart's experience translates him eventually into a selfless servant of the afflicted, and his love affair becomes an immortal idyll."[128] Although Mallet considers SNTD to be a "competent romance", she is one of the few newspaper critics who criticised Cusack for structural weaknesses. She suggested that the novel resembled a playscript and required a stage for the characters to become credible since Cusack had used her playwright's skill in drawing the cast of her "tragic dilemma" (op.cit). Nonetheless, Mallet's col-league at the Herald Tribune in New York praised it as a "moving Australian novel."[129]

The American review was reprinted in part by the Australian newspaper the Sydney Sun. The New York critic considered Cusack's work to be a "touchingly human novel of personal suffering endured and difficult problems faced with fortitude". Once again we find the familiar characteristics of Australian literature as elucidated by Inglis Moore who argued that lack of romance in Australian literature resulted from the realist's preoccupation with hardships, toil and fortitude. Yet the "personal suffering" and the metaphorical "immortal idyll", brings the text closer to the romantic tradition with its spiritual, subjective and emotional concerns of the individual whose struggle for life leads to a meditation on death, if not growth.

In the influential Melbourne journal Meanjin, Eric Lambert asserted, "The love story of Bart and Jan never quite comes to life... The failure is one of method, for a pair of conventionally romanticised lovers do not belong in a book with such a message."[130] Lambert correctly identified the hybrid genre of romantic realism, yet he considered the "method" of writing to be at fault: the gendered subjects are conventionally romanti-cised which is inappropriate to a polemical novel of protest, a social document that criticised the government of the day. He did not investigate the way the conflicting generic demands on the "lovers" results in a deconstruction of gender and illumination of the discourses influencing the text. Similarly L.I. Howarth, in the competing literary journal Southerly in Sydney, stated:

> ...the story seems to move on two planes, *through a failure to synthesize the romance with the reality.* One reason for this may be found in the difficulty Miss

[128] MS4621/15/542.
[129] "Tribute to Australian's New Novel," Sun 31 Jan. 1952.

> Cusack gives herself initially by trying to evolve a deathless love-story from what began as a casual wartime affair. Another may lie in the characters themselves, who seem to be too light-weight, intellectually and emotionally, to carry out the author's intentions.[131] (my italics)

Howarth's comment encapsulates my concerns in this Dissertation. Cusack's narratives seem to be split because of the textual struggle to "synthesize the romance with the reality". The content remains serious and appropriate to a high cultural text, yet the characters are not successfully credible or sufficiently "realised" to achieve this status.

What interests me are the consequences for women and men in the narrative: I have argued that they become differently gendered because of the competing demands incorporated in the hybrid genre. The text's failure to synthesise the opposite genres of popular romance and social realism may also be interpreted as a failure of the characters to perform their gender in a consistent fashion. Women are at once heroines of their own romantic fantasy and the "victims" of social iniquity, while men are alternately convincing as strong, dependable heroes and the repeated perpetrators of sexual discrimination. These opposing elements, drawn from social discourses as well as literary genres, lead to a deconstruction of gender, sexuality and race in chapters four and five.

"Feminine" Popular Romance and "Masculine" Social Realism: Southern Steel

My theoretical argument rests on the hybridisation of the social realistic novel - characterised by its polemical reportage and documentary narrative - with the popular romance, defined by its sentimental love story and melodramatic plot. These genres have an important connection with expressions of twentieth century femininity: romance supposedly enlarges female fantasies and idealises established gender roles whereas realism offers claims to truth about the sexes, or the "real" desires of individuals whose sociological gender naturally develops as a consequence of their biological sex. Genre here seems to be itself gendered, in that popular

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[130] Meanjin 10.4 (1951): 415-416. 415.
[131] Southerly 10 (1953): 133-134. 133.

romance represents feminine fantasy and female escapism, while social realism promulgates masculine truths which inform fiction. Similarly, Diane Elam has suggested that the genre of classical realism and its masculinism is not open to women writers who are relegated to "historical romance" even when they succeed in writing realistic novels.[132] Yvonne Tasker, however, has warned of the theoretical pitfalls of feminising popular romance merely because of its association with an exclusive readership of women.[133]

In her review of Come in Spinner, the literary critic Margaret Walkom placed Cusack's and James' collaboration in the peculiarly "Australian" category of prize novels that were "sordid in theme, slapdash in construction and style":

> Such considerations, however, will not worry the reader who will enjoy this book - the reader who wants colour, glamour, romance, swift incident, and a touch of tragedy to provoke sentimentality - in short, the reader who seeks in a novel just the escape that she (for this is a very feminine novel) would seek in a film.[134]

A conflation of gender, sex, genre, the reader and the author is clear in this statement. The novel becomes feminine, like the mass media form of cinema, as a result of the gendered reader/viewer whose sex, in turn, apparently determines her desire or con-sumption of certain genres. The feminised novel in this case is the conventional romance and "tragedy" to which "sentiment" is added as well as the "colour" of an illustrated popular newspaper, the "glamour" of a Hollywood movie, and the "swift incident" of a television soap opera.

In this section, I would like to suggest that genres themselves have often been gendered. In literary history, distinct genres have been accorded a gender, as for example, high cultural realism and popular, mass romance. This may be due to the fact that the English literary canon is mostly made up of male authors while twentieth century romances have been the creative area of women. Furthermore, the role of literary criticism and newspaper reviews has played a key role in conflating the sex of the author with the gender of the novel. For instance, when a woman is the author of a realistic work, critics have have historically sought its "feminine weaknesses", the flaws in structure or content that supposedly belie female subjectivity. Thus the male pseudonyms of such writers as George Eliot, George Sand and Henry Handel

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[132] Diane Elam, Romancing the Postmodern (London: Routledge, 1992) 2-4.
[133] Yvonne Tasker, "Having it all: Feminism and the Pleasures of the Popular," Off-Centre: Feminism and Cultural Studies, ed. Sarah Franklin, Celia Lury and Jackie Stacey (London: Harper Collins, 1991) 85-96. 90.
[134] Southerly 13 (1952): 44-45. 45.

Richardson were clearly an attempt to hide their sex given the gendered response of critics. Women succeeding in the arts under a man's name could also be understood as an attempt to prevent the text being given the feminine gender, or becoming feminised.

Literary features such as conciseness of expression, philosophical references, pyschological profundity and logical narratives have generally belonged to "masculine" high culture. I would conclude then, that it has been considered "natural" that women have been the producers and consumers of popular romantic novels, since the love story evolves from the domesticity of a family or personal situation, the private sphere of emotions and desires. In other words, the domestic sphere is the very opposite of what has been understood universally as "culture" and its abstract concerns which have been accorded greater worth and significance than feminine nature.

The masculine attributes of a literary genre can be identified through a close analysis of a text's reception. Because of the hybrid genre of romantic realism, Southern Steel was thought to be a mixture of masculine elements - the industrial scenes, scientific reporting, the accurate depiction of a chemist's career and work conditions - and of feminine topics such as family intrigues, calculating, unfaithful wives, and the vague, seemingly superficial expression of feelings and thoughts. But first I wish to examine the novel's status as a distinctly Australian novel and the way it has been classified generically.

Geoffrey Hutton of the Argus in Melbourne wrote that Southern Steel was characteristic of the selling names in Australian writing:

> I cannot say that this novel gave me that pleasurable shock which comes from really good writing, but it never dithers around; it is always making points and making them shrewdly and perceptively. Perhaps we do not produce much exquisite writing, but at least we have novelists who tell us something about the world we live in.[135]

Hutton has a fairly negative view of Australian literature. For him it is mostly mundane rather than "exquisite". Cusack's work is exemplary since it is more like journalistic reporting instead of innovative prose which gives the reader the "pleasurable shock which comes from really good writing." He reads Cusack's texts functionally: it is more like an argument than a narrative, "making points... shrewdly and perceptively." The didacticism of Southern Steel,

the trade union polemics and the corrupt industrialists and the class differences which cause brothers to feud, are nonetheless interpreted as a story that tells "us something about the world world we live in".

The "we" indicates the postwar assumption of common humanity, signified by the hum-anist goal of self-realisation and political awareness. The narrative that does not "dither" nor fail to inform the reader about his/her society, illustrates Cusack's expressed goal of writing to communicate with people. Indeed, her writing style was taken to be autobiographical fact; she was often seen to be a journalist reporting on Australian culture even though it was usually an unflinching, uncompromised critique of that society. For example, one Australian review noted that Southern Steel has "all the piquancy and the vigour of a living diary. It is perhaps a report from life, rather than a creation from life, a documentary rather than a piece of pure literature."[136] The notion of a "living diary" conjures up ideas of the indisputable present, actual fact which has not yet been transposed into fiction, as were the author's stated premises of writing Heatwave in Berlin. Again there is the changing of generic form from the novel to the more filmic social documentary, which has also become a popular television format.

As a naturalistic report, rather than a "creation from life", Southern Steel is, according to this reviewer, no longer a "piece of pure literature". My argument for a multiplication of gender resulting from a hybrid genre is supported by the reviews above. They suggest that Cusack's texts move from the literary realm to "the real" (a living diary) and incorporate popular cultural features of filmic "swift incident", "glamour" and "sentimental" tragedy. The recurring opposition of fact and fiction, as discussed with reference to the reception of Heatwave in Berlin, seems to be bound with concepts of reality and authenticity.

Cusack may not have written exquisite prose yet her work was considered an accurate, authentic representation of the society she lived in. This is despite its unrelenting social critique, as the following statement by the Mercury demonstrates. For the Tasmanian newspaper, Southern Steel was a "true novel of industrial Australia which never becomes a mere study in sociology."[137] I suggest that the reason it does not resemble an academic study, is the author's commitment to the "average person" and the humanist concerns she succeeded

[135] 20 Jun. 1953.
[136] Newcastle Morning Herald? 16 May 1953. (MS4621/15/446)

in bringing to the text. Furthermore, the romantic narrative contributed to its entertaining, popular appeal.

Significantly, Southern Steel was immediately placed in the context of an emerging body of Australian literature. Hutton in his Argus review mentions the fact that Cusack wrote Southern Steel with the aid of a Commonwealth Literary Fellowship and despite his criticism, he was glad to see that "the Government spent its money so shrewdly" (op.cit.). The Sentinel Bridgetown also approved of government spending on Cusack: "the fund did well. For this is a book which men and women can read with a deal of pleasure. It can be recommended."[138] Again the functionality of the text is placed in the foreground. The novel informs the reader about the world, it is a necessary, contemporary guide which at the same time affords the pleasure of "light reading" according to my previous use of the term.

Thus Southern Steel was interpreted as being an accurate or appropriate reflection of the "real Australians" who had, in fact, indirectly contributed financially to its production through a state funding body. It is interesting to note that public comment on Australian cultural policy, in this case, the decisions of the Commonwealth Literary Fellowship, were being made in terms of the cultural suitability of the text produced with government funding. I suggest that this remains a feature of contemporary Australian culture since the decisions of the Australia Council for the Arts are periodically met with outcry and internal re-evaluation of its selection criteria. I would argue that the centralised funding of literature in Australia has led to a number of watersheds in public debate and general opinion of the country's literary canon or more precisely, its reformation.

In contrast to the reserved appreciation of Cusack's second solo writing effort in Australia, the reviewers in Great Britain generally admired the novelist's most recent exposition of life in the Antipodes. The Birmingham Mail praised her: "Dymphna Cusack, that Australian writer of compelling style and outstanding narrative powers, presents Southern Steel."[139] The reviewer in the John O'London's Weekly, said Southern Steel was "unusual in two respects - firstly, the author is an Australian woman writer, and secondly, it is set in the coal and steel city

[137] 26 Sep. 1953.
[138] 9 Jul. 1953.
[139] 6 May 1953.

Newcastle."[140] The mainstream British media regarded the novel as a credible representation of contemporary Australia, as the Queen stated: "The chief interest for the English reader is in the detailed treat-ment of the quality and colour of modern Australian life."[141] The Manchester Evening News wrote that "characterisation is the strong point of this book, which tells an interesting story" while Current Literature considered it a "strongly written story of the war years in the steel city of Newcastle, New South Wales."[142] The Evening Express, the Press and Journal, the Sphere and the Sunday Times all gave Southern Steel very favourable reviews.[143]

Arguably, the success of Southern Steel, like Picnic Races, was due to the exotic appeal of the former colony, a far away land of adventure, newly established lifestyles and derivative British customs. The truth and realism of the text was acknowledged by many reviewers, yet for others the narrative focus was the domestic sphere with the accompanying feminine sentiment, as discussed at the beginning of this section. For instance, the British critic Elizabeth King in her article entitled "Subject for Talents of Women", reviews Cusack with two other women writers who were popular in England. She states that "the talents of a woman writer are particularly suited to the treatment of delicate problems of human relationships."[144]

Similarly, Constance Cummins in the Telegraph congratulated Cusack on her "ability to capture the personal and emotional", concluding:

> This writer can convey the atmosphere of a smart cocktail party, and she is also adept at catching the tang and vigour of working-class conversation. If Southern Steel does not delve deeply into any major problem, it is an honest, intelligent and readable story.[145]

In contrast to the male critics above, these gendered reviews of Southern Steel from a "woman's perspective" appreciated the entertaining features of the narrative and praised the sentimental and domestic detail. Nonetheless, the novel was considered to be intelligent prose and socially accurate despite its lack of depth.

[140] 8 May 1953.
[141] 17 Jun. 1953.
[142] 10 Jul. 1953; Jan. 1953.
[143] 8 May 1953; 23 May 1953; 16 May 1953; 10 May 1953.
[144] 7 May 1953.
[145] 20 Jun 1953.

The presumably male critic at the Sydney Morning Herald began his review of Southern Steel with an admiration of Cusack's more masculine qualities: "Dymphna Cusack is an entertaining controversialist, which in her case is a polite way of describing a novelist who enjoys getting into a good brawl."[146] Although the reviewer remains anonymous, his or her criticism is decidely masculine with regard to conventional values and language. He praises the seemingly aggressive stance and ideas in her novels, especially in Say No to Death, which "swung a punch at authority." While the author's ability to "brawl and swing punches" is admired, the reviewer abruptly limits his praise with reference to the "feminine weaknesses" of the text and its supposed female readership:

> Strangely enough, despite an air of toughness in the account of many of its episodes, this is a type of novel that many readers quickly come to recognise as a woman's book. The term is used in a derogatory sense; and it means, of course, not necessarily a book written by woman but a book with irritating defects of a kind that quite a large number of women readers especially seem to tolerate and even enjoy. In Southern Steel there is an underlying sentimentality, a pausing on non-significant details of domesticity, a shapelessness of structure, an animated discursiveness like the monologue of a long-winded telephone-caller. (op.cit)

The reviewer suggests that women readers in themselves are inept literary critics since they not only tolerate, but seem to enjoy the flaws and weaknesses of a text. What makes the text flawed, in this instance? Its failure to remain masculine: the narrative concern with the domestic sphere, its failure to be concise ("shapelessness of structure") and abstract in its concerns ("animated discursiveness"). In short, its language is not that of a "real man" who, being faithful to his masculinity, would never indulge in a "long-winded" dialogues in a supposedly industrial novel.

The reviewer attempts to deflect charges of discrimination by pointing out that a woman's book does not necessarily mean a novel written by a woman. Male authors might also cater to the inferior critical abilities of a female readership. Thus he tries to qualify the obviously derogatory term so that it may be applied to authors of both sexes in all fairness, just as he acknowledged the masculine attributes of the petite Dymphna Cusack, who in mythical Australian fashion, rebels and argues by means of brute force and muscular prowess, either physically or textually. I discuss these presuppositions of masculinity in chapter five in the

[146] "With a Raised Voice," Sydney Morning Herald 4 Jul. 1953.

section "Real (Heterosexual) Men Becoming Whole." For now, I wish to make the point that romance or the love story has been traditionally consigned to the domestic and the feminine, whereas realism has been given masculine attributes of rationality, rhetoric, culture and the public sphere.

The hybrid of romantic realism was considered to detract from the original literary genres upon which it drew:

> What emerges in print of her researches - her brief historical reminiscences and her descriptive pieces about the processes of steel making - sit uneasily in the company of the sensational, heavily romanticised sequence of events she makes her story. Southern Steel is an unpolished literary outpouring that is sure to have a popular success, but will add nothing to Dymphna Cusack's reputation abroad as a distinguished Australian novelist.[147]

Similar to the final comment on Say No to Death in the previous section, the apparent failure to synthesise romance and realism results in an "almost literary" text; the authentic, historical detail of realism "sits uneasily" with the sensational, romanticised swift incident of the story. Again the gendered attributes discussed above become appa-rent in the reception of Southern Steel. Romantic realism seems assured of popular success, yet the more polished prose of realism or historical romance has been simplified or hybridised. Therefore the text became less significant in terms of cultural production. Notably, the status of a distinguished Australian novelist is defined by her literary reputation that has been established elsewhere, the mystical signifier of abroad that in Australia has conventionally meant Europe or culture signified by the Western European continent.

The Perth newspaper the Mail referred to Cusack's popularity while at the same time describing her as "one of the best-known and best-selling names of Australian literature."[148] Like the two regional dailies mentioned above, the Western Australian press referred to the decision of the Commonwealth Literary Fund which had "spent its money wisely" (op.cit). It reinstated the division of literary and popular: "Southern Steel is no literary achievement. In places it appears to be unnecessarily crude and from the start it seems out-dated. But it is vigorously written and it gives a forceful, though somewhat imaginative, account of the

[147] Adelaide Advertiser 27 Jun. 1953.
[148] 11 Jul. 1953.

Australia we lived in during the war" (op.cit). The reflection of reality, of an identifiable Australian character, values and lifestyle, seems to have continually restored Cusack's reputation as a skilled writer of light reading. The "accuracy" of her fictional representations granted her importance as a cultural critic even when her efforts were not sufficiently literary. The Fleet Street newspaper, the Times summarised this positioning of Dymphna Cusack as a popular author who had made a contribution to Australian literature. "Southern Steel is not a very stylish piece of work," the Times noted, "yet the text should be appreciated for its accurate description and rambling, episodic and domestic account of life in the industrial Australian city of Newcastle."[149] Cusack was certainly not a fashionable writer, her prose was not "stylish", yet its serious and entertaining features appealed to a broad public.

In 1953, Osmar White, reviewer for The Herald in Melbourne compared the latest novels of Eleanor Dark, Ruth Park and Dymphna Cusack. He recognised their literary reputations as Australian writers who have "won distinction and popularity in postwar years." Furthermore, "the trio might well be used as the basis of a short course in contemporary Australian literature. Here are the leaders, if not the teachers to whom young Australian writers currently look up with admiration and awe."[150] Thus the important contributions of Cusack, Dark and Park to Australian literature seem to have been widely acknowledged in the fifties.

Yet this acknowledgement was often qualified by literary critics who demanded more from the leaders in Australian fiction. White criticised Dark's No Barrier, Park's A Power of Roses and Cusack's Southern Steel for the type and presentation of subject matter. He exclaimed, "Why, oh why, are our most competent Australian writers so unventuresome in their minds?" (op.cit). According to White, despite Eleanor Dark's meticulous representation of history, she failed to produce a "social commentary" while Ruth Park, who is "skilled as an artist, ought to find more significant subject matter instead of dwelling on sordid lives and underground culture" (op.cit). Cusack's Southern Steel by comparison is "pedestrian... a good, but by no means inspired repor-tage on the lives of extremely dull people stuck in a backwater during a world-destroying war" (op.cit).

Similarly, the Melbourne Age stated unequivocally that

[149] 22 May 1953.
[150] 4 Jul. 1953.

> Dymphna Cusack has become the most prolific Australian woman novelist of the postwar period yet in Southern Steel she evidently feels that she must never allow any member of her company of, after all, quite ordinary decent average people, to be anything like as vivid, as witty, or as wise as a novelist should, surely, at times be."[151]

The relevant question here is one of representation of the exceptional, sensitive individual or the extraordinary, fantasy worlds of Romanticism, as opposed to the everday in the lives of ordinary people, as portrayed by Victorian and twentieth century social realism. Cusack was a competent, skilled storyteller who was appreciated by a wide, general public. Yet many literary critics in Australia were frustrated and dissatisfied that such prolific women writers did not attempt to integrate the aesthetically "more demanding" elements of satire, comedy, philosophy and pyschology in their work.

By contrast, Kath Olive's review for the Communist Party's newspaper the Tribune criticised Southern Steel for not being political, polemical and ordinary enough. She described Cusack's novel as a "useful contribution to Australian literature, even though it has serious weaknesses."[152] These flaws were apparently authorial mistakes in socialist realism. The communist trade union official in the novel is criticised for being unconvincing because he "displays no qualities of leadership.. his work is taken up with petty problems" (op.cit). In other words, Cusack's work fails to sufficiently idealise her protagonist. Olive also criticises Cusack for being too impartial with regard to the large monopolies that dominate "the imperialist country", Australia. The Communist Party critic concludes that "Miss Cusack fails to face the issues presented, and to show the way forward", as a socialist realist novel would have done.

For the female communist, the text is not realistic enough because of its romance: 'Southern Steel does not cope with the powerful theme it embarks on. The feminine rivalries, soldiers' lusts and lovers' ecstasies [quoted from novel's cover] take charge, reducing the book in parts to the Forever Amber [popular romance series] class" (op.cit). Significantly, Olive changed her criticism of the text in the late eighties, when she explained to Vic Lloyd that Cusack's humanist, "emotional" use of social realism might have been considered a strength, since realism was the dominant genre in postwar Australia and that the prescriptive nature of Marxist

[151] 5 Dec. 1953.
[152] "An Important Book -with Weaknesses," Tribune MS4621/15/478.

cultural criticism during the Cold War probably had an adverse influence on writers who were willing to experiment with realism (qtd in Lloyd 58). Here Olive acknowledges the value and function of the hybrid genre romantic realism.

In conclusion, I would like to refer to a British and then an Australian review which emphasises my point that popular texts by women writers have been customarily defined as feminine, even when they adopt the literary genre of social realism with its coded masculine attributes. The Sunday Times in London referred to the latter quality when it said of Southern Steel: "Everything about Dymphna Cusack's writing is robust, not to say coarse… [SS] promises well as a study of men and their wives, their work and their politics, and the division of a family by varying degrees of prosperity."[153] However the promise of a story of men (and their wives) in the masculine domain of work, politics and prosperity deteriorates into the feminine sphere of domesticity, even sexuality: "But gradually it becomes more and more involved with women's gossip and the misadventures of a distraught nymphomaniac" (op.cit).

"Women's gossip" recalls Geoffrey Hutton's euphemism for the female reader, the "long-winded telephone caller". Similarly, the Sunday Times seeks to criticise Cusack's text in terms of gendered weaknesses. While the review admires her general ability to describe "men at work in a steel foundry, or scrambling for their lives aboard a torpedoed ship", it qualifies it praise with "Miss Cusack uses a broad brush and thick paint effectively; elsewhere she switches on pathos with an all too expert hand" (op.cit). Thus the depiction of Cusack as an almost naive, amateur artist. The effective use of a "broad brush and thick paint" lacks the polished, finer accuracy of realism, proven by her expert use of pathos, the literary mode of emotional, sentimental tragedy that has traditionally been cast as a feminine attribute, a weak or flawed mode of expression.

In Australia, the reviews of Southern Steel were a mixture of qualified praise and prag-matic assessment of government expenditure on the Arts; with the help of literary grant, Cusack had managed to complete a commendable text about her homeland for Australians. Gendered critiques were a significant part of the overall reception of Southern Steel, as well as Australian literature in the postwar period generally. The most definite illustration of this is the Courier

[153] J.W. Lambert, "Many Adventures," Sunday Times 10 May 1953.

Mail article by Roger Covell entitled: "Women Rule the Field of the Australian Novel."[154] He attempts to identify a biological cause for the number of outstanding women writers:

> There must be some significance in the fact that nearly all of Australia's leading novelists today are women... Whether women are our best writers is another matter. But no one could deny that the novelists which have made most stir here and overseas in recent years have been women - Kylie Tennant, Ruth Park, Eleanor Dark, Dymphna Cusack, and others. There are more coming on.
>
> Could it be that the Australian woman has less difficulty in pouring out the sympathy and compassion needed for a novel than her more bottled-up brother?
>
> Time will tell (op.cit).

In response, one could point to the detailed, historically informed feminist literary scholarship of the last few decades that renders such statements above as ludicrous. Yet it is important to note that in the postwar era Covell was echoing other critics in Australia and in Europe who were continually trying to explain and/or diminish the success of the increasing number of women writers in the English-speaking world.

The recasting of the novel as a genre requiring "sympathy and compassion", both feminine attributes, is a strategy that began in the nineteenth century with the rise of the Victorian novel and the great number of women who enjoyed commercial success as writers of historical, romantic and realistic fiction. Thus it is necessary to take the gender of the author into consideration, given the gendered reception women's writing has experienced. More importantly, an analysis of Cusack as a Cold War writer, a humanist and as a feminist, should also place her in a tradition of women writers who succeeded in the twentieth century fiction "market" and subsequently have had a lasting, popular influence on a diverse readership. As I have explored in chapters two and three, the hybrid genre of romantic realism was largely responsible for Cusack's success in the postwar years. The demand for entertaining romance and politically committed realism embraced a number of historical discourses, foremost pacificism. Romantic realism also reflected the contradictions inherent in the social discourse of romance, the emergence of the Modern Woman and the subjectivity of gendered subjects in the conservative period after World War II, as examined in more detail in the following chapter.

[154] 20 Jun. 1953.

CHAPTER FOUR

i) Women Caught Between Realism and Romance

Cusack's Texts Differentiated: an Extension of Radway's Thesis

In this section, I wish to concentrate on Cusack's "love stories" in order to analyse her texts as romantic narratives that are, at the same time, realistic. By focusing on the popular romantic element of her work, I hope to differentiate the narrative development of her polemical novels and plays, all of which rely on the conventional love story. In order to distinguish the way the two genres interact and how this hybrid genre in turn shapes the characters, I have expanded the ethnographic categories of Janice A. Radway's study in the United States.[155] In her survey of the Smithton women readers of popular romance, Radway differentiated between ideal and failed romances. An ideal romance "induces pleasure in the reader by providing her with vicarious nurturance and by reassuring her that standard female development does indeed lead to emotional rewards" whereas the latter fails to provide this reassurance (157).

The conventional narrative of popular romance may at first evoke "equally powerful feelings of anger and fear directed at the fictional hero and thus more generally at men" (op.cit). The love story, however, subsequently disarms those feelings by satisfactorily explaining why the hero had to act precisely in that way (op.cit). By contrast, in the failed romance the male's transformation from "enemy into lover" is less enjoyable than the ideal version because the "extent of the hero's independence, taciturnity, cruelty, and violence" is exaggerated (158).

[155] Radway has been criticised for her reliance on Nancy Chodorow's definition of femininity and masculinity. I have focused on the results of Radway's survey and theory, rather than analysing Chodorow's concept of female and male dependency in gender relations. For a discussion of this, see Susan Purdie, "Janice Radway, Reading the Romance," Reading into Cultural Studies, ed. Martin Barker and Anne Beezer (London: Routledge, 1992) 148-164.

As explained in chapter one, I have not conducted a study amongst female readers of Cusack's work, nor have I relied on "reader response" theory so as to surmise the conditions of her reception in East and West. Nonetheless, Radway's empirical study is use-ful in categorising Cusack's texts in terms of ideal romances that depict harmonious gender relations as opposed to failed romances that do not justify objectionable, mas-culine behaviour towards the heroine. I argue that Cusack's narratives contain elements of both ideal and failed romances, even when they apparently belong to one or the other category.

The table below provides a schematic listing of Cusack's fiction and plays provisionally categorised into ideal and failed romances (see Table One). Such a division necessarily remains provisional given that ideal romances such as Say No to Death and Southern Steel also contain minor narratives of women who have been betrayed by their lovers. Similarly, the parodic romances Black Lightning and The Half-Burnt Tree nonetheless support conventional ideas of sincere, eternal love. I have described the latter two novels as parodies of romance and explain this term further in the next section.

In accordance with the author's autobiographical statements on romance (see chapters one and two), the failed romances listed below do not foreclose the possibility of genuine love between men and women. In Cusack's narratives "genuine love" is offered as the best possible alternative to the passing glamour of an affair. If that is unattainable, for instance, because of a partner's betrayal, then women embittered by love and marriage have the option of solitude or remaining single, as suggested in Black Lightning and The Half-Burnt Tree. These pragmatic alternatives to love may be considered to be evidence of the social realism which interacts with the romantic narratives.

Remembering that "romance's fantasy ending might defuse or recontain emotions that could prove troublesome in the realm of ordinary life" (Radway 157), I have grouped the five texts under "Ideal Romance and Marriage" because they generally defuse female dissatisfaction with her lover and assure the heroine of the emotional rewards to be gained from the male's promised devotion and ardour. For example, Say No to Death provides reasons for Bart's philandering; his fear of commitment and insecurities about emotional bonds with the opposite sex induce in him a preference for the com-

Table One: Ideal and Failed Romances

Ideal Romance and Marriage

Red Sky at Morning (stage play, filmscript)

Southern Steel (novel, magazine serial)

Say No to Death (novel)

Picnic Races (novel)

Heatwave in Berlin
(novel, adapted for stage, newspaper serial)

Failed and Parodic Romances

Jungfrau (novel, adapted for stage)

Comets Soon Pass (stage play)

The Golden Girls (radio play)

A Bough in Hell (novel)

Black Lightning

pany of his fellow soldiers or "mates". By contrast, Jan serenely awaits her lover's emotional growth or moral transformation. She accepts his affair with self-effacement even when his infidelity results in a worsening of her illness and eventual death. The text, however, provides an explanation as to why Bart succumbed to the temptation of Magda thereby exonerating his errant ways. Following the humanistic conventions of the popular romance, the incorrigible soldier is ultimately transformed into an infallible carer and lover.

In Heatwave in Berlin, Stephen's intolerable rudeness and harshness towards his wife is justified in the narrative by giving Joy full responsibility for the situation she has unwit-tingly placed them in. Similarly, the obnoxious geologist Greg in Picnic Races aggres-sively mocks Eden, since she is inexcusably complacent about the various social injustices dividing the township. In Pioneers on Parade, another Greg, an arrogant doctor, scorns the upper-class Primrose who also seemingly deserves the hero's contempt for her unenlightened ways. I have classified the latter romance in the third category of romantic narrative, "Primary Love Story Succeeds", which I will discuss below (see Table Two). Greg and Primrose fall in love and the competing love story in the text between Little Willy and Lady Lucy also succeeds. Pioneers on Parade's ridicule of the upper-class and obvious sympathy for the Australian "bush type" are integral to the romantic conventions of this parodic love story. As a social satire or a comic novel, the text becomes less distinguishable as an ideal romance. The (bi)centennial prose work vacillates between realism and the popular love story.

In the successful romances listed above in Table One, the poor behaviour of men is con-sistently excused by pointing to popular conceptions of contemporary gender relations. For instance, Bart Sweetapple in Southern Steel resorts to a passionate though ill-fated affair because of the emotionally bankrupt bond with his wife, who is portrayed as self-seeking and unfeelingly ambitious. The Irish convict hero in Red Sky at Morning is also abrupt and insensitive, while the conclusion of the play is a melodramatic romantic union through their attempted escape. (It is unclear whether the couple have drowned whilst crossing the flooded river.) In all five works, female fear of and anger towards men is contained or defused by the narrative's conclusion, with a "happy ending" for at least one pair of lovers in the narrative. As Radway has stated, the "Happy End" is a requisite feature of a successful romance; it

represents the "free and unfettered union of one man and one woman with the promise of a blissful future" (162-63). The texts listed under "Ideal Romance and Marriage" all end happily with an assurance of security and eternal love for the heroine and, presumably, for the reader.

As I have already noted, all five ideal romances are, at the same time, a hybrid genre. The narratives are blended with social realism and cultural critique, thus preventing the protagonists from remaining solely in the realm of popular romance. The women and the men are not only caught up in their own desire and love, they are continually witness to social injustice, political debates, rebellion against authority and community protest about government policy. For example, Picnic Races is a comedy whose plot relies on a number of conventional love stories. Yet it is also a harsh critique of sections of Australian society that do not accept multiculturalism, an egalitarian nationalism and the rights of Aboriginal people.

As discussed in chapter two, Picnic Races does not appear to be a decidely feminist text, given its portrayal of men as the intellectual mentors of culturally inferior women, with a few exceptions. Arguably, this minor role of women in the development of the narrative is an accurate depiction of gender relations in postwar Australia (see chapter six). Women, especially in regional and urban areas, were often confined to the domestic sphere by political discourses and customary social practice. I discuss the urban confinement of women in the following section, "Postwar Gender Roles: The Sun is Not Enough". But first I would like to conclude my analysis of Table One and then progress to the second table.

Southern Steel contains many conventional love stories, yet it is primarily concerned with the politics of a steel manufacturer, its managers, workers and their families who depend on the industry. I suggest that Myee and Ros are not merely the clichéd type of a frustrated wife who longs for a more satisfying life. In a "realistic" fashion, these women attempt to negotiate the prescribed gender relations and oppressive limitations imposed upon their sex in wartime Australia. Similarly, the couple in Say No to Death must endure the appalling reality of poverty and powerlessness with regard to Jan's terminal illness, while the text documents the wide and varied experiences of other "victims" of the tuberculosis epidemic as a result of inadequate government policy and health provisions. Thus the heroine Jan is not simply a romantic who aspires to reach an ideal of love with her transformed husband, rather she is

constituted by a realistic awareness of her hopeless, "tragic" situation and a romantic longing to "become whole" through her union with the hero.

I wish to return now to the failed romances listed in Table One. Those listed above would have quite likely been criticised by the Smithton readers, given that masculine aggression, indifference and (emotional) brutality are exaggerated, confirmed and inadequately "explained" in the text. For instance Keith's exploitative betrayal in Black Lightning serves to confirm feminine fears of abandonment as well as the feared abuse of their trust in the sincerity of the relationship. Cusack's staid sexual politics were representative of her time, as we have seen in the preceding chapter with regard to Southern Steel and Heatwave in Berlin (see also chapter five, "Sexuality"). Within the bounds of "proper" romance as defined above, these novels do not contain explicit descriptions of sex, although in Black Lightning the seduction scenes between Keith and Tempe are explicit, rich with popular romantic clichés of the mind being swept away by the body's passions and hackneyed descriptions of the intercourse itself (210-211). Thus the narrative vacillates between the chaste conventions of popular romance and the requirement of twentieth century realism for sexual relations to be explicitly described or at least referred to.

Roslyn's struggle with alcoholism in A Bough in Hell is not resolved by love or union with a man. To the contrary, her husband's infidelity and her family's neglect is largely to blame for her illness. Significantly, many reviews affirmed the inconstancy of men and the pressures of family were the cause of this woman's misery.[156] Like Black Lightning, A Bough in Hell denounces the false sense of security women seek in marriage, thus making them partly responsible for their dependence. Neither of these heroines' emotional disappointment and anger is contained by a successful romantic resolution, rather the women remain solitary. Alone, they find their way to emotional and financial independence. Paradoxically, the melodramatic elements of popular romance in A Bough in Hell were acknowledged, even though the reviewer insisted that the "people are real and believable".[157] Thus the characters are hard to define, constructed as they are in a romantic narrative which has failed them and transformed them from a conventional woman of the love story to another gendered being of social realism.

[156] "Torments of Insecurity," The Auckland Star 25 Mar. 1972; "Portrait of an Alcoholic Wife," Courier Mail 22 Jan. 1972; "Horror Inside an Alcoholic's Asylum," Sunday Times 9 Jan. 1972.

Cusack's "lesbian" plays also depict solitary women who have overcome oppression by men and discover a form of independence, if not power. Much like Ms Kingsbury in Morning Sacrifice, the elder daughter in The Golden Girls becomes a mockery of male tyranny by adopting the masculine role of the family patriarch and ruling over her depen-dent sisters. After being deprived of her "one true love", Angelica never recovers from the emotional injury inflicted by her father who had refused to accept his daughter's suitor. In a surreal scene of murder, the eldest daughter inadvertently kills her father and ursurps his power and privilege (see chapter five, part two). She distances herself from the realm of the feminine, no longer interested in marriage, and prevents her sisters from exercising their personal freedom or will.

Like the the heroines of Black Lightning and The Half-Burnt Tree, the women in Comets Soon Pass and Jungfrau have in common female protagonists who sceptically analyse or fully reject the sentiments and precepts of the romantic ideal of "true love" or permanent union with a man (see chapter two, "Liberal Feminism and the Woman Subject"). Their subjectivity is shaped and informed by the postwar discourses on conventional femininity, even though Brenda ridicules the genre of popular romance and its social expectations promoted by women's magazines of the fifties.

Morning Sacrifice and The Half-Burnt Tree seem to belong to the failed and parodic romances, but I have listed them in the third category below under "Primary Love Story Fails" (see Table Two). The novels in this table can be differentiated by the fact that romance is not precluded in the text, instead it has been obstructed by external circumstances. The narrative conclusion is open; the potential for the love story to succeed is strongly suggested. These love stories differ to the more definite conclusion of the failed or parodic romances, in which the heroine is unwilling to renew her belief in love.

The Half-Burnt Tree, a polemical novel about race relations and the Vietnam War, clearly remains a romantic narrative, given its use of the conventional language of popular romance. For example, the description of passion: "His lips came down on hers in a kiss so hard she felt them bruised against her teeth" (71). This language is used despite Brenda being a recluse who is interminably embittered by a past, bigamous love affair. She alternates between romantic desires and embittered recollections: "Derek was only a hate-

[157] William Leonard Marshall, "Self-made Alcoholic in a Fit of Boredom," Australian 26 Mar. 1972.

Table Two: Primary Love Story Succeeds or Fails

Group One - Primary Love Story Succeeds

Come in Spinner, with Florence James
(novel, adapted for television and video)

The Sun in Exile (novel, Kunstlerroman)

Pioneers on Parade, with Miles Franklin (novel, satire)

Group Two - Primary Love Story Fails

Morning Sacrifice (stage play)

The Sun is Not Enough (novel)

The Half-Burnt Tree (novel)

ful memory that clamped down all her feelings so that she moved like a zombie through a world with which she had no contact except through those senses that continued to make contact with it as they had always made contact" (68).

The failure of this romance has effectively removed this woman from the "real world"; she no longer has "contact" with people and so it is easy for her to retreat from a judgemental

society. The conclusion of The Half-Burnt Tree, however, suggests that Brenda and Paul may begin a relationship which would heal both of their spiritual wounds – therefore the symbolism of the half-burnt tree renewing life. The hybridity of this romantic realistic text in which the heroine succumbs to romantic desires to her actual, physical and psychological detriment, is typical of the other novels by Cusack listed above.

The secondary "failed" romances in the texts listed under "Primary Love Story Succeeds" serve to counteract the central narrative about the successful union of the heroine and hero. This differs to the category "Ideal Romance or Successful Marriage" in Table One. In those novels and plays, there are very few examples of failed love in the text, despite the ever present social critique and realism of the narrative. Conversely, in the "Failed and Parodic Romances", there are few examples of idealised love. The heroines become embittered, even though their psyche and actions have been initially formed and influenced by the social discourse of romance. I have suggested in my discussion of The Half-Burnt Tree above, that the language describing Brenda's former happiness resembles that which is found in the popular love story. The social discourse of romance, then, may be defined as the junction between fictional representation and lived experience, or the ways in which a woman's subjectivity is influenced by the discourses on femininity and gender.

In Group One, "Primary Love Story Succeeds", the female protagonists do not necessarily abandon their scepticism regarding popular conceptions of romance, as I shall illustrate in part two of this chapter, "Deconstructing Femininity." In Pioneers on Parade, for instance, the heroine believes that she has been duped by romance.

> Prim made her arrangements with bitter resentment of all those things that had failed her so badly. Useless to blame Ninny and Lucy, she realized with unyouthful clarity. She should have seen earlier that glamour is not enough. She had been a poor simpering fool carried away by a few titles and a uniform. A vulgar and brutal showdown had brought her to her senses and she saw that all those things she had learned from her companions and at finishing school were wrong. All the things her mother - in her love and ambition - had taught her to esteem and desire, were wrong. (208)

Nonetheless, the heroine Primrose succeeds in finding a genuine, lasting love with her antagonistic lover Greg. He, in turn, is transformed into a deserving partner of the now

enlightened object of his desire. Significantly, the conventions of popular "romance and glamour" are critiqued by the heroine herself in Pioneers on Parade, yet the narrative conclusion presents the reader with an ideal romance rather than a failed one.

Come in Spinner also represents multiple relationships predicated on the love story. The text contains both ideal and failed romances as well as the social realistic indictment of men's exploitation of women in the public realm (Monnie's forced prostitution) and the private (Nigel's financial use of Claire). Similarly, Kim's infidelity and indifference is met with Guinea's anger expressed by her own chaste affairs and flirtations. According to the popular romantic convention, the unhappy, independent young woman comes to realise that her "first love" had acted out of immaturity, poor judgement and the pres-sures of being a soldier at war. Again the transformation of the errant male into a romantic hero is accompanied by a legitimation of his former behaviour. The heroine's self-effacement ultimately defuses her resentment and anger with her lover. As I argue in the next section "Deconstructing Femininity", Guinea is constituted by both social realism and popular romance which renders her femininity, indeed her gender as a woman in wartime Australia, unintelligible. Furthermore, the romantic Happy End of Come in Spinner counters the often brutal social reportage to be found in the realistic narrative.

Cusack's *Kunstlerroman*, The Sun in Exile, is a "text within a text": an autobiography of a writer Penfold who ends up supporting the ideal of marriage and admitting its benefits in times of adversity, specifically, the insufferable barriers caused by racism. The narrator remains perplexed, if not cynical about the conventional promises of love and marriage, regardless of the happiness of the Australian heroine Vicky and the Nigerian hero Lance (152). Vicky claims that she has found "her mate", stating "I'm a whole person with him" (157). Again we return to the humanist precepts of the love story in Western culture: to be a self-realised individual, an agent who is able to form relationships and affect the external world. This is best encapsulated by Cusack's insistance that people should become "Whole Men and Whole Women" through the achievement of "genuine love" as well as an active conscience, or political awakening, as discussed in previous chapters.

Cusack's definition of love as the "fusing of heart and mind" is relevant here. Her socialist precepts of equality in gender relations were predicated on the liberal humanist belief in "man" or mankind, enabled by democratic freedom for the individual. As mentioned above, despite

it being a satire of social conventions, Pioneers on Parade offers the reader a number of conventionally romantic resolutions to the conflicts of protagonists. More importantly, the heroes and heroines are divided by class and postcolonial differences. Therefore love becomes a means of solving social injustice, or at least bettering the individual and transforming him or her into an agent of change. These three texts are indeed the best examples of my argument for a destabilisation of gender because the female protagonists are bound up in the romantic narrative and, at the same time, are constituted by the critical genre of social realism.

In Group Two of Table Two, the primary love story has been frustrated by external circumstances, rather than a conscious decision on the part of the heroine to reject romance because of men's indifference and oppression, as occurs in the "Parodic and Failed Romances". In Morning Sacrifice, it is suggested that Sheila Ray's desperation may not have led to suicide, had she received her suitor's confirmation of his love, that is, the telephone call censored by the "wicked" Miss Kingsbury. Thus the heroine's suffering is not inflicted by her lover, rather by her manipulative colleagues who are in turn morally corrupt as a result of institutionalised sex discrimination. The heroine's suicide is similar to that of Thea's in Jungfrau, though it seems to be more melodramatic and less credible. The graduate teacher is, as far as we know, not pregnant and in desperate need of an abortion, as is the case in Jungfrau. Sheila does, however, feel persecuted at her workplace and generally frustrated with the double standard morality of the wartime society.

I have categorised Jungfrau and The Golden Girls as "Failed Romances" because, unlike Morning Sacrifice, the narratives are solely concerned with the impossibility of the heroine attaining her romantic ideal in the form of her one true love. One sister in The Golden Girls does manage to elope with her love, but poverty and her family disowning her has marred her happiness. Even though Sheila Ray's lover never appears on stage, the audience is assured of their love and happiness until the sudden nervous collapse of the heroine. Her suicidal disappointment leads to the abrupt failure of the romantic narrative to provide a Happy End. Morning Sacrifice has a solemn, highly dramatic closure that purports the reality of discrimination at the workplace and, more broadly, of gender oppression. This was signified in the play by the Married Women Teachers Act and sexist school inspectors.

In the texts listed under "Primary Love Story Fails", either the heroine or one of the female protagonists represents the continued potential for successful love. In Morning Sacrifice, it is the defiance of Gwyn Carwithen who is punished for having sex outside of marriage. Such flagrant behaviour was considered immoral in the forties. She refuses to marry her boyfriend because under the Act, as a married woman, she will immediately lose her job. Despite the social pressure and moral censure, their "illicit" relationship survives on the uncompromised terms Gwyn has insisted upon.

A further example is the romantic union of The Woman/Brenda and The Man/Paul through caring for the Aboriginal boy Kemmy in The Half-Burnt Tree. The provisionality of my categories is once again obvious. This "anti-Vietnam War" novel could still be classified as a parody of romance since the man who joins Brenda in her isolation is, visually, the opposite of a desirable, romantic hero. The ex-soldier Paul is a sufferer of napalm bombing during the Vietnam War. His appearance is grotesque because his face and limbs are deformed by peeling skin and scars. The war veteran's appearance is so repulsive that his wife has left him and he is planning to commit suicide. Cusack's disturbing use of a napalm victim as a romantic hero is notable for its horrific, gothic effect rather than the conventional physical attraction of the strong, handsome male.

Brenda's first love has failed her, yet the possibilities of further human intimacy, for example, an attachment to the opposite sex, is reintroduced by the narrative's closure. Unlike the Happy Ends of the novels in which the "Primary Love Story Succeeds", The Half-Burnt Tree is marked by cynicism. This is incorporated in a single woman's bitterness towards men, the suffering caused by the Vietnam War and the text's radically polemical statement regarding unofficial apartheid and racism in Australia. Similarly, in The Sun is Not Enough, the primary love story fails despite the happiness of the younger generation of lovers. Paradoxically, the minor love stories in the text are resolved according to the very generic conventions and social clichés which the primary love story refutes. The success of the secondary romances is muted by "reality", that is, the political unrest in Asia and the protests in Australia against the Vietnam War, as I will discuss in the section on *Postwar Gender Roles*. But first I will define parodic romances and the particular way the love story interacts with realism causing a deconstruction of gender in the text.

Parodic Romances: the White Heroine in Cusack's Black Narratives

I have suggested that a woman in the romantic plot who does not fit, act or perform her conventional gender, becomes a point of resistance in the text, a subversive figure who antagonises the narrative structure. I have adopted the standpoint of Judith Butler's philosophical theory of gender (141). My argument has attempted to demonstrate how gendered subjects are caught between realism and romance: "real women" in Cusack's texts are also constituted by the romantic narrative. Their credibility as realistic figures in the narrative is contradicted by the conventional love story, or in other words, the "real" men and women in Cusack's texts fail to repeat the performative acts appropriate to their socially recognised gender. Instead, they adopt and represent the stereotypical behaviour of men and women in popular romances. This conflict of the supposedly "realistic" males and females with the gendered clichés or types, as we have seen in the case of nationalism in chapter two, undoes the essentialised gender identity of Cusack's protagonists.

I suggest that in failed romances where the heroine abandons the love story altogether, the romantic narrative becomes a parody of the realistic account of gender relations. Realism is itself a simulacra or replica of the authentic, since there can be no original gender to be represented; lived experience is a conglomeration of parodic acts, cultural repetitions and imitations of a projected originality. Because of its claims to verisimil-itude, the realistic novel attempts to avoid the generic conventions of the love story. Cusack's parodic romances, however, rely on realism to construct their narratives, thus calling the realistic novel's claim to be the only accurate reflection of society into question.

The failed romances imitate the love story. The heroine's disillusionment with romance leads to a divergence from the genre. Just as an abiding gender identity must be rethought, since gendered subjectivity arises from performative acts, so must literary criticism rethink the

possibility of abiding genres and ranking realism as the "original" above romance, as the parodic copy of real gender relations.

The protagonists of The Half-Burnt Tree and Black Lightning, Brenda and Tempe become parodies of romantic heroines: the narratives begin with idealised, glamorous and passionate romances which are devastated by their lovers' infidelity and deceit. Brenda in The Half-Burnt Tree, isolates herself on the outskirts of an Australian country town, taking over her father's position as postmaster and grocer for the remote district.

> She hated the occasional fishermen... because when the men came in they brought with them their own aura of conjecture as to why she chose to live there unless it was for some such unexpected encounter with them. Men were unbelievably vain. They never saw a woman without thinking of her in relation to themselves. The thought that she might have any other reason for existence, or no reason at all except that she existed, never crossed their minds. (9-10)

The men of the area have given up trying to seduce the single woman who mocks the opposite sex and their failure to understand her desire for celibacy and solitude. I am not trying to argue, however, that her independence automatically results in a parodic romance. In these two novels the parody lies in the contrast of a clichéd love story and the heroine's conscious rejection of formulaic popular romance. The narrative alter-nates between genres and so demonstrates the tenuous construction of the subject. The heroine represents exemplary femininity while at the same time she is critical of her societal role and the discourse of romance.[158]

In Black Lightning Tempe, in reaction to her de facto lover's betrayal, attempts to com-mit suicide. The narrative unflinchingly shows how the woman is entirely alone in the world apart from the care and support of an aunt. The TV celebrity who is the host of a daily women's programme for Home and Beauty tips, has devoted herself to Keith, the achievement of his goals and playing hostess for his friends and contacts. The news-paper editor ends up

[158] See for example the anti-romantic heroine Brenda in The Half-Burnt Tree, when she compares her youthful passion with her mother's faithful marriage. Contemplating her mother's motives for reading the "weekly women's papers", Brenda "wondered if she did not also find in the highly-coloured stories with their inevitable happy endings some satisfaction for the things that had never touched her easy, steady life as wife of a man who had loved her to the last as his first love, who had been her first love and her last love as she was his" (59). (London: Heinemann, 1969). Der Halb-verbrannte Baum trans. Olga and Erich Fetter (Berlin: Verlag der Nation, 1972) 62.

deceiving Tempe by secretly marrying his employer's handicapped daughter in order to secure an executive position. In the following extract, Cusack points to the connection between gender relations in the public sphere, sexual relation-ships and the significance language has for women. When in conflict with men, they must rely on the power of speech:

> Between them there had never been argument. She had been content with her role as the feminine counterpart of his masculine world. In the months that she'd been alone, she realized that all her views on anything outside her own purely feminine world were his views, and even in that intimate personal world he was the lodestone [sic; lodestar] of all she did. When for the first time their wills crossed, she lacked the words to combat him. (215)

Here we have some recognition of career women in the postwar era, even though Tempe was still confined to the domestic sphere, a "purely feminine world". By choosing this background and personality for her heroine, Cusack was able to highlight the superficial gains made for women after first wave feminism and how in reality, working and professional women were at a disadvantage in personal relationships. In fact, their social status had not altered greatly in the "masculine world" of business, employment and public life.

A summary of Black Lightning on the cover describes her as "typical of many lonely middle-aged women with no goal in life, she attempts suicide and fails". During her convalescence, Tempe discovers that her estranged son had had a daughter to his Aboriginal wife. The parents have recently died and the orphaned child writes to Tempe on behalf of her black family because the community is about to be expelled from their land. The summary continues "if she is to help them, Tempe realizes that she must step out of the fashionable, conformist world in which she has lived, throw herself into an unpopular cause, associate with people she has despised" (see Illustrations in this chapter). The white woman eventually "loses" or overcomes her racism. She realises that her "Aboriginal granddaughter" Kristy bears a family resemblance, "The bone was the same, the blood was the same and suddenly the colour did not repel her any more. She saw it as Christopher would have seen it" (146-47). Tempe's transition from a "typically racist" white middle-class Australian to an outspoken, courageous activist, is quite dramatic and stretches credibility. In order to make this change convincing, Cusack carefully "documented" the character's "stock" perceptions, unthinking stance and gradual self-doubt which leads to her new position.

Before her transformation into a public supporter of the derisively named "Black Cause", Tempe avidly believed in her own glamour, thinking "She was the personification of all that romance-hungry housewives longed for" (19). The first chapter of the novel indicates the extent to which Tempe has been "duped" by glamour and romance: "She got enormous gratification out of the popularity of her Charm Club; satisfaction out of the letters of women who told her what a difference they'd made in their appearance and homes by following her advice" (20). As I have already discussed, both her lover and her son mock Tempe for her belief in romance and the beauty myth. Keith states bluntly that "housewives only long for romance because they were told they should long for it" (19-20). Once again, men in Cusack's narratives are more politically aware than women of the way the subject is manipulated by social institutions. The men in these parodic romances seem to flourish from the conflicting narrative demands, alternating between romantic heroes and "true-to-life" individuals who are successful, wealthy and loved by women despite their obvious weaknesses and in some instances, sexism.

Tempe leaves romance behind in the "realistic" quest for herself and her newly discovered black family. She rejects Keith's offer of setting her up as his mistress, realising at last what she had given up for the sake of romantic love: "She'd be no back-street woman. They had shared too much and loved too deeply for that. It wasn't the perfect romance, but maybe the perfect romance was possible only when you were young and didn't realize the price you were paying" (209).

Tempe's personal development is similar to the housewife and alcoholic Rosyln in A Bough in Hell, whose rehabilitation leads her to abandon all romantic aspirations in her marriage and immediate future. This quest for the self, as discussed in chapter two with regard to Joy in Heatwave in Berlin, results from the heroine's complete disillusionment with her husband, his unfaithfulness, dishonesty and his abuse of alcohol which is supported by the drinking of his peers in the marines. Roslyn's recovery from alcoholism is due to her own self-realisation and newly discovered strength of will. She opts to remain alone without the support of her family. Her independence is gained by being cynical towards romance, even rejecting it temporarily.

Tempe is the personification of women's supposed obsession with the domestic sphere and, until her attempted suicide, a shining example of feminine subservience. Cusack convincingly

portrays this upper-class Sydney woman's reaction of physical revulsion and shame upon the discovery that her son Christopher has married the Aboriginal woman, Zanny (104, 128-130). Through Tempe's racism, Cusack emphasises the powerful role of white women in the perpetuation of violent nationalism and fear of miscegenation in postwar Australia. Furthermore, Tempe's coming to terms with her own racial prejudice results from her self-development and political interventions in the public sphere. Thus she abandons her supposed reliance on the feminine and the domestic, and becomes an active agent in issues and forums traditionally regarded as masculine.

When Tempe makes a strategic bargain with the media mogul Robertson, she is infor-med: "Grandmothers have no glamour. Grandmothers of Aboriginal children have less" (246). Paradoxically, this revocation of the power granted by her former beauty and acquiescence to her gendered role of exemplary femininity, creates a discursive space in which the older, unemployed woman with Aboriginal relations is able to negotiate. Barely over forty, she is relegated by discourses on femininity and romance to an asex-ualised gender. I suggest that Tempe has been given a supposedly powerless status as sexually undesirable and thus becomes unintelligible as a "woman" in a romantic realistic text. The first half of Black Lightning follows romantic conventions: the love story, however, fails the heroine and she becomes a realistic figure in a failed or parodic romance. Her successful efforts in the public sphere and the negotiation of political, humanist demands for her Aboriginal family, lead Tempe to a type of womanhood that confounds the gender binary integral to the text's deployment of realism and romance.

Ironically, Tempe almost refused to become involved in the campaign to retain the Aboriginal family's property and desired to return to "her own world again - even stripped of its glamour, it was a safe and comfortable world" (151). I would argue that Tempe's admission and acceptance of a halfcaste granddaughter not only casts her as a social rebel, it recasts her gender in Australian society of the sixties. The sacked celeb-rity gradually realises that it is she who has been stripped of glamour, not her world of white privilege. Is Black Lightning then, a parody of romance due to the protagonist's feminist awakening? Tempe differs to Brenda, whose rejection of romance has taken place before she is forced to confront her own racial prejudice with the death of the young, Aboriginal boy Kemmy.

Arguably, Tempe is similar to Alexandra Pendlebury in The Sun in Exile, who also forms a more personal view of racism and postcolonial discrimination when the object of her love, Vicky, draws "Pen" into her own romance with the African Olumide. Both texts depict the quest for self-realisation and political awakening of white middle-class women. Despite the narrative focus being placed on white heroines, Cusack's Aboriginal novels should be regarded as successful parodies of romance which depict the realities of racism in the years of the Cold War. The consequences of this hybrid genre for other subjects in these texts as well as Cusack's critique of racism is discussed in chapter five.

Postwar Gender Roles: Suburban Alice in The Sun is Not Enough

The narrative begins with an explanation that Alice has become a frustrated spinster because of the loss of her "one true love", Reg, an Australian soldier killed in Papua New Guinea during the Pacific War against the Japanese. Alice claims that her mother's puritan ways destroyed the "one beautiful thing in her life", since Mrs Belford refused to let the couple get married (119). For Alice, her mother represents Victorian morality which hinders the Modern Woman's prerogative to love whom she chooses. The dutiful daughter constantly regrets not having eloped with Reg or even having had his child out of wedlock. Interestingly, the narrative distances itself from romance when it describes Alice's disappointment and subjection to maternal rule: "As the war years receded her mother cleverly began to build up her daughter's tragic love affair into a Great Romance" (op.cit).

Alice's constant recollection of their lost passion relies on the language of the popular romance: "...that first tremulous touch remained in her memory as though it had opened the gates of paradise" (118). Although Alice has been shaped by the discourse of romance, she remains curiously aware of her predicament:

> Memory would waken, stir like a fire in the blood and she would imagine that she was with Reg again in the house at Lillipilli. Things she thought she had forgotten would flicker in her nerves. She would feel her lips grow hot and swollen and her breasts

> tingle in unbearable memory and she would weep, telling herself it was for her lost love when in reality it was for her whole wasted life (120).

The language seems to trick the reader into believing that Alice had succumbed to the sensuality of her "lost love", but surprises us with "in reality" the heroine was mourning "her whole wasted life". The national cultural type, the "Australian housewife of the suburbs", is constituted by the social discourse of romance as well as by the language of popular romance in the text. This becomes evident in her pining for her one true love in the above extract, aware of her social isolation and lost opportunities, which is then counteracted by her attempt at another relationship in which she immediately subordinates her femininity and sexuality to her new lover's "romantic charm"(123).

Despite her unquestioning submission to her overbearing "European" lover, Alice retains a consciousness of romance's fallacy and her own unnecessary emotional suffering because of it.

> She saw before her, like the neatly-ruled pages of the house-keeping book she kept for no particular reason, the debits and credits of her life. Remorselessly the old question went round and round. Why should this have happened to her? ... if she herself had started asking "Why?" earlier she would not be in the position she was in today: a prisoner in a house she hated, with people who despised her and with nothing to look forward to but growing old. (113)

Alice's gender is recognisably "feminine" in its aspiration for happiness through conven-tional marriage and living up to the ideal of a dutiful woman in the domestic sphere. Significantly, her accepted gender role is contradicted by her intense resentment of the domestic arrangements that have provided her with a "foster" family. As a housekeeper for her brother and the proxy mother for her niece, she fulfils the primary functions of the suburban woman of the Cold War. Yet Alice's own frustration and disillusion confounds her gendered subjectivity which, according to the governmental and cultural discourses of the day, ought to have been satisfied with her domestic role and fulfilled by such an existence (see the Illustrations in the next section, "Deconstructing Femininity").

The criticism implicit in Alice's dissatisfaction in The Sun is Not Enough influences the two pairs of young lovers who are set up in opposition to the older generation and its morés. Perhaps Cusack's novel - first published in 1967 - bears the spirit of the times since the teenage Australians are modern, multicultural and extremely direct in their discussion of sex

(251-254). Nonetheless, the university-educated girls aspire to the same ideal of love as Alice. This is clear in the following passage which describes the student romance between Young Mack and Liz:

> To his astonishment she drew his head down and put her lips against his in an inexpert and lingering kiss. Incredulous, he folded his arms around her and pressed her to him waiting for the recoil. Passionate and eager she quivered and clung. Trembling, he looked at her in growing joy, then kissed her as he had never dared kiss her before.
>
> "Little Liz," he murmured. "Let's get married at once." (255)

The language and writing style could easily be mistaken for an extract from a popular romance for teenage girls. The Sun is Not Enough remains, however, a social critique. It is a polemical report on the "infiltration" of former Nazis, Yugoslavian Ustachi soldiers and *Volksdeutscher* who are now resuming their fascist activities in Australia, a country that "supports and protects" Nazi war criminals by refusing international requests for their extradition (285-86, 282). Thus the young men and women in the narrative are constituted by both the demands of romance and social realism. Their behaviour is contradictory, indeed their very gender becomes unintelligible, especially from the contemporary, moral perspective of the twenty-first century.

Alice's melodramatic suicide in reaction to the overwhelming intrusion of not only politics, but the quest for justice to avenge the inhumanity of Nazi war crimes, sustains the romantic narrative. In a bout of Christian guilt about her immoral excesses with Carl, Alice represents the helpless feminine heroine confronted with incomprehensible obstacles to her eternal love. In the face of his abduction by the international Jewish organisation,

> She refused to believe that they would take Carl away from her, leaving her to live the arid years ahead alone. She clung to the rail, praying: "Oh God, forgive me if I have sinned in loving Carl before we were married. Do something to save him. You know I can't live without him". (284)

The heroine loves her hero to the end, even when he turns out to be a type of masculine monster typical of early Gothic novels and nineteenth century romantic fiction. Wives' suspicion of their husbands being something other than they appear, was meant to reflect fear of male brutality, or else women's anticipated powerlessness within the tradition of marriage, enforced by social institutions.

The heroine Alice in The Sun is Not Enough is misguided in her naive choice of a "fascist" lover and her unwitting involvement in European politics that have been transplanted in the Australian suburbs. The text suggests that it is neither love nor romance, rather her ignorance that causes her unmitigated emotional disappointment and melodramatic suicide. Thus the failed romances listed under "Primary Love Story Fails" (Table Two) are not anti-romances as such, since they are predicated on the love story which fails because of external social and political circumstances, as I have argued above. The Sun is Not Enough insists that genuine, lasting love is worth striving for in terms of Cusack's proposal of "comradeship instead of passion", as demonstrated by the teenage lovers Liz and Young Mack as well as the "multicultural" couple, Johann and Lisha.

The detailed reporting of neo-nazi plotting and expansion in the West resembles the generic style and polemical objectives of Heatwave in Berlin, as discussed in chapter two. Carl Ludwig von Rendt's kidnappers in the Australian suburbs belong to a worldwide organisation: "Those Who Shall Never Forget" and they intend to bring the war criminal to trial as Eichmann had been condemned in Israel (281-282). They relate in meticulous detail the cause and motives for the anarchistic kidnapping, exposing Alice's fiancée as "Wilhelm Ernst Rudolph von Liepach, *Obersturmbahnführer* of the S.S Sonder-Kommando Eaglehawk, war criminal No 112/j4 on the War Crimes List, wanted for crimes committed against the civilian population in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Italy" (280). Thus the serious, sensational message of her bestseller six years earlier is repeated: Nazis are being sheltered and protected in the West. The text reiterates the Cold War belief that war criminals were even "rewarded" in West Germany, where denazification had failed as a result of an impenetrable fascist network worldwide (284).

There is another parallel romance between the second generation German Jew, Lisha Mandel, and the West German Johann, who is depicted as the "innocent" nephew of the Neo-nazi von Rendt. Their relationship is also predicated on the conventional love story. When Johann declares his love for her, she replies, "Oh! My dearest, there's no time for love. I'm going to Vietnam" (260). The dialogue seems incredible, yet the context is the multicultural party where the Indian student Vaidya has just presented a long, polemical monologue meant to agitate his Pacific friends including Anglo-Australians, Indonesians, Malaysians and Phillipinos. Lisha, although responding to Johann's declaration of love in an infatuated manner typical of

romance, nonetheless decides to join the political call to arms of the Indian activist. Again her femininity is constituted according to the generic conventions of popular romance, then deconstructed by the social realism of the text, represented by a social conscience and commitment to a politics of protest.

As already mentioned, Alice displays a morbid obsession with her forbidden lover, the deceased soldier Reg, and does not form another attachment until she meets the "charming" Carl von Rendt. Immediately Alice subjects her will to his and her "feminine" subservience is extended from her brother's household to catering to Carl's whims. She unhesitatingly accepts his racist criticism of her Jewish acquaintances and of Australian multiculturalism. Here we see again the ambiguity of Cusack's women as discussed in chapter two. In Heatwave in Berlin, Joy was also meant to represent the complacent, middle-class Australian woman whom Cusack seemed to detest. Yet her critique of these women was not always that of a radical feminist, as already discussed in "Liberal Feminism and the Woman Subject" and which I will analyse further in chapter six.

Even though Liz and Lisha attend the university, the young women are less dominant in the narrative than their male counterpart. Paradoxically, Alice scorns her mother, claiming she was "fragile, feminine, virtuous, without ever breaking one of the Ten Commandments, she had been a wicked woman" and mocks her for her frigidity, emotional barreness, and hypocrisy (113). Thus women are constantly criticised and attack one another for their submissive behaviour and their uncomplaining adoption of constrictive gender roles in postwar society. Yet they seem to have had no alternative "in reality" and thus placed themselves in either a romantic exchange like Liz or else remained dependent in the domestic sphere like Alice. Their subjectivity frequently clashes with their actions, their romantic desires with their physical behaviour, which is another indication of these women having been "differently gendered", in contrast with the social expectations of the female sex at the time.

In The Half-Burnt Tree, Brenda's mid-life retirement as a bitter recluse evidently results from the limited opportunities for women living in remote areas as much as her traumatic experience of bigamy and betrayal by her "one true love". The realistic love stories of Group Two, "Primary Love Story Fails", demonstrate how the female protagonists are deprived of both romance and "genuine love" by an unfortunate collision of circumstance and social conflicts.

More importantly, the texts of both Group One and Two (see Table Two) contain heroines constituted by the opposing generic demands of popular romance and social realism. In other words, their aspirations for an idealised love are confounded by "reality" which results in a conflictual subjectivity. When these women assume a feminine gender, in often contradicts the gendered experiences they have as nonconformist females. They are meant to belong to the female sex, yet the narrative betrays an inconsistency of their gender as romantic heroines and realistic agents.

Women's Complicity with Romance in Comets Soon Pass and Heatwave in Berlin

As Cusack's play Comets Soon Pass asserts, men wanted women to be ignorant and were immediately threatened by their acquisition of knowledge. The mentor and artistic "genius" Jason Denver tells his youngest conquest, "Women shouldn't know too much" (41) and that "Women shouldn't do chemistry (43). When the naive young Elaine asks "Why not?" he replies candidly, "Because, my sweet, I'd like to have been the first one to explain to you that you're my catalyst…" (op.cit). This masculine desire to be "the first" to instruct and teach is a recurring theme in Cusack's texts. Caroline Denver is aware of her husband's chauvinistic posing, self-centred insecurity and transparent manipulation, yet she chooses to remain by the "great man's side", rather than divorcing him for infidelity.

Her cynicism and recognition that women are "caught" between the discourses of romance and realism prevent her from taking action: "How ironical! Margot - my daughter - has been reared in the kind of glamorous, romantic world I used to dream of once - and she wants to be a doctor! Elaine has been brought up in a nice antiseptic, scientific fashion and she dreams of Romance with a capital R!" (26) Thus Mrs Denver points to the discourses that inform women's subjectivity which are seemingly more powerful influences than upbringing and their immediate environment.

The worldweary Mrs Denver in Comets Soon Pass serves to illustrate women's complicity in the discourse of romance ("with a capital R") and how they as subjects choose ignorance over

action and social privilege. Elaine has been raised with expectations of the latter, yet she submits to the chivalrous domination of Jason, even when the threat to her independence is elucidated by his wife. The play not only depicts female protagonists caught between realism and romance, the "practical harem idea and latent notions of chivalry", but also presents a case for women to break free of the conundrum. Significantly, the advocate for women's freedom, the ill-treated wife Mrs Denver, returns to her husband's side with the explanation: "When you get what you want, you don't want it. I don't cae now if he has a harem; and I have to earn my spiritual keep!" (86)

It seems freedom, that is, the decision to leave her unfaithful, manipulative husband, is too simple for Mrs Denver to obtain. She prefers the complexity of suffering and the desire to indulge her masochistic feelings, even though her intellect is aware of the damage incurred by earning such "spiritual keep". Defeatedly, she approaches her husband's discarded lover Elaine and claims, "I'm sorry – for both of us" (op.cit).

Jason's desire to be "the first" to pass on (sexual) knowledge to the young girl is not rejected or opposed by the "lovestruck" Elaine who continues to play the role of the intellectual, artistic protégé as well as romantic muse. Her failure to effectively chal-lenge Jason's pretence, even when guided and encouraged to do so by his disillusioned wife, points to women's willingness and complicity in adopting the "virginal" and "ignorant" attributes that have been ascribed to her gender in society and fiction. Such complicity seemed to anger Cusack who was convinced that Australian women were particularly at fault for not exercising or taking advantage of the rights won by the suffragettes. Despite James' defence of Cusack's personal feminist stance, the best-selling author did at times personify "female" ignorance in the form of the politically unawakened or intellectually lazy woman in her fiction and plays.

In the following quote from her biography, Cusack justified her casting of the Australian woman as politically ignorant and the German man as her intellectual opposite in Heatwave in Berlin:

> Joy developed into a person from the vaguely personified reflection of the uninformed, misinformed and uninterested I knew at home. Stephen more clearly personified Germans I had met, who, coming from Nazi families, had learnt in the war that the whole of their country's policy was wrong and saw how its change from denazification

> to re-armament as likely to lead to a catastrophe that would be greater and more lasting even than that of Hitler's Germany. (qtd Freehill 138)

The narrative is meant to represent Cold War discourses (the threat of Neo-nazism), personal opinions (Cusack's historical witnesses) and government policy (West Germany's re-armament). As I will discuss in the following section and in the next chapter, this text relies heavily on national (stereo)types which makes the factuality of the novel questionable. What interests me in this section are the consequences for gender, if the Australian woman is meant to embody a lack of political knowledge or interest. As Cusack suggested above, Joy is supposed to be the "vaguely personified reflection of the uninformed, misinformed and uninterested" in postwar Australia.

Certainly, Joy is overwhelmed by the wealthy family's "power" and the "von Muhler blood". Stephen's mother is set up in opposition to the masculine dynasty with her feminine repose (49). The apparently naive Joy makes a critical observation regarding gender roles in Germany and Australia which patriotically places the New Country in a superior position to European tradition. She criticises Stephen's mother's role of "sweet submission" as a role she despises. Joy comments that she cannot understand a woman who complies and consents to every wish of her husband, claiming that she doesn't know any women like that in Australia (50). Mrs von Muhler, however, proves her strength by the narrative's conclusion. In Cusack's melodramatic style, the "traditional" German wife and mother has no alternative but to suicide. The text suggests that there is no place for the defiant female who has asserted herself, challenged patriarchal power and, in this instance, won the struggle for independence. One can also recognise in this breaking of the gendered mould, the motif of the New World versus the Old World, which is problematic since Cusack idealises Australia as the better country in comparison with gender relations in West Germany.

In his synopsis of Heatwave in Berlin, Freehill suggests that Joy is "uncomfortably and unsympathetically aware that Stephen is less happy than she is in the return to his family" (136). I would argue, however, that the young Australian woman is far from being unsympathetic, rather she is increasingly confused by the family dynamic. Joy is tempted by the promise of luxury and power, though ultimately she says it is up to her husband to decide whether they will stay in Berlin (53). She is played against him by the family and manipulated in their web of lies and secrecy (54-55). Joy is charmed by the "handsome brute" Horst,

Stephen's attractive, manly brother, who is also a war criminal, but now enjoys a top position in the government/military as well as running the family's industrial business (53-54). Joy agrees to stay because she believes Stephen wants to. At first she insists that their roots are in Australia, yet the family continues to persuade her by offering her a house, jewels, castles and prestige (51-52). Her brother-in-law's flattery resembles a filmscript dialogue. Horst offers Joy romance and glamour if she stays in Berlin with Stephen: "Men would adore you and women would be madly envious of your figure" (51).

Freehill writes in his biography of Cusack that Joy is a "typical product of the Australian middle-class" (op.cit). Yet the text constantly points to the social conditions of that typical product. The narrative describes Joy's subjectivity and her middle-class existence in Australia which seems petty compared to the glamour and romance of riches offered to her by the generous von Muhlers. "She was dazzled by the picture he painted. It revived the romantic dreams of her girlhood... A glamorous world that till now existed for her only in films and novels" (57).

She thinks, then, economically of her husband's desires and believes that the reasons for his moodiness may be due to homesickness. Joy then decides she could adapt to life in Berlin and prepares for life as an immigrant in West Germany. She compares herself to the British royalty, the Queen at Windsor, when told of the von Muhler villa in Bavaria: "And though inwardly she mocked at her romanticism she thought: What woman would be fool enough to refuse power and position for her husband and children? Wealth for them all and the things that only great wealth could give" (57).

Joy is shown to have a consciousness of the discourse of romance which is countered by her pragmatism. Her realism recognises women's fantasies of romance. Interestingly, the women in Cusack's narratives usually associate romance with glamour, wealth, luxury or else genuine chivalrous love in the lower classes, for example, in Southern Steel and Say No to Death. Like Freehill, Lloyd uncritically agrees with Cusack's state-ment at the beginning of this section; Joy is meant to symbolise Australian complacency and unwillingness to engage in complex or unpleasant ideas. Yet I would argue that Joy is judged harshly by the author and these critics. As a typical feminine virtue, she takes the wishes and well-being of her husband into account and makes her personal decisions with regard to family and other private

commitments. This is through no fault of her own, rather it is a result of social conditioning and the gender role given to women in the postwar era.

Because of her political ignorance, Joy is initially impressed by European standards of luxury. The villa of the family clan/dynasty in West Berlin looks like "magazine pic-tures… over-elaborate, unreal, yet exciting, glamorous" (41). Her knowledge of the world has been formed through magazine pictures and popular women's literature that have, typically, helped to exclude women from the political, public domain by limiting their interests to the private sphere. Paradoxically, her migrant husband, Stephen, comes to represent the Australian work ethic and "democratic tradition"; he became his father-in-law's assistant by proving his competence rather than succeeding through family connections. Stephen explains to his Prussian father that in Australia a manager works with his employees and does not manage them since that is "the Australian way" (47).

His family rejects this. As Herr von Muhler repeats "Das Blut" [blood ties] should be the most important source of power and he scorns Australia's democracy which leads to strikes and poor industrial performance. Stephen defines Australian democracy for his German family: less racism in work practices and workers are less subordinate to superiors as well as being anti-militaristic (48-49). Here the national stereotypes of both Australian and German cultures are deployed in the narrative. More importantly, they are purveyed by males, in a conversation between men. The national stereotypes are formed around questions of economic power, industrial management and masculinity.

In contrast to this unchallenged possession of knowledge by men, Joy's unwitting betrayal of the persecuted Arthur Schonhauser is exaggerated in the narrative. He was a world famous pianist till "the Nazis ruined his hands in Dachau" (79). Cusack even uses German for the father's furious reaction who claims Schonhauser was imprisoned because he had "damaged the honour of the German Reich" (op.cit). Joy still doesn't understand the family's position and believes her sister-in-law is trying to "spare her feelings", although she retorts derisively when Bertha attempts to deny the purpose of the camps. Joy argues with them but fails to see their role in the War and, supposedly, in postwar German society. Typical of the propaganda of the GDR, the narrative insists on the unrelenting nazism of its characters who express outright mockery of the "International Jewry". The patriarch's anti-semitism is encapsulated

by the insult in German "Widerlicher Judenluemmel!" [repulsive Jewish louts] (80). More importantly, the fascist family is widely supported in their extremist views.

Given this outright hatred and explicit reference to war crimes, Joy's naivete makes her an incredible character. At Han's offer of taking her to an educational documentary on Germany, Joy replies "...if it's one of those political documentaries, I'm not interested" (61). Stephen's opinion of her is confirmed. Joy seemingly wishes to remain ignorant and not solve the political "mystery" of her situation. Her romantic impulses in this "realistic" narrative result not in a weak characterisation of the woman, rather they confound of her very gender. As we have seen, women's ignorance of political affairs has been a construction of femininity itself. Joy is depicted as an ignorant, suburban housewife who dreams of glamour, riches and romance whilst worrying about the welfare and financial security of her children and husband. Her appearance and concerns are what is conventionally defined as feminine: the family, the domestic sphere and romantic fantasies. Yet this romantic, ignorant woman is transformed in the narrative into a politically aware agent in society. Joy is alternately a feminine subject, then a "masculine" agent of change. In other words, she is torn between romance and realism in the text.

To mark her moral and political transformation, Joy becomes a campaigner for an international Jewish organisation that is seeking more justice for survivors. Joy donates money through Brunhilde and promises her continued support when she is back in Australia. Given Joy's rapid "politicisation", it seems that Stephen is the cause of her ignorance since he refused to inform her about his family. Indeed Joy accuses him of deception and false pretences, as soon as she has become a "politically aware and self-realised" individual. This occurs dramatically as a "rite of passage" whilst she is playing the piano for the dying Professor Schonhauser. I suggest that Joys's "not-knowing" is a result of her husband's "not-telling". The need for disclosure and a fair exchange of information is bound into the gender relations portrayed in the novel. Joy and Stephen follow the conventional form of marriage and are rewarded for it. Once all is revealed and the truth of the (family) history is disclosed, it is possible for their marriage to at last become fulfilled and secure.

Cusack first addressed the charge that Australian women were comparatively uneman-cipated in her wartime radio programme "Calling All Women", broadcast in New South Wales. This

highly unusual, witty and provocative programme often drew hostility from male listeners, as Cusack's clever responses in the transcripts of the radio show record. For example, two male listeners complained that Australian women are "fifty years behind women in America and England" because they are "too lazy" to use their political rights and "hug their own chains".[159] Through her regularly broadcasted forum on women's rights, Cusack attempted to dispute this charge by pointing to sexism and discriminatory practices, even though she frequently expressed a similar sentiment that Australian women were not sufficiently committed to their own emancipation, as I have discussed in the previous section on "Liberal Feminism". This view of Australian women is also expressed in the extract from the novel quoted below.

Stephen continually taunts Joy for her "girlish ignorance" and trust in other people's stories, even deriding her for having believed his explanations for the last ten years of their marriage when even her mother could see that he was lying. He fails to take any responsibility for his lies, laying the blame on his wife who was just like her father, and believed what she wanted to believe (154). There are many opportunities in Berlin for Stephen to "confess all" and ask for his wife's understanding. For example, it is implied that Hans is a spy and after Joy attempts to verify this, Stephen rudely tells her not to enquire about such things (60). Stephen deliberately feeds her ignorance while scorning her for it.

> "My dear Joy, on any question concerning Germany, Hans and I bow to your superior knowledge." His voice was so full of irony that she writhed.
>
> "There's no need to be sarcastic about it."
>
> "What else can I be about political questions when for the ten years I've known you I've never seen you read anything in the paper but the music criticisms, the literary page and the fashion notes?"
>
> Joy simmered at his rudeness. (61)

According to Cusack, Joy represents the typical "Westerner", or more specifically, "middle-class Australian women" who believe that denazification since the Nuremburg Trials has entirely "cleansed" Germany. Ignorance is bliss and the women in the texts discussed in this chapter, are quite often ignorant. They are blissfully unaware of inter-national politics in their secure middle-class existence in Australian suburbs as The Sun is Not Enough proposes. Another of Cusack's Cold War thrillers, this text also insists on the ignorance of the heroine, who rather than becoming enlightened or "politically awakened", suicides. The discourses

[159] Transcript of radio show, Dymphna Cusack, "Calling All Women," 1944. MS4621/7/24-25.

operating in these narratives suggest that ignorance of politics and history is feminine and "having knowledge" is portrayed as a masculine privilege. Thus the romantic heroines, such as Joy, Alice and Mrs Denver, assume a conventionally feminine gender, in appearance, attitudes and social behaviour, even though both women "realistically" become aware of their own ignorance and the constraints of conventional femininity.

ii) Deconstructing Femininity

Unintelligible Genders: Come in Spinner, Picnic Races, Say No to Death and Southern Steel

In Gender Trouble, Judith Butler reformulates established concepts of agency and resistance as a possible transformation of gender. She explains how the continual task of "acting" or performing one's gender calls for a new politics:

> The possibilities of gender transformation are to be found precisely in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a de-formity, or a parodic repetition that exposes the phantasmatic effect of an abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction. (141)

Butler suggests that theorists and activists should maintain an awareness of the "politic-ally tenuous" nature of identity in order to effectively mobilise around such subjects as women, lesbians, gays and issues of racism. The fact that the "woman subject" is not a closed, predetermined identity and is, instead, open to multiple meanings and redefin-itions, should enable a better understanding of femininity and masculinity in the past and present. As I have argued in the previous chapters and will attempt to illustrate here, many of Cusack's protagonists become exemplary of this discontinuity or "deformity" when they fail to repeat the gender acts established by the generic conventions of social realism and popular romance.

I wish to begin my analysis with an example of a heroine who is apparently realistic in her approach to gender relations, yet opts for a romantic resolution of her love life. The beauty

therapist Guinea in Come in Spinner, is the youngest staff member of the Marie Antoinette Beauty Salon. She is the central, romantic figure of the multi-narrative story which takes place in the span of a week. Like its later adaptation as a television series in the eighties, the controversial postwar novel, written in collaboration with Florence James, remains an icon of women's resilience and wartime hardship in Sydney.

The cover of the 1994 edition of Come in Spinner reprints an advertisement for Ponds cosmetics with the motto: "Packing food for the boys... or meeting HIM on leave... *she's lovely* with Pond's Lips and Pond's Dreamflower Face Powder" (see the illustration below). Apart from the lipstick and powder, the illustrations include a "tall, dark and handsome" returned soldier kissing a blissfully happy, extremely feminine woman, underneath a much smaller picture of her in a services uniform, working diligently in a military kitchen.

The publisher has chosen to emphasise the popular romantic aspect of the narrative; indeed a potential reader would not expect the harsh social critique of this recent "classic edition" which is more than 700 pages long. Similarly, the hardcover edition of Pioneers on Parade, republished for Australia's Bicentenary in 1988, strongly emphasises the popular cultural appeal of the text by reprinting similar "romantic" images from cosmetic and domestic appliance advertisements, as well as the now nostalgically valued, elegantly designed, cover pages of the national magazine The Australian Women's Weekly among other women's journals (see the illustrations below).

Guinea has various affairs with American and Australian soldiers. Her promiscuous conduct is scrutinised and she is reprimanded by her jealous, childhood sweetheart Kim (528). Guinea plays with romance, affecting and realising the "dream girl" image with her good looks and groomed femininity. The young Australian woman remains self-possessed and refuses to take her lovers' sentimental devotion seriously: "Gee! Does he write slushy letters! I only ever read the beginning and the end" (60). Similarly, Guinea courts the American colonel with an unsentimental clarity of purpose, that of marriage, which would secure "glamour with a capital G and luxury" since Byron Maddocks was the "answer to every gold-digger's prayer, maiden or otherwise" (203).

Guinea's various social successes contrast starkly with the fate of her unfortunate sister Monnie who, in an attempt to avoid conscription for factory labour, is forced into pros-titution. In fact the organised exploitation of the girl represents the inversion of romance, since Monnie at first believes the American soldier/customer to be an exciting date (195). Her older sister and foster mother blame Australian society for Monnie's "crime" and point to the hypocrisy of the law system which never arrests the men (526). Guinea, the glamour girl, even seems to become a man-hater. Her colleagues remark on the beauty therapist's successes in love, "...you've got more men than a film star". This is followed by the exclamation: "Men! Guinea kicked the wastepaper basket passionately. Men! Crikey, how I hate men!" (517). Guinea seems to typify the often embittered romantic heroine of conventional romance who tends to be wary of men's intentions and sincerity (521).

It is important to note that in popular romance, the woman's scepticism is remedied by the Right Man who awakens desire against her will. The hero may not initially appear to be the heroine's ideal lover, yet he is the one preordained to overwhelm her senses (body) in order to achieve final unity with her will (mind) - or as Cusack put it, a "fusing" of the mind and body. In Come in Spinner, this conventional romantic plot is constructed through Guinea's initial rejection of Kim, the honest, Australian boy-next-door (668). It would be no surprise to see Guinea give up Colonel Maddocks for the less glamorous native soldier, if the narrative were an unmitigated romance. Guinea is, however, also constituted by the narrative demands of social realism which means her motives for seeking "true love" are either self-serving at worst or resulting from economic imperatives at best (523, 635).

Guinea remains detached about becoming Maddock's future wife (685). She is bored when her suitor is "tender and romantic" and declares she is prepared to "give romance away" (700). Despite her cynicism about romance, Guinea returns to her first love Kim thereby fulfilling the romantic narrative. Contrary to her protestations regarding the superficiality/painfulness of love and "all the romantic guff men seem to think so important" (708), Guinea accepts the man who promises to marry her "for keeps", to be faithful and to have a child with her, which is of course the (re)solution - and reassurance - offered by conventional romances (709). Guinea, in the process, becomes "unintelligibly gendered": she resembles the idealistic, romantic heroine while almost becoming the pragmatic realist or a

"fully realised" woman of social realism, before the narrative's sudden closure through romantic generic conventions.

Come in Spinner ultimately provides a "Happy End" about which the female characters, and even Cusack, had apparently been sceptical. Cusack's scepticism, for instance, is evident when she described her motive for writing the anti-romance The Half-Burnt Tree, "The story illustrates that romantic love is not enough: it is too variable, too turbulent, too uncertain a base on which to build a life" (qtd Freehill 179). Cusack advocated love as a "by-product of life", a "fusing of mind and heart". Is the union of Guinea and Kim to be read as "true love" as opposed to "romantic love"? Here we return to the fundamental irony of the popular romance which I noted at the beginning of this chapter. The conventional love story is in fact a mimesis of the high cultural search for "genuine love". Like the realistic novel, the romantic narrative lays claims on the truth and credibility of its protagonists. The "real" is confirmed by the definite closure of the "Happy End" or blissful union.

Like Guinea, the "pretty young" romantic heroine Eden in Picnic Races, almost decides to marry for money rather than love: "You could make a good life out of liking and a bargain you both respected" (219). Marriage as a business transaction depicts the heroine as a guilty, feminine agent, making the most of her limited options in life. Furthermore, it would avoid the chaotic power of desire which would hinder the young woman's chances of making a good match. Considering the emotional bond to her British aristocratic suitor/imposter, Eden reflects:

> With him you'd be safe from all the wild tumultous things to which your body and heart could betray you. It wouldn't be what Juliet had, but, looking at it

Illustrations: Bicentenary Editions of Come in Spinner and Pioneers on Parade

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Dymphna Cusack and Florence James. Come in Spinner "Unabridged Classic Edition", (1951; Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1994).

Dymphna Cusack and Miles Franklin. Pioneers on Parade (1939; Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1988).

21

In the morning Aunt Lucy had a temperature, and was so listless that William was scared. "It's the first time I ever saw Grandma throw in her bundle," he said to Lizzie.

She increased his fears. "After all she is seventy-eight, and all this excitement might be the death of her."

William felt as if someone had put a lump of ice in his chest, and could well believe Lizzie as he saw his grandmother lying so quiet in Prim's modern lacquered bed. Never before did he remember seeing her in bed during the day. It seemed to his frightened eyes that the wrinkled flesh had fallen away from the bones already, and the great Brankston (or Foxer) nose looked more raking than ever. He put a hand on her forehead. "Take your hands off me," she barked. "Do you think I'm a sick cow?" That was comfortingly familiar and better than watching the thin veined eyelids as she lay with them closed. He went off with relief to summon Greg—as a friend—not as a physician, for Aunt Lucy had scorned the suggestion.

Greg, having only one patient waiting, soon made the call. He said he wanted to hear the rights of the belly-band story, and the magnificent stand Aunt Lucy had made against ancient oppression and snobbery.

He reported later that the old lady had a touch of 'flu but also showed symptoms of shock. It would be just as well if she could be persuaded to stay in bed for a day or two.

Audrey looked upon this as providential. If Aunt Lucy gave in to the wedding, George also might be brought to see reason. When Lady Cravenburn telephoned to ask Mrs George if she would have lunch with her and then go shopping, Audrey made the most of old Mrs Brankston's indisposition. Nevertheless, with Lizzie in charge, she clamped down her anxiety

> reasonably, where did it get Juliet? If she married Ralph he would have a pleasant, easy, civilised existence without endless conflicts. She was already walking down the aisle on his arm in the most romantic setting she could imgine when they turned in to the homestead gate (217).

Eden compares herself to the heroine of Romeo and Juliet, yet uses her pragmatism to decide "true love" could only lead to melodrama, disappointment, and possibly death.

Her preference for an "easy existence" seems to be modern, but it coincides with Cusack's opinion that women in the twentieth century had to choose between the harem and chivalry, or in Dallas's words, the glamorous wives of rich men or the domestic drudgery of most women (see chapter one). Significantly, Eden becomes a Modern Woman when she opts for a university education and career. She rejects a suitable marriage for one that she truly desires. Eden is realistic in her independence and self-assertion, yet is shaped by the discourse of romance which instructs her to redeem the taciturn doctor Greg and recognise that he is her "one true love". As the local town sergeant observes of the final union "Now that's what I call real RO-mance" (314).

The love story in Picnic Races is hindered throughout by class differences and the romantic heroine changing her superficial values for "real" working-class ones. Florence James has noted that in Come in Spinner, Guinea takes Kim back on her own terms and the couple's love emanates from shared family values. In response to critics, James states that although Guinea lacks "depth", she was "somehow all the young girls of the period who were attractive, and who were independent enough to say yes or no" (qtd Lloyd 361).

> We have been criticised for not making Guinea more ambitious, more critical of the traditional male/female roles in marriage, but she is a girl of the 1940's - and it's still the accepted hope for many young girls of the 1980's. Guinea dealt with people as she found them, never with ideas. (op.cit)

James' comment above illustrates the varying forms and definitions which twentieth century feminism has taken. From a post-Women's Liberation perspective, a feminist text ought to criticise gender roles in marriage and society, in other words, the precepts of the romantic ideal. James admits to being a postwar liberal feminist, in that she and Cusack tried to "reflect" the real aspirations and behaviour of Australian women during World War Two. For many women in the 1990s, argues James, an ideal marriage or successful love is "still the

accepted hope". Thus woman's subjectivity is portrayed in its ambiguity of lived experience of dealing with daily gender oppression. This experience was/is compounded by theoretical reforms that have been based on the struggle for emancipation.

The ambiguity of women's awareness of disadvantageous gender relations and their ensuing agency are continually portrayed in Cusack's work. In Say No to Death, Jan is convinced of her hero's better qualities and the transcendental nature of true love. Her suspicious, authoritative sister Doreen initially wishes to explode Jan's delusions about Bart:

> There's been too much fun and games for him to settle down. Too many girls for him ever to be content with one. It wouldn't matter two hoots if he had picked on the same type of girl, one-for-all-and-all-for-one, but no, he has to pick on a softie like you, full of romantic ideas of being faithful forever, and it just makes me sick. (13)

Doreen, who has had a successful military career and is later rewarded for it when her tuberculosis is treated in well-equipped army hospitals, is influenced largely by the nar-rative demands of social realism. Doreen remains the aloof pragmatist, much like two other professionals in Cusack's texts, Eve in Jungfrau and Dallas in Come in Spinner. These women do not attempt to reform their lover/husband so that he may become a "Whole Man", as Jan succeeds in transforming Bart through her, and eventually his, self-effacement. The character Jan is, in this sense, a textual agent of romance and its humanist promise, rather than merely being a realistic figure in the social drama of the tuberculosis epidemic that shook wartime Australia.

It seems that a realistic depiction of marriage does not preclude romance. Cusack often referred to her own marriage with Norman Freehill as a model of happiness, content-ment and equality. "Wholesome couples" fulfilled by heterosexual romance are to be found throughout her narratives, for example, the workers Landy and Anne in the indus-trial novel Southern Steel. The newlyweds consider marriage bliss, "an incredible, lovely spring of happiness" (329). Landy eroticises his wife by observing Anne's "body strong and beautiful... her firm breasts" (328). The clichéd language of popular romance assumes prevalence in the text:

> He sat watching her. "I'd like a colour picture of you as you look now".
>
> "Get along with you; you're getting real sookey. The way you're babbling about pictures of me, I reckon you'll want to turn me into a film star next."
>
> "Nothing doing. I'm exclusive. You for me, and me for you." (328)

Landy's possessive admiration only serves to make Anne self-conscious, although her bashful reaction succeeds in eliciting conventional romance's promise of exclusiveness and sustained glamour in marital love. The parallel romantic story concerns Landy's brother Bar and his wartime affair Myee. There is nothing coy about their illicit relationship which begins with a "long and disturbing kiss" and, inevitably, the nagged husband Bar is seduced by the the absent soldier's wife (327). Yet this is essentially an industrial novel, based on factual reporting and much detailed description of the steel works and local history. As discussed in chapter three, the novel's hybrid genre was even classified as a "woman's book" (see the section, "'Feminine' Popular Romance and 'Masculine' Social Realism: Southern Steel").

The dualistic gender roles available to Australian women are again evident in this hybrid novel: the romantic heroines in Southern Steel represent either the femme fatale (the "practical harem idea") or the wife on a pedestal ("idealistic notions of chivalry"). As I shall discuss in the next section on sexuality, the men are portrayed as besotted, tragic figures of romance, devoted husbands or else indifferent to the plight of their partners. These types are not credible since the men and women are not quite "realistic" or, according to the general criterion of classic realism, the characters lack "pyschological depth". I would argue that Anne and Myee, who are both constituted in the narrative in terms of masculine desire, become differently gendered because the realism of their female selves is constrained by the romantic narrative, indeed by the social discourse of romance.

This Dissertation has been mainly concerned with a texual analysis of genre, gender and discourse, rather than examination of the social discourse of romance. As mentioned in chapter one, Catherine Belsey's work is exemplary of the work being done on the lattter topic. I wish to limit my project to a literary critical analysis of genre and fictional types that inform gender in Cusack's texts. As the previous chapters have shown, there is a presupposed hierarchy in the criticism that her characters are superficial or types, not sufficiently credible for realism, although they may be suitable for romance. Thus there has been a subordination of romance to realism as the superior genre, as I have demonstrated in the section on feminine popular romance and masculine social realism in chapter three. More importantly, critics often assume that realism accurately reflects an original or authentic gendered subject, "men and women", whereas romance is supposedly a caricature. Popular romance is then considered to be a distorted represen-tation of men and women as they

"truly" are, without recognising that gender is the creation of subjectivities and discourses on the "biological" sexes.

It is useful to return to Butler's work at this point. Her notion of mimesis is an argu-ment against the idea that homosexuality imitates the "original form", heterosexuality. Following gender theorists such as Gayle Rubin, Adrienne Rich, Monique Wittig and Michel Foucault, Butler has argued for a performative notion of sexuality in that the distinction between sex and gender is abolished through parody, cultural ascription and the "compulsory" performance of social norms. Similarly, postmodernist critics have argued that there is "no original" object (the text) or subject ("man"); only simulacra and pastiché. Meaghan Morris is one of the many critics who has pointed to post-modernism's initial exclusion of feminist theory and the subsequent exchange between the two bodies of thought.

I suggest that in lieu of this feminist, postmodernist challenge to hierarchical cultural forms and gendered subjects, the superiority of realism to romance can be easily dis-missed. Furthermore, the effects of hybrid genres on gender can be interpreted as the constitutive frame in which the subject repeats or performs her/his gender. "Male" and "female" protagonists of Cusack's Cold War fiction are able to be deconstructed as humanist representations of gender. They can no longer remain the unified, "sexual" entities they were once taken to be, especially when these characters resemble national, cultural types. Butler's thought has extended Simone de Beauvoir's thesis, "One is not born but becomes a woman". Thus the female subject in Cusack's narrative is not merely a poorly written type or an inaccurately represented "woman". Instead, I wish to interpret her as a sign of the gendering process at the juncture of historical discourses and fictional representations which have been regulated by established genres.

Confounding the Binary: the Female Trio in Jungfrau

> I've said it's a fascinating world for women today. It's also a critical one. You can't pick up a paper or switch on the radio without finding someone - usually a man - making solemn pronouncements upon the place of women in the world. Someone thunders that a woman's place is in the home if civilisation is to survive. The evening paper exhorts you to go canning apricots if you value your country's welfare at a tinker's cuss; recruiting officers try to lure you into this or that uniform by showing you impressive pictures of amazonian women driving motor trucks with one hand, while manufacturers of morale beseech you to "Stay feminine for his sake!"[160]

Despite her liberal form of feminism discussed in other chapters, Cusack seemed to possess a sardonic perception of the societal pressures on women to conform to given roles and standards of femininity. The quote above illustrates that Australian cultural policy, whether in wartime or not, did not necessarily relate to women's lived exper-iences nor did it succeed in duping them.

Cusack wished to illuminate this disjuncture when she decided to write about "real women". In a letter to James, she wrote that Jungfrau:

> is mainly concerned with women as they are. Not as Galsworthy would have us believe they are, or Aldous Huxley draws them or as Eleanor Glyn presents them, all wrapped up in icing sugar - like Turkish Delight! but women as we know them... Thinking, working, loving, desiring, growing weary of this freedom... moving between ecstasy and despair. Full of longing for the wider horizons - and a little afraid of the snapped cables and dragging anchors.[161]

The story of three female friends clearly has a foundation in Romanticism, given its pro-jected "ecstasy and despair". Cusack's first novel apparently shocked "genteel readers" with its uncompromised depiction of Modern Women with their newly gained freedom from some traditions.[162] Women in the thirties were still meant to conceal such "scan-dals" as abortion and premarital sex, which Cusack rightly thought to be a misrepre-sentation of women's actual experience, how they "really are" as opposed to the fic-tional attempts of her contemporaries. Jungfrau has therefore been considered by Drusilla Modjeska to be a "prototype of the feminist novel of the interwar period" (3).

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[160] Dymphna Cusack, "Calling All Women," Transcript, 1944. MS4621/7/2.
[161] Letter quoted in James' foreword to Jungfrau, (Sydney: Penguin, 1989) ix.
[162] Dymphna Cusack quoted in Florence James' foreword to Come in Spinner (1951; Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1994) vii.

With the right to abortion as its polemical theme, it is a moving tale of Dorothea Mackinley whose doomed affair with the Professor Owen Gloster leads to her pregnancy and suicide (229). The narrative focuses on Thea's intimate friendship with Eve and Marc who vainly try to prevent her psychological disintegration. Jungfrau, a runner-up in a literary competition, was reviewed positively at the time by the Australian Women's Weekly, the Bulletin's Red Page and the Advertiser in Adelaide, which makes its public censure and subsequent failure to be reprinted all the more surprising.[163]

The reviews tended to debate the morality of the Modern Woman, even though the novel points to gender inequality as the source of the three women's quandary.[164] Cusack seems to have anticipated the debate by depicting Gloster's ignorance and mis-understanding of "the Moderns" in general who, the Professor of Literature at the University of Sydney believes, are like modernism itself "without hope and incapable of despair" (291). The central protagonist is Thea, an Arts student, who resolves to have an abortion. The dilemma arises from the conflicting reactions of her two closest friends. The young women Marc, a passionate, androgynous libertine, and Eve, the religious, coldly intellectual doctor, are opposed in a way that is more complex than differing expressions of conventional morality. Similarly, I would argue that there is more at stake than emerging types of the Modern Woman, as identified by the aforementioned reviews.

In their embodiment of sexuality, the androgynous Marc and the asexual Eve do not repre-sent a "third gender". Instead, I maintain that they signify a confounding of the gender binary, presupposed by the dominant narrative structure of romance, albeit a failed romance in Jungfrau. Thea becomes a tragic, romantic heroine while her devoted friends, Marc and Eve disparage the ideal of romance and remain pragmatists in the "social world". In their pragmatism, careerism and androgyny, Marc and Eve do not fit into the binary of femininity/masculinity, woman/man, female/male. In other words, they do not fulfil social expectations of the established gender roles available to women in the 1930s.

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[163] "Fine Australian Story with a City Background: Tale of Post-war Moderns," Australian Women's Weekly 28 Nov. 1936; TD. Mutch, "Ellen Dymphna Cusack," Bulletin The Red Page, 16 Sep. 1936; "Future of the Australian Novel," Adelaide Advertiser Nov. 1936.

[164] See also Drusilla Modjeska's discussion of the women's moral dilemma, Exiles at Home: Australian Women Writers 1925-1945 (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1981) 149.

Despite their similarity, that is, their common failure to perform their gender as Australian women in the interwar years, the two professionals are vastly different. Eve is Marc's moral and spiritual opposite. Believing in chastity and a Catholic God, Eve is a proud, efficient and highly-respected surgeon. The hard working Marc, acts according to common sense and a modern set of priniciples. The committed young social worker also takes pride in being a libertine and dilettante. Inevitably the puritanical Dr Blakemore and the Marchesa clash more than once. Marc's famous feminist statement about women "withering on the virgin stem" is rebuffed by Eve's religious solution of celibacy, when she replies "there are other possibilities" (34).

Marc scornfully retorts, "I don't think there's anything so profoundly depressing and so likely to encourage girls from the straight and narrow as the history of a really good woman" (34). Thus we find the subject "woman" a point of contention between women in Cusack's text. The "history of a really good woman" indicates the fictionality of the virtuous, ideal woman, indeed the inescapable fictionality of the woman subject altogether, which Cusack referred to in her letter to James. Moreover, the model held up to gendered females is also an historical one. Beginning in the chivalrous days of the Middle Ages, prose and history were combined as the moralistic requirement of being a "good woman". This dictate, as suggested in the text, is unlikely to convince those for whom it has been constructed, women.

Eve misjudges the seriousness of Thea's condition when she assures Marc that "women don't die that easily" and insists they should wait till Thea comes to her senses (252). Eve's religious dogmatism, however, is one of the suggested causes of Thea's suicide, since her doctor friend refused to perform an abortion. Instead, Eve offers to give up her position in the Sydney hospital and move with Thea to Western Australia where she could give the illegitimate child up for adoption. As a result, Marc scorns Eve for her relentless moralism and hypocrisy (288), although she acknowledges the probability that nothing could have saved Thea from herself in the end (289). Thea had been too deeply disappointed by her "one true love" and, in accord with canonical, romantic literature, becomes a tragic heroine.

Thus we have in Jungfrau female protagonists constituted by differing generic conven-tions in the one narrative. As I have argued above, characters who are caught between realism and romance represent the conflictual subjectivity of women in the first part of the twentieth

century. Thea, Marc and Eve illustrate the ethical, social and psycho-logical dilemmas of the Modern Woman in the interwar period in Australia. The text depicts these female characters struggling to become "Whole Women" according to the humanist dictates of society. They are educated, responsible and ethical citizens, yet they are obstructed in this struggle to become "fully realised humans" by the intertwining discourses of romance, religion and politics.

Love and Romance in Jungfrau: Constituting Thea and Marc as Subjects

Because of its primary metaphorical significance, it should be noted that *Jungfrau* is the German word for virgin. Professor Gloster likens his former student to the proud, vir-ginally untouched, mountain Jungfrau in the Austrian Alps. This simile confines Woman to Nature, as feminist scholarship since the eighties has elaborated with its research on gender dichotomies in Western thought. The narrative suggests an alternative to the concept of virginal nature: Thea is neither woman nor man, rather she embodies the artistic ideal of the "Della Robbia Child." This is the explanation Marc gives to Thea's devoted beau, Terry (114). Marc considers Thea to be unawakened but not in the sense of being sexually naive or immature. Instead, she is "not quite adult and is like those Della Robbia reliefs. Exquisite dancing figures just falling short of complete reality - living in a world of two and a half dimensions instead of the full three. Real, and yet static, immobilised against that bright burning blue" (112-113).

If Thea does not belong to that world, then what or where is she constituted as a sub-ject? Significantly, Marc's theorisation of her friend's state of being resembles my argument for proliferating the gender system. Thea has not become a woman in the course of the narrative, she becomes "differently gendered". She remains a static, immobilised figure that is paradoxically dancing. Thea falls short of complete reality and is, then, almost or not quite real. Life overtakes Thea, it rushes in on her, and she reacts by taking her own life. Jungfrau culminates in her schizoid sense of self and environment until Thea is finally overcome by her emotional disappointment, paranoia and angst (242). Thus her indistinguishable gender, not

being a woman or recognisable "human", is a result of her psychological suffering at the hands of society and having believed in romance.

She became alarmed at Marc's warning that being a "modern woman nowadays is no sinecure, believe me, however pleasant it seemed in anticipation" because men expected all things from a single woman who must embody virtues, charm and intellect (56). Such cynicism oppresses Thea, especially when Marc insists that women are no happier today and cannot choose their fate despite the social reforms that followed the first wave feminism of the suffragettes. Marc's attitude towards love is pessimistic because she believes most things are just incidents and we only try to invest them with a sense of permanence (57). She considers Eve one of those "antiseptic women" and although she admires her professional success, Marc claims: "it fills me with horror when I think of all they miss. Women who make a success of any job other than marriage are expected to live a life with all the inhibitions and none of the compensations of a cloister" (56).

This character represents the emancipated woman who determines her own sex life free of the moral strictures of the time. Even though she seems to promote a sexually active life for unmarried women, Marc argues for an idea of romantic love that is not defined by sexual relations: "It's only lately that we've narrowed romance down to the popular idea of being something to do with sex relations... the Greeks didn't regard their sex relationships as the be-all and the end-all of existence" (55). Marc's position on romance is similar to that of Dallas in Come in Spinner; a nostalgic notion of romance belonging to women's cultural tradition that has been debased by mass culture and contemporary definitions of femininity.

At the same time, love should not be the rationale of relations between the sexes. Marc asserts, "It's all bunk about love being a woman's whole existence" (58). Her reflec-tions on love throw Thea into a deep melancholy (59). She begins to articulate a sense of her shifting identity in terms of being a woman:

> No pigeonholing people; or yourself, for that matter. No docketting yourself as Dorothea Mackinley, Class II, Section 8, snub-nosed brunette. For, the moment you had the labels on, something would happen and off you would go behaving according to the rules laid for Class IV, section 2, lop-eared blonde. (80)

Thus the narrative points to the enforced categorisation of women according to stan-dards of beauty, virtue and availability. The stark irony of females being placed into classes and subcategories with determining features is a parody that was ahead of its time. Cusack broadened her analysis of gender as being tenuous, enforced and "untrue" to a humanist platform of "no pigeonholing people; or yourself for that matter." Clearly, there is an attempt to free the subject from external discourses and one's identity and gender being determined by physical, "biological" factors.

Unlike Thea, the impermanence and instability of life and love do not seem to disturb Marc whose namesake is taken from a portrait of the decadent aristocrat Marchesa Casati (37). Marc is a strong, self-assured woman of the world who is unashamed of her promiscuity and unmoved by men's overt admiration of her. She ridicules the social mandate to be courteous to the opposite sex and "compulsory pairing" as she describes the pressure on her not to remain a single woman (51-52, 89, 93-94). Although in her career as a social worker she is politically committed to delinquent youth, Marc dreams of luxury and cultivates a circle of friends comprised of intellectuals and wealthy sponsors of the arts (73).

In her stance on gender relations, she seems to be radical in comparison with Thea and offers subversive advice on sexual relations: "Men like to be entertained, Marc had once assured her, adding that that was the reason she was always careful to be her least interesting when they expected her to be amusing" (69). Marc is a fascinating portrait of the Modern Woman and, like the novel itself, has imbibed the intellectual culture of the day. Significantly, she was even praised by the Australian Women's Weekly reviewer for being "the only truly emancipated one of the three". Marc openly scorned conventional morality and sexual behaviour. As Cusack formulated the social demands on women during wartime, Marc refused to "stay feminine for his sake" as "beseeched by manufacturers of morale".[165]

Jungfrau was runner-up for the Prior Prize Memorial in 1935. In the Bulletin literary competition, Kylie Tennant's Tiburon had won. Nevertheless, Cusack's first novel appeared in an edition of 1 000 for which she received 23 pounds. Her contemporary, Frank Dalby Davidson, commented at the time: "It stands alone as the first Australian novel to take the

[165] "Fine Australian Story with a City Background: Tale of Post-war Moderns," Australian Women's Weekly 28 Nov. 1936.

liberated young woman as its theme."[166] Susan Hawthorne has pointed out that Jungfrau, even though a Bulletin prizewinner, was

> immediately allowed to go out of print, where it remained, for 53 years, until a recent reprint by Penguin. In the same year, [1936] Ray Lawler's The Summer of the 17th Doll shared the drama award with Oriel Gray's play, The Torrents. Only Lawler's survives."[167]

What does this tell us about the place of the woman writer in Australian literature? Furthermore, what can Cusack's novel tells us about gender roles, genre, discourses and women's subjectivity? Some of these narrative aspects are explored in the following section on Jungfrau with respect to constructions of sexuality in postwar fiction.

[166] Quoted in the obituary by Nancy Wills in the Australian Communist Party newspaper. See the Tribune "Dymphna Cusack, Writer of Conviction," 11 Nov. 1981: 13. Cusack died on the 19th of October in 1981. Wills commented, "she refused to be silent while there was suffering in the world" (op.cit).
[167] "FemLit: Here We Go Again - But Why?" Sydney Morning Herald 27 May 1989: 84.

CHAPTER FIVE

i) Race and Racism

Picnic Races, Black Lightning, The Half-Burnt Tree and The Sun in Exile

As this Dissertation has shown, Cusack discussed social issues and discrimination by the use of examples in fiction. These "case studies" are particularly powerful in her depiction of racism towards Australian Aborigines. I have already identified the genre of Picnic Races as a "light", romantic novel incorporating "realistic" national cultural types (see chapter two, "Humanist Representations"). The tale concludes with the triumph of the oppressed local tribe over the whites who wish to expel them from the community. The gold discovered at the novel's end is undeniably on Aboriginal land, their "cemetery" thus the Aboriginal clan is shown to participate in the town's wealth and exercise some power over the find.

It is rather telling that Cusack minimises Aboriginal protests regarding the disturbance and demolition of their burial site. The local squattocracy has bribed authorities and quelled the unrest of white locals and Christian churches caused by his development of the Aboriginal site:

> Consciences were comforted by the Council's announcement that henceforth the Blacks – segregated in life – would be integrated in death, and a swampy corner of the general cemetery was allotted to them as far from the various Christian sections as possible withut their falling into the Noonbee [river]. But the locals refusing, Lock had to import a team from Mingoola to perform the unpleasant job of disinterring unidentifiable bones that had lain there for the best part of a hundred years.
>
> By day King Billy [the clan leader] sat impassively watching the desecration, emitting, whenever a skull came to light, sounds that the workers said 'ud fair lift the skin off y'scalp. (284)

Cusack manages to expose the hypocrisy surrounding the rights of Aborigines to be buried near white citizens, while dramatizing the spiritual affront and misery inflicted upon the local Aboriginal clan. To salvage the comic element of the novel, the desecration of the burial site serves to swing the tide of fortune for the Aboriginal "owners" of the land and the whole township when gold is unearthed by King Billy.

The love stories in Picnic Races develop around various examples of racism towards the black population and newly arrived migrant workers (40-41). The townspeople are able to make exceptions to the general racist rule when the new hotel bans the Olympic prospect, the Aboriginal girl Betty Sole, from training in the river that runs through the town

> As a whole, Gubba had the usual democratic doubts as to how far democracy for other people should be allowed to go, but its back was up at the threatened prohibition. Most certainly no one would dream of letting any of the germs and dirt from the older blacks in the Camp mix with the dirt and germs shed by the whites. But Betty Sole was different. (235)

Picnic Races performs the remarkable feat of exposing the hypocrisy of racial preju-dices and the popular support of discrimination, "how far democracy for other people should go" whilst keeping the "average reader" interested in the adventurous, comic tale of national, cultural types in a small country town.

In Cusack's "autobiographical" novel, the love story is woven into the realistic struggles for ideas and identity. The question of identity and "belonging" to the community is most obvious in the clashes between McGarrity, as the spokesperson for the towns-people, and the ambitious, domineering "new rich" families (79-81, 92-93). When Cusack's narratives expose racism, they appear to be influenced more by realism rather than romance. As my discussion of her "black texts" will show, the hybrid genre romantic realism deconstructs the gender of the black woman. The humanist represen-tations of both social realism and romance can only be an approximation of her subjec-tivity and historical, lived experience.

Black Lightning (1964) and The Half-Burnt Tree (1969) are two powerful examples of Cusack's cultural criticism. Both texts depict Australian Aboriginal women, men and children who convincingly argue and fight for black rights. It is an admirable attempt to portray Aboriginal subjectivity in the sixties. Black Lightning deals with Aboriginal land rights and

racism, although the *Leitmotif* is the white myth of beauty and romance. The text was immensely popular in the Soviet Union and was even televised in former Czechoslovakia in 1976.[168] Remarkably, The Half-Burnt Tree is the only novel in Australian literary history to have addressed the two of the key issues of the 1960s: the Black Movement and the anti-Vietnam protests.

In The Sun in Exile, the themes of racism based on Social Darwinism, the British Empire, postcolonial independence and the development of the Commonwealth are addressed. On the ship bound for England, the majority of the white passengers prove themselves to be racists who demand a form of apartheid to be established on board. The exclamation, "They're filling the ship with bloody niggers!" typifies the reaction of the businessmen, farmers and professionals (74-75). The text demonstrates how rapidly racial hatred leads to violence when the white businessman A.K. attacks the Nigerian Olumide because he is dancing with the Anglo-Australian Vicky (94). With regard to the racial tension on the ship, Alexandra Pendlebury or "Pen" writes "... in my long years of travel, I have met no race that has a monopoly on virtue or vice" (60), thereby assuming a humanist, "apolitical" position on the racial hatred that has overwhelmed her fellow passengers. Thus she seems to neutralise the racism and suppressed violence of the whites towards the 200 Jamaican passengers and only by the narrative's conclusion does Alexandra admit the pervasiveness and brutality of the racism which the Carribean immigrants in England endure.

"Pen", the Parson, and Vicky are the most outspoken white passengers against the racism that has taken hold of the ship (61-65). Vicky argues with A.K about his racial hatred and rejects his terms of abuse for Aborigines and people of colour. He snarls, "But would you marry a nigger?" and this challenge precipitates the romance between the white heroine and her black lover (67). The text attempts to link racist discourses in the former British colonies through a brief discussion of Australian Aborigines. Hal, who is represented as a "typical" white Australian male, speaks strongly against misceg-enation. Nonetheless, in his "open-mindedness", it is Hal who introduces Lance Olumide, the "tall negro" to their group (70). Olumide distinguishes himself from the Jamaicans by explaining that he is Nigerian and was planning to study in the States, but immigration difficulties have forced him to try his luck in

[168] See photos and correspondence with the Prague television production manager Milena Mathausova, 10 Feb. 1976 (MS 4621 Box 20 Added 11/5/78). Cusack commented sarcastically that they should have

England (72). As the love story develops between Lance and Vicky, the text points to the widespread support of the White Australia policy and racist stereotypes (51). Indeed, the White Australia Policy prevents Vicky's Nigerian husband from emigrating to Australia. He is unable to obtain a residence permit since "the laws say permanent migrants to Australia must be 75 per cent, or more of European descent, fully European in outlook and education" (199).

The Sun in Exile does not conclude optimistically when Vicky's hand is seriously injured at a political meeting in Hyde Park. Upon his arrival in London, Olumide's difficulties and poverty lead him to become an activist involved in race riots. At the Hyde Park demonstration, right-wing thugs attack the couple and smash the artist's hand so that she is no longer able to paint. Thus the young Australian woman's illustrious career is (melo)dramatically ruined. On a scholarship to London, the talented Australian had even won a prize for her "portrait of an African", a subject that gained controversial media attention (257-259). Cusack's protagonists in this text are finely developed agents, whose "psychological depth" is appreciable. The pair become hardened and Vicky is politicised through her anger about the injustice in her own country and Great Britain. Like Joy in Heatwave in Berlin, it takes an act of violence to prompt her "political awakening" which results in her gradual self-realisation. Vicky's mentor and sponsor Pen realises that this self-development roused by political activism has excluded her; the upper-middle-class woman of leisure was now "outside their lives" (262-263).

Ironically, Cusack's portrait of a liberal humanist travel writer is so unlike the author, yet it incorporates the discourses which formed Cusack's texts. Pen criticises the political activism that has taken hold of her beloved Vicky, "All her banked up creative power is going into an omnivorous and, I fear, one-sided study of the problems that their marriage has thrust upon her" (263). Paradoxically, this is the very criticism that was continually directed at Cusack's work, that it was a "one-sided study" of social problems. Yet Cusack seemed to negotiate the charges of being too "polemical" and "left-wing" by depicting characters who were seemingly apolitical, indifferent or ignorant of injustice in postwar society. Through the narrative, by "communicating with the reader", she hoped The Sun in Exile would act as a catalyst, that the reader would also be "politically awakened" and follow the humanist goal of "self-realisation" through a commitment to "mankind" globally.

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employed black actors rather than white to play the Aboriginal characters.

In Black Lightning, the Aboriginal characters are given highly polemical, dramatic monologues which at the same time, eloquently summarise the social and political real-ities facing Aboriginal people in the sixties. For example, Paul makes a speech about his first experience of "equality" in the Australian army in World War II and how he learned to "fight back" (141). Yet in postwar Australia, he was forced to survive continued discrimination, unemployment and a lack of civil rights. He now speaks with the confidence of the emerging Black Movement in Australia:

> Looking back on it, it's hard to remember that I accepted what the police and the other white people made me think of myself. "Out of town, blackfeller," when you were just walking along the footpath quiet and peaceful. "You can't eat here and you can't drink there - not even a lemonade."
>
> You can't go to school except on the Reserve and that only took you to third class and you forgot it as soon as you left. You can't go to the pictures. "Out of here you dirty, black b--" (140-141)

Up until the census, it was forbidden by federal law to serve Aborigines alcohol in a public place. Australian Aborigines were confined to the government reserves and had to request permission to leave or work outside the settlement, even having to gain the permission of the superintendant to marry. Unofficial apartheid existed not only in schools, where the black dropout rate is still extremely high, but also in public swim-ming pools, cinemas, restaurants and other venues in postwar Australia.

Black Lightning alternates between the failed love story of the white heroine, her self-development and polemical tracts "performed" by the black protagonists. I deliberately use the word "perform" as the speeches made by the Aboriginal men and women usually take the form of a dramatic monologue. For example, Paul challenges Tempe's hidden racism and elucidates the Aboriginal situation by elaborating political "facts":

> "What rights have we got? None. They've taken our land from us. They've taken our names. I don't know the songs of my people and I speak the white man's language." He pointed a finger at Tempe. "You've got an Aboriginal granddaughter - but did you know that the Constitution of the Commonwealth doesn't even mention Aborigines as people to be legislated for as people of any other race are legislated for in this country? Do you know we're not even counted in the census? Do you know I

> can only be counted a citizen now if I sign a paper to have nothing to do with my blood-brothers on the Reserve? (139)

The text refers to the campaign in the early sixties to include Aborigines in the national census, a referendum that took place finally in 1967, four years after the publication of this novel. The issues of segregation, state surveillance and linguistic colonisation are continually addressed. Cusack attempts to depict the more "conservative" or less militant Aboriginal voices by showing divisions and conflicts among the Aborigines in the narrative. For example, Bert accuses Paul of having a "chip on his shoulder". Paul readily admits his anger, after all, his family has been kicked out of their home and his son is now on the run after trying to protect them (139). The activist asserts, "Being Aboriginal is a crime itself in this country" (138).

Almost as a counterbalance to the political speeches of the men, Cusack portrays two Aboriginal women on the government reserves who again "perform" an indictment of racism and the Aboriginal situation in Australia. Emma disputes the government policy of "protection" by forcing Aborigines to live in strictly controlled settlements and mis-sions:

> It's not our welfare they're interested in. It protects the inefficient boozing superintendants like the ones we've had, and the whites in the town who exploit us by paying us less wages than they have to pay a white man. They're the ones protected. We haven't even got protection from the mosquitoes and hookworm and the dysentery that could be cleared up here in a year with a little proper hygiene. Does the Council care? No. According to them, all we need is a firm hand on us. (179)

Emma's speech is realistic and convincing in its polemical insistence on black rights, the injustice of the white system and individual Australians who exploit Aborigines. Her rhetoric and the eloquence of her "public speech" place her within a supposedly masculine discourse of political activism and social interventions. By assuming these attributes and actions of the Aboriginal man in the narrative, the black woman has already diverged from her gendered role when it is compared with that of a white female subject. For example, Tempe initially represents the ideal of femininity and women's political ignorance or apathy before her transformation into a "self-realised" Whole Woman.

Jed is similar to Paul and has experienced a kind of equality in the trade union, until he was disfigured in an industrial accident and was forced give up work. Both of these young, black men argued with the Swedish captain Swanberg who wishes to keep his family away from the

Aboriginal movement and growing black militancy (180). After having been removed forcibly from her home and denied her "land rights" to the Swanberg property, Eva makes the following realisation:

> You say we've got to fight. I was always against fighting. I always stood by my father when he said we must keep to ourselves and not get mixed up with the people on the Reserve. I always thought he was right; that if we behaved like decent, well brought-up white people, we'd be treated like them. I know now they were right. What happened to us yesterday taught me more than all the days of my life. My father might have been right for his time but he wasn't right for ours. He was white and we're not and that's where he made a mistake. If you've got Aboriginal blood in you, you've got no rights, and that doesn't matter whether you live on Whaler's or on the Reserve. To the police and the mayor and the superintendent, we're all the same. (180)

Eva, Zanny's mother, assures Tempe, "we're not anti-white" and informs her that many Aborigines are part European. Apart from that, the Swanberg family had freely accep-ted Christopher as Zanny's white husband. Thus the text differentiates between Aborigines living in an assimilated fashion, like the Swanberg family, urban lifestyles, as the relatives in Redfern show, and the abysmal conditions on the government settlements or "reserves" in the 1960s.

What the black protagonists in Cusack's texts have in common is a growing commit-ment to the Aboriginal "Movement" or militancy that was to change the political situa-tion in Australia by the seventies. In The Half-Burnt Tree, Kemmy's parents Joseph and Mary Bardon, are meant to represent differing political tendencies in the Black Movement after the referendum. Joseph or Jambana is an activist and cynical about the

Illustrations: Book Covers of Cusack's "Aboriginal Novels"

(First published, William Heinemann, 1964; 2nd ed. London: Readers Book Club Edition, 1965, in association with the Companion Book Club)

(London: Heinemann, 1969)

recent social reforms that have recently been introduced, for example, Aborigines were given suffrage.

> "Vote for who? Aborigines like ourselves? Not likely," he challenges his wife who believes in the reforms, "Vote for a Whiteman to make some other laws to keep the Aborigine in his place. It's a clever way of making us think that we do something about the laws ourselves but there aren't enough of us here to do anything about it, and the Whiteman is too clever; he's got it all sewn up" (21).

The first part of the novel contains much bitter rhetoric concerning "white supremacy" and racism internationally. By contrast, Mary Bardon has adopted the Christian faith and is intent on assimilating her son, even if her people have failed to become integrated after their years on a Mission settlement. Her strident husband is oppossed to her position and dismisses a potential university scholarship for Kemmy as a "passport into the whiteman's world to do what whites say and be paid less for it..." (op.cit).

Cusack has clearly gendered the more potent figure of resistance and intellectual mentor as male and the weaker or more conservative element in the narrative discussion of the Black Movement as female (14-21). Although Hope, Emma and Eva share some of the polemical narrative in Black Lightning, they are not as virulent in their speech as their masculine counterparts. As already discussed, Cusack tended to cast women in these very conservative, if not historically skewed, roles. Was this a tendency peculiar to Cusack, or could we broaden such a feminist analysis to other Australian women writers such as Katherine Susannah Prichard, Marjorie Barnard and Florence Eldershaw?

Is the otherwise "feminist" stance of many of these writers negated by their discour-aging portrayal of Australian women as the intellectual protégés of their male mentors? A clear example of this is Eleanor Dark's The Sun Across the Sky in which the literary and philsophical "genius" Kavanagh plays mentor to both the artist Lois and the doctor who even risks his life for the posthumous reputation of his father figure.[169] This preju-dice or textual flaw of (stereo)typing women's intellectual capabilities is not confined to the Cold War period of Australian literature. Contemporary novels, films and other media repeatedly depict a gendered hierarchy while at the same time essentialising fem-inine and masculine attributes as a

[169] Eleanor Dark, The Sun Across the Sky (London: Collins, 1937).

matter of biological sex. In the following section, I will discuss the repurcussions of such gender stereotyping for constructions of race, specifically the black woman in Australia.

The Black Woman as Agent in Black Lightning and The Half-Burnt Tree

As I have discussed in the section above, the Aboriginal characters in the precensus Black Lightning and later in The Half-Burnt Tree, written after the 1967 referendum to recognise Aborigines as Australian citizens, have few civil rights. The black women in these texts are exemplary of the continual discrimination they must endure in postwar Australia. I wish to focus on two representations of Aboriginal women: Zanny, the taboo object of desire in Black Lightning, and Mary Bardon in The Half-Burnt Tree who struggles to mediate between two cultures. Zanny has won a High School Bursary for tertiary study and was not able to take it because people in the next town "made a fuss" about her living in the Hostel there. In The Half-Burnt Tree, Mary Bardon is the Mission-educated mother of the boy narrator Kemmy, for whom she wants the oppor-tunity of further education; she believes she must reject "Blackfeller nonsense" in order to encourage Kemmy to achieve in the white world. Mary eventually realises that she does not even have a right to her child as she and her activist husband are forced to go on the run. Pursued by police who wish to take their child away, they have a car accident. Kemmy's parents die because the hospital staff refuse to treat them, and the small boy is left an unwitting and vulnerable orphan.

An example of black women's oppression and agency in Black Lightning is the charac-ter Hope, the Indian Fijian woman based on Cusack's acquaintance with the well-known sixties activist, Faith Bandler. The sardonic, courageous and beautiful Hope supports her Aboriginal brothers and sisters in their fight to stay on their private land at Whaler's, which the local government plans to develop for tourism. For her efforts, Hope is verbally abused by the local mayor. The politician calls her a "trouble-making black bitch" and then instructs the police sargeant to "run her out of town" (148). Hope defies these threats and stays to assist her friends in the fight for their rights. Early in their acquaintance, Hope explains her ethnicity to

Tempe, who had assumed that all people of colour are Aborigines. The black female activist adds that she does not hate white people as her husband is an Anglo-Australian.

Hope is given a strong activist role such as that of the Aboriginal and African men dis-cussed above. Her speech is political: "Only the bigot and the hypocrite want to perpet-uate the myth of white superiority so they can go on exploiting someone else, Aboriginal or Malayan or Papuan or Vietnamese or African or American negro. It's all part of a pattern. Here we're only a tiny fragment of a world pattern" (150). Jackie Huggins and Heather Goodall have noted that during the sixties Aboriginal women were linking up nationally through black rights organisations and playing vital political roles (400). Thus the representation of activist men and strong women of the Black Movement resembled historical experience, although women appear to have taken a more public role than is suggested in Cusack's fiction. Aboriginal women were, in fact, leading activists, as Cusack's fictional portrayal of Faith Bandler indicates.

The elderly Aboriginal woman Emma is a realistic figure, who nonetheless remains a minor character in Black Lightning. Emma lives on an Aboriginal Reserve and repea-tedly resists the intrusions and demeaning control of the drunken and racist Super-intendant (166-174). As mentioned above, the black woman is given a two-page-long monologue that is eloquent and credible in its appeal for improved living conditions and basic rights for her people.

> Emma replied in a low, passionate voice, her eyes burning in her dark face. Then tell them it's not the Aborigines' fault that they're dirty and lazy and shift-less. What chance have they to be otherwise? If they ask you down there why the children are skinny and too lazy to do their lessons, you tell them what the schoolmaster says: They don't get enough to eat.... Mrs Super'll tell you the women have no pride in themselves. Where do you get pride if you wear cast-offs and hand-downs and you starve yourself to feed your kids? (178)

During the course of her speech, Emma astutely describes the deficiencies of the Aborigines' Welfare Board and the State exploitation of black labour, as I have illustrated in the previous section on the polemical monologues of Emma and Eva.

The Australian historians Jackie Huggins and Heather Goodall have noted that this mediator role for black women resulted from the government's implementation of white, nationalist policies:

> Many of these policies focused on women, who were seen either as a means to increase an Aboriginal workforce; to limit or intervene in the Aboriginal birth-rate...; or as cultural channels to carry the 'assimilationist' message of rejection of Aboriginal values. This would be achieved, it was believed, either if Aboriginal women were removed and 'educated' then returned to their communities, or if they were 'educated' while in their communities by being relentlessly inspected and evaluated by officials demanding culturally inappropriate 'house-keeping' or child-care styles. (399)

Cusack seems to have successfully depicted in Black Lightning and The Half-Burnt Tree the incidences and experiences that Huggins and Goodall have recorded historically: the extremity of police brutality (Black 193-196) as well as the state control and surveillance of Aboriginal women and their families.

Unintelligible Genders and Race: Zanny in Black Lightning

The didacticism of Cusack's novels, like Joy's self-development and political awaken-ing, is meant to provoke Australian readers to change their attitudes, or at least become aware of political themes such as (anti)racism and resistance to postwar fascism. Black Lightning encapsulates prevalent racist stereotypes and attitudes in the characters' reaction to a mixed marriage. Tempe's son Christopher is accused in discriminatory terms by the Colonel of having "improper relations with an Abo servant girl from Whaler's [family property]" (116). Enraged, Christopher informs them that Suzannah Swanberg is officially his fianceé (op.cit). There is a general uproar in the Australian army office and the cadet soldier observes that his "parents only feared for their own reputations".

> My blood was boiling at the way my mother squeaked: "Oh, how horrible!"; and my father's grunt: "I never thought a son of mine would come to this."

> "A half-caste!" I can still hear my mother's voice, shrill as a parrot, her nose wrinkled up as though she had a bad smell under it, and my father's "They inherit the worst of both races. I saw enough of those trash in Darwin."
>
> I looked at them both torn between hate and despair... (117)

Racist discourse is contained not only in the rejection of a mixed marriage, but also in the anxiety produced by "half-castes" or people of "mixed blood". Cusack effectively shows how racism in Australia seemed insurmountable when Christopher, in the face of his parents and society's condemnation, becomes speechless in his despair.

The prohibitions against miscegenation and the highly sexualised body of the Aboriginal woman are reflected historically in the linguistic violence of the Anglo-Celtic language. The derogatory naming of the Australian Aboriginal woman in English has been discussed by a number of scholars in diverse disciplines.[170] The appropriated Aboriginal words "gin" and "lubra", as well as the erotically vindicated, discriminatory term "black velvet", were not only used by Cusack in her black rights novels but also circulate(d) in a complex matrix of power determined by Australian governmental policies and cultural practices this century. This white naming of the black woman regulated and demarcated her place in the gender hierarchy: as a sexual partner at a price, by force or as a substitute for a white woman. Clearly, the black woman has been an anomoly in Australian gender relations, a subject who could not easily be assimilated by the generic demands of romance.

Even Christopher cannot describe his lover and eventual wife in conventional terms of the romance. She looks more masculine than feminine:

> I've decided that I'd rather have thin girls than ones with bulges all over them. When she looked up I thought nobody's got eyes like hers, not even Marilyn Monroe, nor hands that give you the feeling that they have electric currents in them. Figure isn't like T.V. and film stars, just two little breasts like apples on a suppel [sic] torso and hips that make hardly more of a bulge than a boy's. For the first time I understood what the words in the magazines Ma reads mean – lithe, willowy etc. (91)

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[170] Jackie Huggins and Thom Blake, "Protection or Persecution? Gender Relations in the Era of Racial Segregation," Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation, ed. Kay Saunders and Ray Evans (Sydney: Harcourt Brace, 1996) 53. For the original meanings of "gin" and "lubra", see Robert M.W. Dixon, William S. Ramson and Mandy Thomas Australian Aboriginal Words in English (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1990) 164, 167, 170.

The Aboriginal romantic heroine Zanny is rarely given direct speech in the dialogue, she is continually described and indirectly narrated. Her body is both unconventional for Hollywood popular culture (Marilyn Monroe) and at the same time fashionably thin and boyish. Her lover's language attempts to place her in white culture's measurements of beauty and feminine attractiveness.

When Christopher meets Hope, the Fijian Indian activist discussed in the previous section, he does not hesitate to describe her appearance in terms of popular cultural appeal. "She's a cool kind of beauty with a kind of invisable [sic] fence around her and a touch-me-not air. There is even something a bit arogant [sic] about her that I like when she throws back her head and laughs showing all her teeth that are good enough to be in a toothpaste ad" (109). Christopher deliberately misspells and invents grammar as an act of linguistic subversion, given his own forced subservience in the Australian military to which he has been sent by his officer father for service in the Vietnam War. His love for a black woman proves to be his greatest act of rebellion, given the pressure on him not to form a relationship with Zanny and thus avoid producing Australian society's outcasts, "half-castes" or the children of mixed marriages and the products of interracial sex.

Fitting for the radical nature of the indigenous love story, the secondary relationship in Black Lightning is largely narrated by the romantic hero, the white Australian soldier who ignores all social taboos, as quoted above. As discussed in chapter four in Parodic Romances, his mother's betrayal is the primary love story that fails in the narrative. Christopher confesses to his diary that "Loving Zanny's like lightning. Even when it's over the light stays with me. I call her my Black Lightning because she makes me see the world as I've never seen it before" (124). Sex with the mostly silent Aboriginal woman is described as elemental as nature, lightning, with light, ironically, becoming a racialised metaphor for the hero's enlightenment.

The first literary example of the black woman's power to disrupt the romantic narrative was the novel Coonardoo.[171] Katherine Susannah Prichard's love story of a white man and black woman, demonstrates that the romantic narrative is generically predicated on race. When a person of colour is the protagonist, as in The Sun in Exile, the love story is usually hindered by racial prejudice and iniquity. When generic conventions of race are not followed, the romance

becomes discontinuous, much like Butler's idea that gender becomes discontinuous when culturally unintelligible.

Butler's definitions of gender include: a "corporeal style, an act..." where the term per-formative suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning (139). More importantly, Butler argues that "gender identities have been made discrete in order to *humanize* individuals" (my italics, 140). In other words, gender becomes discontinuous when the human subject is not culturally intelligible, speakable or nameable. Is the black woman in a white text culturally unspeakable, unnameable because of the extreme historical differences surrounding her sexuality and race? Arguably, the black woman subject in Australian history and literature represents, in Butler's terms, "a being whom neither man nor woman truly describes" (127). This positioning of the black woman in relation to the "European" gender binary may usefully demonstrate the difference between white and black women in Cusack's narratives.

I suggest that Cusack attempted to show how the conventional love story fails in terms of race with her graphic account of racism in The Sun in Exile and Black Lightning. In the former, the romantic hero is a black man, in the latter, there are several black heroines, yet both subjects deconstruct the hybrid genre, romantic realism, through their ethnicity. I maintain that an African or Aboriginal subjectivity is precluded from popu-lar romance because social realism, a genre developed in white Western culture, does not adequately render cultural and racial differences intelligible in the text. In short, the genre is not commensurate with the subject which has been formed by political dis-courses of humanism, racism as well as cultural heritage.

I have proposed that the Aboriginal woman's precluded gender which has been forbidden and despised in dominant discourses of sexuality and policy, is an internal subversion of the white, heterosexual binary. This binary is elemental for both the genres of popular romance and social realism. How should one read Black Lightning, a documentary of the Black Movement influencing a white woman's life? Similarly, how should The Sun in Exile and The Half-Burnt Tree be interpreted, given both texts were written by a white middle-class Australian woman for a largely white readership? If we allow race and sexuality - in this case, the

[171] Katherine Susannah Prichard, Coonardoo: The Well in the Shadow (London: Jonathon Cape, 1929).

desired/forbidden black woman - to deconstruct both gender and genre, this would lead to a strategic reading aimed at elucidating and comprehending the minor narrative voices of black women in three texts written from and for a white woman's perspective.

ii) Sexuality

A Homosocial Romance? Women Loving Women in The Sun in Exile and Jungfrau

Like indigenous love stories, homosocial relations have been mostly precluded from the conventional love story and popular romance in twentieth century Western literature.[172] Furthermore, lesbian and gay protagonists are rarely found in postwar realistic fiction.[173] Within the humanist paradigm that encompasses these genres (romance's "fusing of body and mind" through love; realism's "becoming Whole" through self-realisation) the homosexual subject is unable to attain the humanist promise of wholeness. I wish to argue that the homosexual male and female are not included in the genders proposed by popular romance, neither are they frequently portrayed as forming part of "real" society.

In the last two decades, there have been many theories on the way homosexuality corresponds to heterosexuality. The latter has been said to be a type of dominant paradigm that in Adrienne Rich's terms, enforces a compulsory heterosexual norm. In Michel Foucault's theory, heterosexuality is a result of power that subjugates marginal knowledges while at the same time constituting those alternative subjectivities. In literary history, gay and lesbian characters have belonged to a subculture, an "underworld", as much as fiction produced by homosexuals has been relegated to the margins of cultural production.

[172] Except the lesbian popular romance which enjoyed a large, though clandestine circulation in the fifties in Australia, England and the USA. This genre continues to the present day, especially the mixed genre of the lesbian love story and detective novel. See for example, the internationally popular Australian writer Claire McNab, as well as German translations of American lesbian romances and "Krimis".

[173] The most notable exceptions have been the work of Anais Nin, Carson McCullers, EM Forster, Christopher Isherwood, Virginia Woolf's Orlando (though not strictly realism), Thomas Mann's Death in

In the following sections, I have examined sexuality in terms of "masculine" females and homosocial love. My aim is to clarify femininity and masculinity through its con-struction in the conventional love story. As I have argued in the previous chapter, The Sun in Exile is a romantic realistic narrative, one in which the primary love story succeeds (see Table Two). The "asexual" narrator Ms Alexandra Pendlebury, a writer known by the phallic nickname of Pen, considers romance to be an element of "every conventional novel" (33). Pen's story of her love for Vicky is beyond those novelistic conventions which would have compelled her to "start straight off with Vicky's relationships and the men who loved her" (op.cit). The narrative is concerned with Pen's transference of her love for her deceased sister to the younger woman. She becomes obsessed with protecting and nurturing Vicky, who encourages her devotion with a passionate desire to keep the older woman a part of her new life abroad.

Pen becomes an admirer of her cabinmate, in fact, she forms an attachment that influences all her decisions – she decides to continue her voyage and reside in London, at Vicky's bequest. She constantly admires the beautiful young woman, her attire and expressions, and realises that she loves Vicky who closely resembles her deceased sister Virginia. "Vicky hadn't changed, and I was beginning to let the imagined likeness obsess me. Lying awake in my bunk that night wondering what she was doing, I pointed out myself its absurdity" (81-82). The "love story" between Pen and Vicky develops parallel to the artist's romance with the fellow passenger, the African student, Olumide. Finally, Pen relinquishes her intimate attachment to the younger woman, after having cared and spoiled her Australian protégé in England, realising that Vicky's self-realisation has required her to become an "agent" in the fight for black rights.

Pen, the world traveller and author, decides to move on: "I knew that if I stayed, the rich, strange gift of Vicky's love which came to save me when I needed it most would be changed. We are too strong, the two of us, to suffer each other's violently opposed opinions gladly" (264). In The Sun in Exile, a narrative of love hindered by racism and social injustice, it is the two female protagonists who are caught between the romance of "true love" (Vicky) and the realism of leading a difficult life on the margins of society (Pen's judgement of the mixed

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Venice and "mainstream" lesbian writers such as Audre Lord, Rita Mae Brown, Maureen Duffy and Jeanette Winterson.

marriage). Vicky has become militant through her marriage to a black man, while Pen remains a liberal humanist, seeking reforms and peaceable solutions for racism.

Vicky would only miss her as Pen's sister Virginia had missed her, because of their primary relationships were with their male partners. Pen realises that her love for the younger woman was a substitute for romance in her own life that resembled a familial bond:

> I had lived all my life spiritually dependent on my sister. I had lived a second spring dependent on a girl who might in other circumstances have been my niece, or my daughter…Perhaps I'm essentially unlovable, and when I am loved it is as a substitute or a means to an end. Perhaps the fault is in me, that I hesitate to accept love when it means pain. As I see it the defect of human love is that one must buy it at too high a price (265).

The travel writer Pen, for all her worldliness, believes she has shied from forming a proper relationship, making her "spiritually dependent" on other people's attachments. What is left unsaid in the above quote and in the narrative, is the fact that Pen has been in love with women and does not genuinely miss intimacy with men. Instead she has denied her sexuality, calling herself "unlovable" because she senses that homosocial love is morally sanctioned and thus she would have to "pay a high price" for the honest expression of it.

Homosocial love among women is also implied in the 1936 novel Jungfrau. As discussed in the last chapter, the romantic heroine Thea remains the feminine object of desire throughout the novel. She is, in the tradition of popular romance, weak and malleable in the sense that her personality is extremely susceptible to the influences of her lovers. Her most intimate emotional bonds have been formed with women. In the passage below Thea reflects on the natures of her female friendships:

> Now here was Marc; and Marc always stimulated her; filled her with a quivering sense of adventure; stirred her imagination; lifted her out of her lostness into a world that had shape and form and color and a strange, wild significance.
>
> Eve; with Eve she had a feeling of security. You couldn't be afraid; and things would work out if you only held on steadily and comforted yourself with the reflection that under all this muddledness there was a purpose that would work itself out in your life from the sheer passion of doing things, finely and exqui-sitely, so that their finish gave to living a design and a meaning you couldn't otherwise find. (31)

Marc is a passionate, self-assured, adventurous dilettante, whilst Eve is an immaculate planner and respected obstetrician. Both women are agents of change, people with certain power in the public world. These attributes have been imbued with traditionally masculine values, the counterpart of which is timid, insecure, "muddled" femininity.

Thea admires Eve's self-control, "no emotional upheavals, no spiritual convulsions" and power over her surroundings which result "in a purpose, design and meaning to living" (77). At the same time, Thea recognises that Eve's powerful capacity for control is a masculine one (79); "making her incapable of compromise, intolerant of weakness" (77). Both Marc and Eve are presented as tomboyish women in appearance and manner; the lean androgynous Marc is described as "rakish", while Thea claims seeing Eve in tears is almost as shocking as a man crying (93). Furthermore, the women are professionally successful and financially independent. This in complete contrast with the delicate, feminine Thea upon whom "the world rushes in" because she has left herself open to it, defenceless and vulnerable, as her two friends predicted (184). Thus the three women seem to be gendered differently with regard to conventional masculine and feminine attributes, although their common sex is female.

I suggest there is evidence of homosocial love in Jungfrau, expressed in terms of desire for the other women's intimate friendship: "She [Thea] wanted both Marc and Eve - but she didn't want them both together ... why must they drag her, spent and unresisting, between their antagonism? (29-30). In a description analogous to Bonnie Zimmerman's lesbian "sea of women", Thea describes her emotional bond with the other two:[174]

> She felt just as she had one day in the surf. Eve was the steady, unceasing crash of the breakers that broke over you in a smother of cold foam, pounded you, and left you breathless and weary on the sand; Marc the insidious dragging of the undertow, dragging you out of yourself, filling your mind with a terrifying, enchanting vision of wide seas under wild skies. (31)

The passage follows many of the symbols and metaphors of lesbian fiction: water, foam, air, especially the ocean and sky. The rhythm of the words such as "steady", "unceasing", "smother" and "pound" result in the erotic effect of breathlessness and weariness. "Coming out" in lesbian prose has also been represented as "terrifying", "enchanting", visionary and

[174] Bonnie Zimmerman, The Safe Sea of Women: Lesbian Fiction 1969-1989. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990).

could be described as leaving the old self behind, as Thea is "dragged" out of herself by the force of Marc's stimulating presence.

Significantly, Eve appreciates Marc's eroticism and "queer charm" while at the same time despising her for it (124, 288). The doctor relishes the fact that Thea first comes to her for help (185). Eve, who is jealous of the attention her rival Marc receives from Thea, expresses her devotion by offering to co-parent the baby (35). Thea seems to be entirely involved in the passion of her female friendship. Although she elevates a single man (the much older Owen Gloster) to the status of romantic hero, she cannot bear the touch of other men, such as her longtime beau, Terry. Even Marc has moods in which she cannot bear men and prefers the company of her boisterous dog (89). Marc finds men "extraordinarily unoriginal" (110) and Eve thinks of them in terms of companion-ship.

When Thea challenges Eve as to her hostility towards Marc, the usually cool doctor lists her reasons heatedly: "She's too sophisticated and showy for my taste... I prefer some-thing a little quieter" (36). Even the Antarctic explorer Mackins, who temporarily becomes Marc's lover, apprehends the strange element of desire which fuels Eve's hatred. He notices the "doctor-girl's yearning and distaste" for Marc (94). I suggest that the homosociality of their friendship is most clear in moments of affectionate phys-ical contact, the most erotic being the following farewell: "As she opened the door to let her out Marc bent down and kissed her full on the mouth with one of her rare caresses, and Thea felt a sense of warmth and comfort in her kiss" (59).

In his review of Jungfrau for the Red Page, TD Mutch adroitly remarked: "The men are as incidental as the chief male actor regarded his affair."[175] The fact that Jungfrau is a "woman's novel" in that it is almost exclusively about women, has led me to a reassess-ment of gender in terms of lesbian sexuality. Similarly, I have already suggested above that The Sun in Exile might also be read as a female homoerotic novel, given the spin-ster Pen's devoted love for the much younger artist Vicky. Such an interpretation relies on textual analysis, rather than authorial intention. Francis de Groen has noted in her essay on Cusack's play Comets Soon Pass that the "frankly heterosexual Cusack regarded lesbianism as deviant" (103). Furthermore, the author believed in a "single sexual standard" for heterosexual relationships

(de Groen 100-101). As I will discuss in the next section, Cusack's homophobia is most clearly expressed in her all-female play of 1943, Morning Sacrifice, which was, ironically, the first "lesbian play" to be produced in Australia.

It is important to note the implications of a lesbian critique or readings of homosociality in Cusack's texts, given that my deconstructive project is to locate a proliferation of the gender binary. Beginning with Adrienne Rich's influential essay on compulsory hetero-sexuality, the imbrication of sexuality in the construction and practice of gender has been theorised by numerous critics.[176] I suggest that gender may be deconstructed not only by the hybrid genre which positions "real women" as successful or failed subjects of romance, but also by forms of sexuality *different to* dominant heterosexuality which has attempted to lay an exclusive claim on the love story in Western culture.

The Threat of Lesbianism in The Golden Girls and Morning Sacrifice

A radio play broadcast on the BBC and the ABC, The Golden Girls was published in 1955, in the middle of the Cold War. Strikingly, the cast is predominantly women: the four beautiful, rich Australian sisters and the granddaughter Dr. Rosalind Prendergast. The key male role is that of the tyrannical patriarch, Major Prendergast. The small parts include the Italian portrait painter, Carlo Santanelli, the coachman's son Tom and Harrison, the solicitor. It is a family melodrama set in the late nineteenth century, with the Gothic elements of imprisonment and murder in the home transferred to a matriarchal power, the embittered daughter Angelica. After attempting to be dutiful and loyal to her father by informing him of her sister Rosalind's planned elopement with the Santanelli, she finally explodes under the strain of living up to his expectations. On the day of her "arranged" wedding, it is discovered that her father's aristocratic choice already has a wife in England. Angelica, in a fit of rage, repeatedly strikes her father which incurs a fatal heart attack.

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[175] Bulletin rev. of Jungfrau, The Red Page. 16 Sep. 1936.

[176] For example, Adriene Rich, "On Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," The Gay and Lesbian Studies Reader ed. Abelove H. et.al. (New York: Routledge, 1993) 227-55.

As a sinister, calculating spinster, Angelica assumes rule over the household, taking over her father's business and controlling her two sisters, Lavinia and Charlotte. She refuses to grant the now happily married Rosalind any part of the inherited fortune and forbids the girls to leave the house for a better life with their disowned sister. Angelica even performs a second murder when she shoots the coachman's son, who wants to marry Lavinia. She, in turn becomes insane and the helpless, "feminine" twins remain in the household where the now "masculine" Angelica tries to indoctrinate them with the lie that Tom was a burglar whom she had shot in self-defence. Tom had wanted to rescue the two sisters and had dared to accuse Angelica of her first "crime": "If ever a woman killed a man, you killed your father. It's not surprising that his ghost haunts the place for you" (56).

Angelica has ursurped her father's place and his spirit is said to haunt her actions. She, however, dominates through reason, logic and love of authority. She argues with Rosalind that a life of poverty with your "one true love" may be romantic, but it creates unnecessary hardship. Angelica rejects the "romantic nonsense talked about love" and warns her sister "One cannot live on ideals" (12). Although there is no clear allusion to homosocial love among the sisters, there is an inference of a lesbian relationship between the twins, who are portrayed as symbiotic, echoing and speaking for one another.

The women, who are virtually imprisoned by their elder sister, share a bed after Lavinia's mental breakdown, which causes Angelica to infer that they indulge in perverse, lesbian "habits": "I don't know what perverse habits you're developing, but I do know that you've been too long together" (60). Angelica forces them to sleep in separate rooms which later provokes their cruel, insane revenge. The subtext of the radio play is inevitable (lesbian) "perversity" brought about by women's desires (for men) being thwarted. The Golden Girls also presents the stereotype of the powerful, disturbed spinster who may be rich and materially enviable, yet is spiritually bereft because she has never known true romance.

Similarly, Morning Sacrifice is a warning about the inevitability of lesbianism if women are prevented from exercising their "natural" desires or expressing unnatural ones of power and authority in business or institutions. The headmistress, Portia Kingsbury, is a spinster who is obsessed with domination and control of the women around her, much like the "evil" Angelica

in The Golden Girls. Thus the lesbian protagonist is portrayed as an ursurper of masculine privilege and power, a woman who is essentially corrupted and corrupting, if not evil.

Given the shortage of men "at home" during World War Two, Australian theatres were in a difficult position when they wished to produce a play with numerous male roles. Cusack seems to have found a solution by writing a play exclusively for female actors. The few men in Morning Sacrifice have an off-stage "presence"; not even the male school inspectors appear on stage and the romantic hero is only referred to and never seen. Although this drama is remarkable for its all-female cast, the homophobia surfaces repeatedly. For example, the teachers Hammond and Pearl, a butch/femme couple on staff, are discreetly mocked in the text.

Hammond is portrayed as a cantankerous, conservative, impatient colleague who becomes angry when other staff members use "her coathanger" or her coffee cup (205). Pearl is depicted as being hysterically feminine, incompetent and terribly insecure. The thin tolerance of the female teachers for the couple becomes obvious in the following extract. Hammond, after getting her lover another sedative in the staffroom, offers to help her with the report she must write for the inspectors.

> PEARL [beaming fatuously] Oh, darling, how often do you help me?
>
> HAMMOND If I want to help you, that's my busines.
>
> PEARL [squeezes her hand] You are sweet to me.
>
> [Mrs Mac casts a look of distaste at them…] (206)

The ambivalence of the text regards lesbianism is evident in the fact that couple become integrated into the more urgent themes of the play – (hetero)sexual double-standards for young women who want lovers outside of marriage, career women and power, sexual harassment and discriminatory legislation. In other words, it is about the emergence of the Modern Woman in Australia.

In the playwright's notes to Act One, Miss Rose Hammond is described as "middle-aged, grim of face, masculine in dress" (181). Within five minutes of the first act, her lover arrives in the teachers' staff room of the girls' high school. The stage directions renders the butch/femme relationship explicit:

[Enter MISS PEARL, very feminine, faded and fluttery, and with what she privately considers "a delicate air". MISS HAMMOND turns, and welcomes her with a smile that transfigures her grim face. She has a habit of clipping her sentences till they resemble explosive bullets rather than conversation.]

HAMMOND [almost cooing]. 'Morning, Dodie. [They kiss warmly.]

PEARL [collapsing into a chair]. Darling, the Inspectors are here!

HAMMOND What! (183)

The drama then devotes itself to the primary conflict of the female teachers versus the Education department, discriminatory legislation and the wartime government. Curiously, the intimacy between Hammond and Pearl is returned to several times, before their homosexuality becomes secondary to the fact that they are aligned to the faction of pro-education policy, championed by the beautiful, manipulative spinster Headmistress, Kingsbury.

Openly supporting her lover, Hammond tries to calm and comfort "Dodie" who becomes hysterical at the news of the immanent inspection by the off-stage, male Education authorities, who are later ridiculed by the heterosexual staff members for their blatant sexual harassment. Hammond calls Pearl "a silly little thing" for staying up late to correct papers and hurriedly gets her an APC (a type of valium tablet) and a glass of water (184-185). The stage directions inform us again: "Just as MISS PEARL is taking it the bell goes. She splutters and they hurry out together, MISS PEARL clinging to MISS HAMMOND…' (185-186). Act One devotes another three pages to the publicly expressed intimacy of the butch/femme couple, after which their sexuality does not come to the fore as much as their political conservatism and support of Kingsbury who expels one of the best female students for immoral conduct because she has met her boyfriend in public without permission. Hammond judges the girl, "Personally, I don't consider the State's money should be wasted on that type of girl" (205).

It is ironic that Morning Sacrifice depicts lesbians as being cohorts with oppressive authorities, who morally condemn rebellious women. Nonetheless, the following extract can be enjoyed by postmodern readers in the recognition of continued butch/femme character traits:

HAMMOND. Here's something that will cheer you up.

[She hands her a box of flowers. MISS PEARL opens it, exclaiming rapturously at the flowers.]

PEARL. Oh, darling! It is simply too sweet of you to bring me them. Are they really from the bulbs I gave you?

HAMMOND. [trying to hide her pride]. Yes, all of them.

PEARL. Imagine them coming on like that! Why, they're twice the size of mine. Aren't they beautiful, Mrs MacNeil?

MRS MAC. They certainly are.

PEARL. I can't understand. Mine are such anaemic-looking things. How do you do it, Rose?

HAMMOND. Manure.

PEARL. Oh-h… But to pick them all! You really shouldn't have done it.

HAMMOND. Suppose I can do what I like with my own flowers.

PEARL. [putting an arm round her and kissing her]. You're just too sweet to me. But wait till you see what I've got.]

[She goes to her locker and mysteriously brings out a small biscuit tin and gives it to MISS HAMMOND, who opens it with an air of surprise as though this did not happen every morning in the week.]

HAMMOND. Chocolate Crisps! Dora! You are wicked to spend time cooking when you should be resting. U-mmm. Delicious! I appreciate them all the same. But you shouldn't, you know. You take more care of yourself. You couldn't have had a spare moment after correcting all those papers.

PEARL. Why, you know I simply adore cooking. Do try one, Mrs. MacNeil.

MRS. MAC. Thanks very much. H-mmm… they're very nice. Your own recipe, Miss Pearl?

PEARL. No, I got it out of "Woman and Beauty". I take it every week. (204)

The homophobia is implicit in the double-edged way Hammond and Pearl are shown to care and love one another. Their dialogue is the small talk of lovers, yet it resonates with a condescending choice of words and stage directions. For example, the several pages devoted exclusively to the couple's intimate behaviour portrays Hammond to be an overly protective partner of her weak, dramatic girlfriend (204-205).

In the melodrama Morning Sacrifice, which was reprinted and produced in the 1980s and 1990s, the presumably homosexual Kingsbury and her manipulative ways are responsible for the heroine's suicide. The lesbian crushes of the schoolgirls on their headmistress - they follow

her and present her with bouquets in teenage rivalry for her affection - do not ameliorate her evil nature, instead they seem to confirm the perversity of Kingsbury, Hammond and Pearl as well as the school system thrust upon those well-adjusted heterosexual female teachers. As a satire on the Married Women Lecturers' and Teachers' Act which removed married women from the workforce from the early to the late twentieth century, the play seems to pose lesbianism as a threat to society, the inevitable outcome of forcing women to stay celibate and single if they were prevented (via economic sanctions) from marrying.

Cusack based Morning Sacrifice, essentially a critique of the Department of Education and government policy, on her experiences and autobiographical accounts of sexually and professionally frustrated women teachers.[177] Ironically, given her homophobia, Cusack eroticises her relationship with one of the three models for Miss Kingsbury in her memoirs A Window in the Dark: "I also developed a crush on the English mistress, something very common since she positively invited it. She wooed me with her honey-tongue, flattered me and gave me a quite undeserved opinion of my capacities" (49). There is an obvious similarity between Cusack's "crush" and the heroine Sheila's loyalty and fascination for her "lesbian" peer in Morning Sacrifice.

Women loving women in the text exposes the genre of romance as prescriptively heterosexual. As I have suggested above, same sex relations confound the gender relations upon which romance is predicated. In this instance of autobiography, Cusack's homosocial experiences have been recorded frankly, whereas in a text of social realism in this period, such a "confession" would have probably been suppressed, censored or at the most alluded to. Alternatively, some proponents of psychonalytic criticism would interpret such autobiographical statements and textual representations within the Freudian paradigm of repression and phallocentricism. It is nevertheless astounding that reviews, from the forties to the nineties, have not even mentioned the explicit lesbianism of Morning Sacrifice. The few exceptions have simply dismissed the lesbian characters, calling them an "unfortunate additional complication in the play."[178] One literary critic did refer to homosexuality in the text

[177] Dymphna Cusack, A Window in the Dark, ed. Debra Adelaide, (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1991) 16-17.
[178] Leslie Rees quoted in Vic Lloyd's, "Dymphna Cusack's Morning Sacrifice," Australasian Drama Studies 10 (1987): 72.

when he said the play was a commendable "indictment of spinsterhood", which encourages lesbianism.[179]

Significantly, Morning Sacrifice has mostly received reviews of praise (see "Selected Reviews" in the bibliography). In the eighties it was "rediscovered" and directed by Brian McDuffie for Ensemble Studios.[180] Cusack's wartime play was even discussed and reviewed at the Third International Women's Playwright conference in the mid-nineties.[181] Consequently the identification of lesbian characters such as Kingsbury, Hammond and Pearl, are necessary to a better understanding of the play's continued appeal. Morning Sacrifice is a realistic, melodramatic, romantic drama that was in its time a powerful intervention into government policy regulating and effectively removing women teachers from the workforce. A literary analysis of these "marginalised" characters in her work would further illuminate the relation of homosexuality and homosocial love to the normative, heterosexual binary of the feminine/female and the masculine/male.

Australian Masculinity: Real (Heterosexual) Men Becoming Whole

Geoffrey Dutton has commented at length on the men in Come in Spinner and their masculinity:

> Not all the men in the book are monsters who get off scot-free while the under-age girls they have slept with go to court, but they are, on the whole, not impres-sive. Deb's husband, Jack, is a selfish man, with whom she is no longer in love. She is offered marriage (and the money and legal facilities for a divorce) by Angus. She neglects her child, whom she pays her sister to rear, while disliking her worthy but patronising brother-in-law, Tom. (The honesty with which Deb's faults are exposed is one of the many indications that CIS is no biased feminist novel.) For all their strength, these three men are limited and bullying in their own fashion. Guinea's Colonel Maddocks is charming but shallow, and she eventually goes back to the fairly simple

[179] Allan Ashbolt quoted in Lloyd op.cit.
[180] The Griffin Theatre Company also reproduced Morning Sacrifice in conjunction with Currency Press Theatre Series which reprinted the play as an 'Acting Edition' (Sydney: Currency Press, 1986).
[181] Louise Nunn, "Making a Sacrifice," Advertiser Magazine, 25 Jun. 1994. 19-20.

> but jolly, self-critical Kim. There are also a few dinkum Aussies like Blue, Lofty and Billo, who are decent enough. (196)

Ironically, Dutton considers the novel to be "no biased feminist novel" because it offers criticism of its female protagonists. My feminist analysis of gender in this Dissertation has, without "bias", also critiqued a woman writer, her protagonists and the foundations of her feminism and humanism. Dutton's statement is therefore not in keeping with the development of feminist theory and criticism, which has gained in self-reflexiveness since the seventies.

I suggest that the shallowness of the "unimpressive" men, as Dutton noted, is a result of romance's failure. These masculine, objectionable men do not undergo a moral trans-formation as for example Bart in Say No to Death and Paul in The Half-Burnt Tree do. In Come in Spinner, Angus, Jack, Colonel Maddocks as well as the pathetic, though exploitative, Nigel, have not bettered themselves through self-knowledge or revelation brought by love. As Dutton commented, these Australian men remain "limited and bullying" and contrast with the harmless, somewhat innocent, masculinity of the "simple but jolly" Kim and the "fair dinkum" Australian males.

Dutton adds that the men in Come in Spinner are like "characters in a bad film" (op.cit). As discussed in chapters two and three with regard to her reception, does this criticism relate to Cusack's skill as a novel writer, her inability to give credibility to characters or do these "not quite real men" simply resemble filmic caricatures? Do popular cultural stereotypes signify a specific juncture of history and fiction, society and subjectivity, discourses and texts? The Australian historian Raymond Evans has noted that in the late nineteenth century

> the dominant bourgeois construction of christian manliness was being contested and subverted in the West by the powerful challenge of muscular manliness. This latter, as its title implies, emphasised both toughness of body and emotion. Conforming to the dictates of a new imperialistic, all-conquering white man-hood, considered most appropriate for advancing industrialisation and the colo-nial penetration of lands such as Australia, the preferred masculine type tended to exhibit athleticism over introspection, brawn more than sensitivity, and an outwardly spartan demeanour rather than any overplay of tenderness, love or affection. (206)

Clearly, international discourses of indigenous colonialism and British imperialism are entwined with historical formations of masculinity in Australia. Important to note is the way political

requirements such as “advancing industrialisation” directly informed the catalogue of masculine atttributes that men were expected to assume in the last century. Arguably, “muscular manliness” and its corollary of devaluing the sensitive intellect and tender, affectionate emotions assumed preeminence in most Western cultures in the twentieth century.

The national cultural type outlined by Evans above and discussed in chapter two, has been continually represented in Australian literature, although the image of the “mus-cular man” as pioneering adventurer was most prominent at the turn of the century and symbolised the republican push for cultural independence. Of interest for this section is the fact that the historically informed “stronger” masculine qualities of brawn and emo-tional toughness have usually been represented by realism whereas sensitive, tender and affectionate men are to be found in the love story. Significantly, the hero is transformed into a sensitive, caring and loving partner by the conclusion of the romantic narrative. The hero’s transformation could be called a state of effeminacy in the terms of the his-torical discourses of masculinity, outlined by Evans above. An adoption of seemingly “christian manliness” in the romantic narrative contradicts the national types created by Australian cultural history and reflected by the tough, brawny men in “realistic” texts.

Evans maintains that it should be remembered not all men were heterosexual or macho, and cites two Australian researchers of homosexuality, Gary Wotherspoon and Denise Thompson. In recent history, many men have identified as androgynous or “gay”, and have supported women’s struggles. The muscular manliness of the colonies excludes feminine attributes such as crying or emotional displays in public. Such “weakness” is generally regarded as emasculating and is accompanied by the taunt of not being a real man, possibly even being named homosexual, since gay men have constantly signified effeminacy, emasculation or failed masculinity in most Western countries this century.

As I have argued in the sections above with regard to lesbianism and homosocial relations in Cusack’s fiction, I wish to suggest here that male homosexual relationships similarly dismantle the binary prerequisite of heterosexuality in (popular) romance. When the male subject fails to perform his gender correctly and does not become a “real man”, he diverges from the supposedly realistic representations of men that are drawn from historical discourses. Consequently, the presence of male homosociality is rarely hinted at in popular romance,

although it may appear in social realism with refer-ence to comradeship amongst men. In Australia, male bonding is signified by the widely recognised custom of mateship which is reflected in literature, media and film. Nonetheless explicit homosexual relationships between men are seldom seen in realistic texts.

In the case of popular romance, the sexes are distinguished by the embodiment of masculinity, that is, the hero. Gender difference as well as desire is maintained in the form of positive or negative male behaviour, as Janice Radway argues:

> Despite the varying intensity of the masculine behaviour that is portrayed, all romances discover that it need *not* be seen as contradictory to female fulfillment. Regardless of the extremity of the misogyny exhibited by their heroes, then, romances all suggest in the end that when properly interpreted, masculinity implies only good things for women. It is the sign of sexual difference and thus a fundamental condition for the love, marriage, and attention women seek. (168)

Women's self-realisation in Cusack's fiction seems to be determined, if not enabled, by an all-pervasive masculinity, as I have shown in my discussion of Heatwave in Berlin, Picnic Races, Pioneers on Parade and Southern Steel in the previous chapters. In these romantic realistic narratives, femininity is required to adapt and shape itself to masculine patterns of behaviour. This is indeed the pattern of many of Cusack's texts: even though the male characters often act in an antagonistic way towards the heroines, in most cases the men achieve and sustain a successful relationship with women. Popular romance's edict that "masculinity implies only good things for women", reinforces the heterosexual norm in gender relations. "Love, marriage and the attention women seek" through union with a man is not only attainable, but necessary for a woman's self-realisation.

Radway suggests that popular romances, even when they exhibit misogyny, nonetheless affirm masculinity and insist that adverse behaviour or sexism is beneficial to women. A monogamous union with the Right Man is the fundamental condition for the hero-ine's emotional and social happiness. Radway is thus pointing to the heterosexual matrix, Butler's and Rich's "compulsory heterosexuality", which is integrated in the love story. She does not, however, name alternatives to the dominant paradigm that governs our concepts of gender and sex. As I have shown in the preceding two sections, a homosocial romance, indeed lesbian relations in Cusack's texts, explode the gender/sex binary in the text or narrative as well as

twentieth century social norms. Important in the context of the quote above, is the insight that masculinity is not limited to the male sex, as my discussion of Cusack's "lesbian" or masculine female characters demonstrates.

Radway has suggested that the hero's masculinity in both good and bad romances is not depicted as being a permanent threat to women, despite feminine fears to the contrary. Ultimately, masculine behaviour is benign because it does not prohibit the establishment of a relationship that can provide a woman with "the relationality she needs" (168). As stated above, Cusack's novels provide women with this relationality between the sexes as the conventional, romantic sexual relations between men and women in Pioneers on Parade, Come in Spinner, Southern Steel and Picnic Races testify. In Heatwave in Berlin, Stephen's aggressive impatience with his wife and his scorn of her ignorance does not finally ruin their marriage. Instead, it prompts and even enables Joy's enlightenment, the awakening of her political conscience and thus her entry into the public (masculine) world. Thus her husband/tormentor provides the young, naive wife with the relationality she requires to interpret the foreign, European world she finds herself in and to reflect on her life and beliefs in Australia. This may be read as a powerful statement regarding gender relations in the postwar era: the reliance of women on men for (self)knowledge, mobility and power.

As I have discussed in chapter three, Say No To Death was reviewed as a "great love story and political intervention" in the "real world" of government, health and public welfare. Nonetheless the heroine assumes a conventionally romanticised gender. Jan is the suffering martyr because she tolerates Bart's infidelity and initial indifference. The narrative then describes the moral transformation of Bart, who becomes devoted to her. Significantly, his devotion leads to the feminine traits of servility and humility in the face of menial labour. Appendix A ("Extract on Say No to Death from Freehill's Biography") illustrates this development in Cusack's account of her original source for the novel's story and development. Bart not only takes care of his wife in the last stages of her illness, he also becomes a nurse's aid in the abysmal TB hospitals in order to constantly see his wife who is a terminally ill patient there. Bart is typical of the recalcitrant hero of romance who begins as a womanizer and gradually proves his "true love" by offering marriage to the heroine as well as exposing his feminine, nurturing side. Conversely, the woman's love helps him to complete his

moral development in his quest to become a conscientious, self-realised "Whole Man", according to the precepts of liberal humanism.

Unlike the cliché of manipulating men with a dark past - Keith in Black Lightning, Carl in The Sun is Not Enough and Derek in The Half-Burnt Tree - (ideal) love in Say No to Death reconciles the lovers. According to Radway, the heroes of "bad" or failed romances are stereotypically masculine. They are "ruggedly handsome" in the Byronic manner, emotionally reserved, controlled, independent, aggressive and scornful of fem-inine weakness. As Radway has defined them, they differ chiefly from heroes in ideal romances by the "unrelieved nature of their masculinity" (168). There is no "mitigating feminine physical feature" that might testify to the "real warmth and tenderness of his hidden personality" (op.cit). In bad romances, the hero is never transformed totally, as in Black Lightning, The Sun is Not Enough, and The Half-Burnt Tree.

In Black Lightning, for example, even after she has attempted suicide because of her lover's betrayal, Tempe sleeps with Keith again because she believes in their love and passion. He, however, continues to act from purely egoistic motives and insults her by offering to instal Tempe in a luxurious apartment as his permanent mistress. When he mocks her work as a "beauty and home" consultant and TV celebrity, his misogyny is made apparent:

> "The seriousness with which you took your role as supersaleswoman in the conspicuous consumption racket always amused me. I don't think you ever realized quite what a hypocrite you were. Most women don't. You wouldn't dare face the fact that everything that goes on between breakfast and bedtime is only a prelude to what you're waiting for all the time."
>
> She shook her head violently.
>
> "Oh, I'm not saying men don't like it this way. The difference is that we have a life to live out of bed in which every thought and every action isn't a preparation for when we get there." (217)

Suffering from disillusionment and rage, Tempe fails to find the relationality promised by the conventional romance. The language of cynicism and masculine hostility towards women, the effective devaluation of women as a class, counteracts the previous metaphors and clichés of the love story to be found in the romantic realistic text.

The newly empowered woman forms a pact with Keith's handicapped wife, Elspeth, whom he has also deceived. Both women use Elspeth's father, the media mogul David Robertson, to attain their ends, namely to rescue the Aboriginal family's property and ensure their right to stay at Whalers (240). Tempe is subsequently offered a new posi-tion in Robertson's media empire while Elspeth accepts the truth about her "marriage of convenience" with pragmatism and dignity. I suggest that both Black Lightning and Heatwave in Berlin resemble the Gothic nature of eighteenth century romance exemplified by Ann Radcliffe's Mysteries of Udolpho: the husband/hero may or may not be a murderer and the reader/wife is uncertain of her husband's fidelity and trust-worthiness.[182] In both of Cusack's texts, female anxiety is resolved by women forming a pact and becoming informed about the truth or reality of their situation.

In Cusack's texts, men are constantly attempting to control and criticise women. For example in Black Lightning, Tempe's embittered son Christopher writes scathingly of his mother's complete emotional dependency on his controlling stepfather. He is convinced of their indifference towards him and retaliates with accusations that his mother, in her attempt to remain a television celebrity, was like a prostitute: "She peddles it like any other tart peddling her what-have-you at King's Cross," writes Christopher in his diary, "though she's getting old and ought to know better" (51). The frequent misogyny of Cusack's men becomes apparent once again. Tempe, reading Christopher's diary after his death in the Vietnam War and her attempted suicide, protests at her son's cruelty. She had thought selling beauty products was "doing something useful", although now she realises, "I peddled sex subtly" (52). As discussed above, her treacherous lover also mocks her home and beauty show for Australian middle-class women. The newspaper editor cynically asserts that they are "in the same business of brain-washing people" (28).

The narrative takes a polemical stance on the manipulative role of discourses on beauty and romance that inform postwar femininity. In a mental conversation with her deceased son, Tempe justifies her actions in the following terms:

> Deep down she hadn't felt it a racket, manipulating women's desires so that they bought things they could not afford because she hypnotized them into the belief that with it they were buying emotional security.

[182] Ann Radcliffe, The Mysteries of Udolpho (London: JM Dent, 1931).

> "No", she protested again. "It's not true, Christopher, that I sold myself for this alone. I did it because I thought keeping beauty was the way to keep love." (53)

The heroine of Black Lightning is able to defend herself against the mockery of her lover and son. She manages to articulate the reasons for her supposedly "duping" other women into romance and the leading them to believe in the myths of beauty. Gradually, she arrives at an understanding of her own self-deception.

Christopher's criticism of his mother is harsh and he scorns her for letting herself be physically exploited and intellectually devalued. Tempe, in anguish and remorse, again points to her social status as a woman as being the cause and/or result of her subservience:

> "An empty mind! Oh Chris, you would never have thought the words could hurt me so! What is a woman to do, Chris? Once I left my father, no one wanted me to use my mind... You never knew how hard it is for women, Chris. Even your wonderful Aunt Lilian used to tell me when I was a girl that it doesn't do for a woman to be too clever if she wants to be happy." (62)

Thus Tempe points to the differences between men and women, the social constraints on femininity and the freedom of men to choose a range of gendered attributes: from the intellectual Christian masculinity to the powerful, muscular manliness. By contrast, in the postwar era, women were encouraged to remain in the domestic sphere and cultivate a "feminised" political ignorance.

Cusack attempted, however, to find a corrective for the oppressive gender relations that are depicted in her novels and plays from 1950 to 1970. She accomplished this in a way similar to her reliance on polarised values in terms of class differences, for example, the members of the working-class are honourable citizens while those of the upper-classes are spoilt decadents. Cusack established a dichotomy of values between East and West (see chapter two, "Ideology and the Author"). She unequivocally praised the new forms of masculinity and gender relations in China (Chinese Women Speak), Albania (Illyria Reborn) and in the Soviet Union (Holidays Among the Russians). Cusack often illustrated her belief in the "revolutionary" new type of gender relations by quoting *verbatim* in the latter text:

> The great difference is that Soviet men take for granted the fact that a woman should continue her work after marriage. A woman who wants to be only a housewife is not

> respected in the community. One young man who had visited England and Australia as a journalist with some Trade mission said to me:
>
> "I was horrified at all those magazines telling girls how to hold their man by using this powder and that perfume and so on. Of course we like our wives to look nice but it's what's inside their heads and their hearts that really matters. We call those much publicised glamour girls of yours pies without filling." (249)

Thus Cusack uncritically, perhaps naively, granted the communist countries "the moral high ground" in comparison with the liberal feminist reforms that had been introduced in "capitalist" countries. Nevertheless it is important to note the emancipatory goals of equal opportunity policies in the Soviet countries, such as the GDR, and to effectively evaluate these wide-reaching social reforms that undeniably benefitted women in the East where conservatism and traditional patriarchy had subjugated them (see Appendix D, "Extract from the Catalogue of an Exhibition on Women's Labour in the GDR").

But what were the actual attitudes of most men in the Soviet Union? Were they actually like those of the progressive journalist paraphrased/interpreted above? At the end of 1961, the Komsomolskaya Pravda Public Opinion Institute, published 3 000 replies to a national survey on new structures of the Soviet family, child-rearing, youth, divorce and women's equality (Holidays Among the Russians 250). Paradoxically, the three replies which Cusack translated and reprinted in full (there were 12 questions on the survey), illustrate that Russian men were not as progressive as Cusack would have liked them to be. The Moscovite Belakhin, a twenty-seven year old engineer, maintained that Soviet men had already taken over "so many domestic duties in the family (shopping, taking the children to kindergarten and the linen to the laundry) that we shall soon be talking of the emancipation of the man in the family!" (251). His statement expresses some resistance to the idea of continuing a programme of equal opportunity in the USSR.

A twenty-four year old army officer, Bodganovich, claimed:

> The question of women's inequality in the family is not an easy one to solve. As a matter of fact I cannot quite see how the woman's position can be equal to the man's. I think it is incorrect to pose this question at all. However, it is our task to do everything possible to make life for women easier. Women must be relieved of hard jobs and night shifts... (252)

Cusack does not comment or analyse these responses, rather she quotes them *verbatim*, with a tacit approval of the Russian men's statements on gender relations. For example, she does not critique the third response of a male student at the Leningrad University that there should be "more respect and chivalry in regard to the female sex" (253). As I have stated elsewhere, such an attitude coincides with Cusack's sentiments about the romantic tradition; romance was "once a lovely word" as Dallas in Come in Spinner and Marc in Jungfrau maintain.

My comments on masculinity in this section point towards a sociological/historical comparison that could be undertaken through Cusack's work. By that I mean a compar-ative cultural study of the social development of Chinese, Russian and Albanian "com-munist men" with Western, "capitalist" men during the Cold War. In Chinese Women Speak her unrelenting critique of oriental patriarchy "before the revolution" and mascu-line customs that oppressed centuries of women, should be granted more attention as an historical document that managed to "communicate" with readers in both East and West. A feminist analysis of travel writing and literature as a documentary text would grant Chinese Women Speak the critical attention it deserves. Similarly, Illyria Reborn provides harsh criticism of Albanian men and the tradition of machismo, symbolised by the Vendetta. In both travel books, these Communist, "Eastern" men of recent, pre-socialist history, are condemned through Cusack's reportage, that is, the hundreds of interviews and discussions which she avidly recorded, had translated and reprinted *verbatim* in her texts.

Cusack was certainly aware of discrimination against women in the workforce and at home, yet she seems to have been fond of the Australian male as well as the Russian. Cusack did not hesitate to satirize Australian men as, for example, the transcripts of "Calling All Women" and her mockery of the school inspectors who sexually harass female teachers in Morning Sacrifice, indicate. As I have argued in the previous chapter (Table One), the heroines of the failed and parodic romances have been disappointed by individual males, though love is not precluded altogether. Similarly, the heroines of Group Two (Table Two), have been frustrated in love by external circumstances, though men are not condemned as a sex.

It is important to differentiate Cusack's romances in order to trace the interaction of realism with romance. With the conventions of the popular love story in mind, one can determine how the narrative deviates from this genre and lapses into realism. Realism is repeatedly evident in the social critique and commentary which are integral to Cusack's romantic narratives. Her

representations of masculinity are eminent examples of characters "caught between" realism and romance. Like the female protagonists already discussed, the men in her texts are depicted as heroes and/or social failures, with admirable strengths and/or ridiculous weaknesses. Thus the contradictory manner in which men are gendered in her work, renders the male protagonists unintelligible, given the conflicting, constitutive demands of (popular) romance and (social) realism.

CHAPTER SIX

i) Humanist Values

Feminist Positions in Literary History

I have attempted to analyse gender by examining a hybrid form of genre in conjunction with the reception of a "Cold War" author. Diane Elam has written at length on the classification of

romance as a "woman's genre, the site of female fantasy" (2). She adopts a postmodernist approach in order to analyse the "gendering" of genres:

> By revaluing the romance of women's desires as postmodern rather than simply unrealistic or foolish, I want to link feminism to postmodernism's calling into question of the established rules of historical and cultural representation. If realism can only deal with woman by relegating her to romance, if real history belongs to men, and women's history is merely the fantasy of the historical romance, postmodern cultural analysis of history and the real offers a way of revaluing female discourse. (2-3)

Unlike Elam, I would not separate feminism from postmodernism in such absolute terms, although I appreciate her aim to revalue women's desires, to challenge "established rules" of representation and especially, to look at the ways concepts such as history and "the real" have served to regulate gendered discourses and subjects.

I would dispute Elam's assertion that realism unequivocally relegates "woman" to romance, given the great number of female realists and novels with women as con-vincing protagonists. Yet Elam is right in that "real history" seems to be the province of men, when one considers that most of the influential historians and literary critics have, up until recently, been men. Indubitably, women as subjects of history as well as female authors of historical texts, have been accorded less regard; possibly, as Elam suggests, their efforts have been considered the mere "fantasy of the historical romance" which would lessen their authority and influence. The task of "revaluing discourses" cannot be accomplished by postmodernism alone.

Furthermore, naming discourse, genre and even the subject as indisputably "female" fails to acknowledge the sex/gender fallacy. When she refers to "female discourse", Elam essentialises women as a political category by asserting a biological aspect to all things associated with the feminine. A "female discourse" then appears to irrevocably be the domain of the supposedly biologically determined female, which contradicts the Butlerian concept deployed in this Dissertation. As I have argued, genre and even "ignorance" may be feminised, but the dominant culture's insistence on one type of literature or form of knowledge as belonging to one "sex" rather than the other, must be challenged and recognised as the temporary, social construction that it is.

Social constructionism was the foundation of radical feminism during Women's Liberation and was revised and developed by academic feminism in the eighties. I have characterised Cusack as a liberal feminist which might seem obvious given the feminine women, conventional love stories and domestic arrangements of the novels discussed. But we need to situate her feminism historically: she was an outspoken, politically committed author in an extremely conservative era. The following obituary is a reminder of her pervasive influence on Australians: "She was a fluent and courageous public speaker, and nearly until the last two years of her life, was in great demand as a guest speaker not only to literary societies, but to many interested in public affairs. She often remarked, 'I've had a wonderful life'".[183] Indeed as my discussion of her travels and prolific output have illustrated, Cusack certainly led an eventful, successful public life. Her insights into women's subjectivity, as well as the ethnic differences of "marginal" subjects, enabled her to challenge established cultural and historical representations. Significantly, she managed to do this by being a romantic realist and a popular writer rather than a (post) modernist author of "serious" prose.

Moreover, Cusack's call for equal rights for women and people of colour was regarded as radical in her time. As a result, she was frequently labelled a Communist or "Red". Beginning with her radio programme "Calling All Women" in 1944, until the Women's Liberation Movement in the seventies, Cusack promoted equal rights. She called "for women to take up their proper places", which she usually defined as entering the workforce and becoming educated. In an Australian interview in 1964, "Woman Has a Dual Role", Cusack asserted that "a woman's place is in the home - and the world out-side."[184] She then made the distinction between "housekeepers" (in her view, oppressed Australian wives) and "homemakers", the latter being her own chosen domestic role. Interestingly, Cusack attempted to provoke the complacent Australian middle-class by comparing it unfavourably to the less-developed countries of Africa and the Soviet bloc: "…Australian women are as capable, attractive and as intelligent as women anywhere in the world - yet they are the most backward of women of many of the countries I visited - including some of the new nations in Africa" (op.cit).

[183] Obituary for Cusack in Artlook 7.12 (1981): 9.
[184] Marian March, "A Woman Has a Dual Role," Adelaide Advertiser First Page for Women, 29 Sep. 1964.

Arguably, a liberal feminist stance in the postwar era was better than none. Indeed many literary histories of Australia claim that there were no feminist writings or consciousness amongst women authors before 1970. For example, Susan Sheridan has remarked that women writers in this period of Australian history were not concerned with "communities of women".[185] She maintains that women writers largely had "no explicitly feminist position available to them from which to question the [literary] tradition's exclusion of women and its denigration of matters feminine" (320). To the contrary, I consider the literary commentaries of Miles Franklin and the steady efforts of the critic Nettie Palmer as a type of counterbalance to the overwhelmingly masculine culture of criticism in Australia in the last century. Sheridan makes Cusack the single exception, whose early works Jungfrau (1936) and Morning Sacrifice (1943) deal exclusively with Australian women.

Sheridan comments on Cusack's fiction and plays, "... the strength of the individuals within them is defined through irreconcilable conflicts stemming from differences of class, age, and sexual morality and woman's inhumanity to woman is a repeated theme"
(323). Although I would agree with Sheridan that there does not seem to be an obvious feminist "solidarity" among the women in Jungfrau and Morning Sacrifice, I suggest that there is a sense of shared oppression in these texts. There is also explicit recognition of the fact that fathers, employers and institutions such as religion and government, are the cause of their common dissatisfaction, rivalry and frequent despair. Furthermore, female novelists' dissatisfaction with existing gender relations is apparent in the correspondence of the circle of women writers documented by Carole Ferrier.

In her 1978 article "Women Who Changed the Course of the Novel", Drusilla Modjeska explains how notable authors of the thirties, including Cusack, relied on the discourse of humanism to advance the cause of women:

> Katherine Susannah Prichard reverted to the political solutions of the CPA [Communist Party of Australia] while others, like Eleanor Dark, Miles Franklin and Barnard Eldershaw argued in varying ways *for the extension of the humanist values represented by women into the public world controlled by men*, to soften the edges of capitalism and mediate in the conflicts of men (my italics, n.p).

[185] Susan Sheridan, "Women Writers," New Literary History of Australia, ed. Laurie Hergenhan (Ringwood: Penguin, 1988) 319-336.

This feminist position suggests that humanism itself is feminised, and that certain "values" are ascribed a gender. By incorporating a humanist stance in their texts, women were able to intervene in cultural and political spheres that have been closed to them.

The type of liberal feminism that I have attributed to Cusack, one that relied on differing degrees of political radicalism, nonetheless recognised the need to change the status of women in Australian society. Even though she utilised the language and plot development of the popular romance, the romantic narrative was rendered more com-plex, if not subversive, through her consistent use of a didactic, polemical realism. As I have suggested at the beginning of this Dissertation, Cusack was indeed extending "humanist values", although I have linked them to the "average reader" of the Cold War period rather than belonging exclusively to the domain of women writers, or being "represented by women" as Modjeska argues.

Liberal humanism was also an intellectual basis for supporters of pacificism, anti-fascism and Soviet communism. In the social movements for human rights and world peace, humanism has played an important, though at times misleading, role in the attainment of equality for minorities and the legal retribution for war crimes and protection of the individual's rights in Western societies. Parallel to these actual historical developments, were the gendered presuppositions of genres that were

influential in the postwar era. I have shown how heterosexual romance enabled the hero and heroine to "become whole" or "self-realised" through a "fusing of mind and body", a conquering desire that united people. In the hybrid genre of romantic realism, however, these protagonists of the love story also became "politically awakened" or a model agent of change, typical of social realism. On the level of textual representation, then, Cusack's women and men reveal these social conflicts and their attempted resolution. They fail to correctly "perform" their gender according to the prerequisite heroine/ordinary woman conventions of the mixed genres. As a result, a contemporary feminist approach needs to be alert to the inconsistencies in the text because of the historical information it can deliver about gendered subjects in a specific location.

Cusack seems to have devoted some thought to notions of subject construction, gender and politics. During World War Two, she announced on her weekly radio programme:

> There's got to be a new deal for women. But before the moralists and the theorists start making a blue-print of it, it's necessary to know what kind of people women really *want* to be - not merely what poets and puritans and politi-cians would *like* them to be; what kind of work women would *prefer* to do, instead of merely having relegated to them what men don't want to do. And of course, ultimately, what you *are* and what you *do*, adds up to the kind of world you have.[186]

The statement above is a surprisingly feminist intervention that matches the explicit, public demands of second wave feminism in the seventies. Cusack incisively pointed to self-determination as the only possible form of emancipation for those subjects categor-ised as women. She made a connection between employment and job opportunities for women as being essential to their human rights, their freedom from sexism, or being relegated to work that "men don't want to do".

Moreover, Cusack draws the distinction that women ought to be free to decide "what kind of people they want to be", which is a step away from confining them to their gen-der or even their sex (see chapter four, "The Kind of Human Beings We Want Women to Be"). Thus being a woman is not a *prima facie* identity, rather it is the belonging to a group of subjects who must decide what kind of human, as opposed to a sexed subject, they would like to be without the interference of government, theorists and moralists. Ahead of her time in this instance, Cusack accurately perceived that cultural policy, education and the workforce were important factors that shaped the subject construction "woman". Through her idiosyncratic form of humanism, Cusack endeavoured to liberate "women" from the constraints of being gendered and even sexed. It is a polemical stance that ironically counteracts the humanist precept of "becoming whole". Instead, choosing to be a certain "kind of person", enables the subject to develop itself as a desexed "human", in an attempt to circumscribe the social constructions of man and woman.

In the "radically feminist" quote above, Cusack described the process of becoming a woman in terms of individuals adopting identities and altering their subject positions through free choice of employment and activitity. She introduced her critique with a metaphorical reference to Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal administration that was known for its radical economic and social reforms in the USA in the thirties.[187] Accor-ding to Cusack, "what you are and what you do" define the kind of world you have. More significantly, her postwar articulation of the process of "females" becoming women, or other "kinds of people", concurs with many theories of the subject operative in Western feminist thought today.

ii) Her Place in Australian Cultural History

From the fifties to the sixties, Cusack was a best-selling author of romantic realistic fiction in Australia, Western Europe and the Soviet Union. I suggest that the singular
feature of Cusack's writing career is her simultaneous popularity in the "West" - England, France and Australia - and in the "East", namely the communist countries. The following extract from an interview with her friend and co-author Florence James, elucidates the inherent contradiction in Cusack's success during the Cold War.

Transcript: Interview with Florence James

> Florence James. Fear was the guiding principle in those years - and still is. During the cold war [sic], the Soviet Union found themselves ringed with mili-tary bases and they had lost twenty million of their own people in the war. The Americans had never experienced that kind of fighting in their own country, but they were paranoid with fear of communism.

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[186] Dymphna Cusack, "Calling All Women," Transcript, 1944. MS4621/7/7.

[187] Alan Brinkley has noted the limits of the New Deal, namely the reforms involving African-Americans and American women. Although the Roosevelt administration was not actively hostile towards these groups, it did not place equal opportunity high on the agenda and accepted prevailing cultural norms (703). Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of the American People, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993) 700-03. See also Paul S. Boyer, Clifford E. Clark Jr., Joseph F. Kett et. al., The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People, (Lexington: Heath and Co. 1993) 844-64.

> Vic Lloyd. Now while these hatreds and suspicions are existing, here is a writer, Dymphna Cusack, who becomes a best seller [sic] in her own country, in many countries in what we call the Western World, as well as a revered best seller in Eastern Europe, and this happens through the Cold War period. What is the secret of her local appeal?
>
> James: I would have thought there were enough Australians who cared about social injustice in their own country to provide a solid readership.
>
> Lloyd: But politically, you could say that her position would be opposed by approximately half the Australian population, which reduced the chance of sales by excluding that entire section ideologically.
>
> James: But her writing was always entertaining. She was a lively story-teller and had a keen sense of humour. Books like Say No to Death and A Bough in Hell were very personal stories that held one quite apart from any underlying determination to show up the scandal of T.B. treatment in N.S.W and draw attention to the horrors of institutions where alcoholics were hidden away.

It seems that cultural nationalism as well as the demands of "average people" for constitutional democracy, individual freedom and world peace were elemental to the post-war discourses that were implicit in Cusack's popularity.

These demands were expressed and suppressed in both East and West to differing degrees and assumed public as well as clandestine forms. A cultural nationalist appeal to the ordinary person became evident in chapters two and three, when I analysed the reception of Cusack's highly polemical novels that are, at the same time, romantic narratives. James is right in pointing to the style of Cusack's writing as being the attraction for readers of the polarised "Left" and "Right" in the postwar period. The serious, didactic messages of her texts were often disguised by her entertaining, humorous style of prose. She was thus able to maintain an international readership, despite its vast political differences. Her texts did not alienate readers in the East nor in the West, even though they may have clashed with the prevailing ideology and the state-controlled fear of communism *and* capitalism.

The following extract from an interview in 1964 illustrates the author's expressed intention to mediate the polarising discourses of the Cold War in the Northern hemisphere and the antipodes: "Miss Cusack is a tiny, slender woman with a never-varying hair-style of a long

plait wound around her head. She speaks quietly but earnestly and is vitally interested in the question of East and West working happily together, saying: 'We must, if we are to survive'"(Cusack, "Writing"). Cusack's humanism is evident in this statement: her interest in "common survival" through pacificism was combined with an idealistic belief in individual agency, as expressed in her wish for co-operation between citizens on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

About fifteen years later, Robert Darby took similar note of Cusack's widely known personality and political commitment:

> This passion for Australia, for the ordinary people, for Australian writing and culture generally, was one of the most striking impressions from a discussion with Dymphna Cusack in her flat at Manly, Sydney, in March 1979.
>
> She is frail to look at - very short and slight, with neatly-coiled white hair. But a few moments conversation reveal her enormous strength and energy and the reserves of indignation against snobbery and wrong that burn within her. (3)

Her very image, one of fragility, due to lifelong poor health, and constancy, her unchanging appearance (the "neatly-coiled hair", or the "plait wound around her head" as described in the 1964 interview quoted above) became a widely recognised symbol of the postwar Australian intellectual as well as the independent, feminist woman travelling abroad. Paradoxically, Cusack, was at the same time, a popular, best-selling writer whose work was appreciated by millions of people of various educational and cultural backgrounds globally.

Cusack's stage and radio plays, which broached contemporary political issues such as women's rights, educational reforms and nuclear disarmament, were produced and broadcast by the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Australian Broadcasting Cor-poration. The Soviet Union (USSR) produced several of her stage plays and published many of her novels in editions that ran into millions (Blain, Clements, and Grundy 256). Cusack's fiction and travel books found a large readership in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Russia, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, the former Czecho-slovakia, Albania and the People's Republic of China. At the same time, she was widely read in England, France, Scandinavia, Australia, the Netherlands and Italy. In short, Dymphna Cusack has been a permanent though provocative figure in the Australian popular imagination. She was exceptional as a controversial writer of "light reading" whose activism was respected internationally, even when

it was a cause for distrust in Australia, given her unqualified support of Soviet regimes in Eastern Europe from the Cold War to the end of the 1970s.

Her travel books Holidays Among the Russians, Illyria Reborn and Chinese Women Speak give a detailed account of her extensive travel in these countries. These texts are particularly significant for their unusual historical recording *ad verbatim* of women's experiences of cultural reforms and communism in the USSR, Albania and China. In all three texts, Cusack uses the formula of "before and after" the revolutions; traditional, cultural and institutional oppression of women and girls that has been combatted and gradually overturned by Communism. Given the exclusively positive accounts of Soviet governments, the truth claims of the female subjects should be approached with caution. The contemporary reader should recall the propaganda apparatus which enabled Cusack to meet these women, the interpreters' assumed reliability in translating into English the actual content of the autobiographical stories and finally, the author's own uncritical stance towards state socialism and its oppressive policing operations.

Despite her unwavering support of state socialism and communist politics, Cusack received numerous Australian literary prizes and international awards from the 1930s until the year of her death in 1981. These accolades included the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal, the Elizabeth II Coronation Medal, the Commonwealth Literary Pension for Life, an Emeritus Fellow of the Australia Council.[188] Although she refused an OBE offered to her in 1975, Cusack accepted an Order of Australia Medal (Award of her Majesty) for her contribution to Australian literature five years later. Even though she enjoyed such widespread recognition, Cusack has not been granted the status of a canonical author in Australian literature. Her "literary" reputation has been acknowledged with much ambivalence and her work is usually relegated to the popular. Curiously, Cusack's work has been variously labelled as light, serious, sensational, romantic, realistic, feminist, marxist and, generally, successful.

What were the factors that led to her international fame and bestseller success? Cusack herself claimed that "tastes in literature were the same in all countries".[189] She repeatedly

[188] See Obituary, Notes & Furphies 8 (1982): 7; The Manly Daily 5 May 1981.
[189] "Travel Takes Royalty Fees," Sydney Mirror Interview. 22 Feb. 1967. "She said the most refreshing discovery of her travels had been to learn tastes in literature were the same in all countries. 'Novels popular in the West are selling just as well in the East,' she said" (n.p).

claimed: "I write about average people in average predicaments. At any rate books that are popular in Western countries are popular in Eastern countries."[190] I have addressed the discourses behind the idea of the ordinary person, or average reader, in chapters one and two. Cusack was perhaps mistaken in simplifying the cause for her "universal appeal" as a type of "common taste" across the globe. As I have attempted to argue, it was not merely the result of a popular cultural demand for "standard" or formulaic bestsellers. In the case of Cusack's romantic realistic texts, her fiction addressed the needs of a reading public that was itself shaped by the social discourses of liberal humanism and the reified ideology of capitalism versus communism.

In conclusion, I suggest that her social concerns and literary style were unique to Cusack whilst being representative of Australian authors on the Left in the interwar and postwar years. I have not undertaken a comparative analysis of Cusack's work with other women writers; rather my argument is one that may be extended to literary historical anthologies or biographies of individual authors because of similarities in their output and reception. A comment made by Cusack's mentor Miles Franklin might help to delineate a genealogy of Australian literature in which Cusack can be placed. According to Franklin, Cusack's influence as an Australian writer does not belong to the national literature early this century, "... but just over the fence of 1950, in what might be called the exhaust from what the predecessors accomplished as we went on from the '90s flowering" (Letter in Ferrier 1992b, 298).

Thus Franklin placed Cusack in a self-consciously Australian, at times radical nation-alist, literary tradition that had taken shape by the *fin de siècle*. The cultural "flower-ing" of the 1890s refers not only to a period of intense literary production but also to a sense of national pride and independent identity symbolised by the men behind the Bulletin and their protégés Henry Lawson, Banjo Paterson and Joseph Furphy. Throughout her life, Cusack openly laid claim to a cultural nationalist tradition and was unashamedly patriotic. This became most evident in the early sixties with the publication of Picnic Races and her various press statements, such as, "'For the first time in 13 years my tap root has uncurled,' she smiled. 'As a writer I am emotionally fertilised by my own scene. And my success abroad I believe is

[190] Interview in the Auckland Herald, "Royalties Pay Bills for Writer's Tours," 9 Feb. 1967.

because I write as an Australian and I always will.'"[191] This quote demonstrates some awareness on the part of the author of the "otherness" of Australia for a foreign, predominantly European readership. It was possibly a factor that ensured her ongoing success. More importantly, Cusack's patriotism laid claim to a place in Australian cultural history, a place which the international, best-selling writer was confident she had deserved.

iii) Conclusion

Ideological Discourses and Social Reforms

> Dymphna Cusack is a profound humanist. She needs no labels, she says, and laughs at the "smear" campaigners, as one who has never belonged to any polit-ical party; her sole interest in politics is in so far as it can improve the life of human beings… In spite of her international fame, she is, to her depths, Australian.[192]

I discussed this conjunction of Cusack's "profound humanism" and radical cultural nationalism in the sections "The Literary Historical Context in Australia" and "Ideology and the Author" in chapters one and two. I suggested in the first chapter that the liberal humanism which informed each of the global lobbies for peace and freedom became synonymous with the humanist representations of gender in much of postwar realistic literature in English-speaking countries.

When we examine women's lives immediately after the war, we can identify in both East and West efforts initiated by women and men to reconstruct private/public roles. These reforms, behind which the political motives greatly differed, resulted in a contradictory articulation of sex discrimination in the conservative postwar era. The clearest example in Western industrialised countries is the push to return women to "the home", after they had been trained

[191] "Gumleaf Brought Her Home!" Sydney Morning Herald 12 Feb. 1963. The interview is introduced with the sentence "After years of wandering, both behind and in front of the Iron Curtain, Dymphna Cusack is home again - this time for keeps" (n.p.).
[192] Norman Freehill, Dymphna, with Dymphna Cusack (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1975) 2.

and employed in traditionally masculine occupations during World War Two (see chapter four, Illustrations). Overall, women's discontent with their social status in the Cold War era was generally expressed in discreet, less public forms than the blatant solidarity offered by Western second wave feminism from the sixties to the eighties.

By contrast, socialist countries like East Germany attempted to draw women into these traditionally "male" occupations, partly because of an urgent need for new sources of labour and partly a result of the communist equal opportunity platform. The illustra-tions from the Mansfeld Museum's catalogue for an exhibition about the controversial female miners in the GDR, is a relevant example of radical social reforms in communist countries (see Appendix D). As the documentation shows, the introduction of women into the workforce in the German Democratic Republic met with considerable resis-tance, despite official Party decisions and enforced policies. Furthermore, sexist conceptions of women could not be eradicated overnight and continued to influence gender roles and expectations.[193]

Nonetheless Cusack gave East Germany, the Soviet Union and communism in general, the "moral high ground", as previously discussed. She seemed to particularly admire gender relations under state socialism:

> Relations between the sexes in the Soviet Union are the sanest and healthiest of any country I've been in. Co-education brings girls and boys up to regard each other as companions. Without the incessant titillation of films and television and advertising, sex emotions develop normally. Love comes carrying a romantic banner - it's not accidental that Pushkin's statue is the favourite meeting place of Moscow lovers, nor that Tchaikovsky is the most popular of composers. (Holidays Among the Russians 255)

As shown elsewhere, Cusack was reluctant to abandon the traditional Western concept of love as promoted by Romanticism and populist sentimentalism. In the quote above, she seems to oppose romantic love to erotica that might influence the "sex emotions". Of importance to this Dissertation, is her placing feminist demands (equality between the sexes) in opposition to popular culture (film, TV, advertising). Ironically, Cusack did not consider her success as a

[193] Irene Dölling, Der Mensch und Sein Weib: Frauen- und Mannerbilder. Geschichtliche Ursprünge und Perspektiven, (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1991); "'But the Pictures Stay the Same...' The Image of Women in the Journal Für Dich Before and After the Turning Point," Gender, Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union ed. Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller (London: Routledge, 1993) 168-79.

bestseller to be a result of her adopted genre, romantic realism. Her texts were informed by popular generic features of the love story, (melo) drama, pathos and tragedy.

In chapter five, I elucidated how Cusack's position on Soviet masculinity was uncritical and naive. Furthermore, Joy Damousi has documented the ingrained chauvinism and discrimination which female socialists and activists experienced in Cusack's own country. Damousi has described the masculinist nature of left-wing organisations in Australia in which women were marginalised in a gendered space (5). Nonetheless, women were active agents of social change within these organisations that had an overtly masculine culture and ethos (1). Consequently, Cusack's suggestion that communism was necessarily an enabling factor in eliminating sexism must be considered historically and thus called into question. Yet the noticeable changes in gender relations that were wrought by communist policies in education and the workforce should not be discounted. The massive changes in employment opportunities, education and training would certainly have had a profound effect on the gendered subject in communist countries during the Cold War.

Subjects as Types, Women as Agents

As chapters two and three demonstrated, both men and women in Cusack's work resemble the modern humanist prototype of a self-realising individual whose conscience reacts to social injustice and offers resistance to iniquitable governments, the class system or gender oppression. In her romantic realistic texts, it is usually a person recovering from the effects of World War II, in particular the Japanese declaration of War in the Pacific, as for example in Southern Steel. The Vietnam War was a formative influence on the characters in Black Lightning, The Sun in Exile and The Half-Burnt Tree. Other topics which literally influence the protagonist are the use and development of atomic weapons, the Cold War divide (in Australia, the fear of Asian communism and the influx of Eastern European immigrants), the repression of the Modern Woman, as well as the violence of racism and struggle for independence in the Commonwealth countries.

Subsequently, there was some anxiety about the effect of the hybrid genre on characterisation, whether the characters of a conventional romance could be "rounded people" or merely "types".[194] Ken Levis in his Southerly review of Heatwave in Berlin noted:

> In this novel there is less depth of study, more contriving and less sure character revelation than in Come in Spinner, Say No to Death and Southern Steel, though it is every bit as topical and as readable. The political urgency of the warning against the post-war renaissance of the Nazis in Western Germany overrides the study of the people she selects. They are presented (validly enough) as people reflecting commonly held attitudes to presentday political and social phenomena. (52)

Levis' comment acknowledges Cusack's ability to weave together discourses, fiction and her left-wing polemical stance, yet still retain her appeal for the "ordinary person" or "average reader". Her characters serve to reflect "commonly held attitudes" to current issues, thus the protagonists were didactic mouthpieces as well as "reflecting" readers' attitudes or public opinion. The obvious populism contained in such fiction

was rendered more complex by the author's commitment to world peace, human rights and respect for cultural diversity. Paradoxically, best-selling texts such as Heatwave in Berlin and The Sun is Not Enough contained politically urgent messages about Jewish reparation and quest for justice as well as a model democracy in multicultural Australia and renewed fascism in Europe. Admittedly, the incorporation of gendered, cultural (stereo)types made the novels palatable reading. At the same time, many of these gen-dered subjects resisted "commonly held attitudes" and continue to provide a source of ambivalence and historical interest for contemporary readers.

For instance, even though Joy's political awakening enables her self-realisation, her behaviour is far removed from the autonomous lives of women in Cusack's earlier work such as Jungfrau and Morning Sacrifice. Joy is critical of the "submissive German wife", yet she fails to represent the next phase of the Modern Woman who emerged in the thirties and was symbolised by characters such as Marc (Jungfrau), Gwen (Morning Sacrifice) Doreen (Say No to Death) Vicky and Pen (The Sun in Exile). Consistent with "feminine" types like Joy, the women of the Marie Antoinette Beauty Salon in Come in Spinner represent the

[194] See the review of Red Sky at Morning, The Australian Quarterly 14.1 (1942): 110. The reviewer categorised the play as a "historical romance". The dialogue, however, was drawn from "conventional romance", thus the characters were not "rounded people", rather they were "types". The play was still regarded as "actable" and evidence of Cusack"s "writing skill" (110).

contradictory status of women emancipated by first wave feminism, who are subsequently oppressed by traditional gender roles, constrictive fem-ininity and the biological determination of the "kind of humans" they ought to be.

Picnic Races, Say No to Death and Southern Steel also deployed national types in order to represent the humanist concerns of readers and the political issues related to the Cold War. My analysis of the reception of these novels focused on the interaction of cultural (stereo)types with the prevailing discourses, which led to widespread praise of the texts' authenticity, poignancy and relevance. The range of British, Australian and French newspaper reviews, both regional and metropolitan, illustrates the extent of Cusack's popularity and influence in the English-speaking world. Nonetheless, some reviewers and literary peers realised the anachronism of many of Cusack's protagonists: the von Muhler family for instance is an exaggerated embodiment of popular clichés, prejudice and mistrust of Germans in postwar Europe.

Kylie Tennant, in her review of Picnic Races rejected the images of women and men in the Australian "city versus country" context, regarding them as "queer and out-dated left-overs from Pioneers on Parade" (377). Tennant firmly believed in the progress of postcolonialism, women's self-determination and the strength of Australian cultural pride. Her review, however, points to a continued difficulty for the critic when asses-sing Cusack's popular cultural texts. Tennant asserts that

> Dymphna Cusack has taken pains, though her Gubba is at once too typical of country towns and, where she tries to lift it from the stodge, her characters are too darn fine and clean-cut to be more than card-board. But she had the right idea. She has tried for a picture of society. (378)

Thus Tennant reiterated Florence James' defence of Cusack whose competent efforts to represent society, to depict its ideological conflicts and human complexities through easily recognisable types, were to be commended. The author repeatedly managed to capture a "cross-section" of society and was able to attract and keep the interest of a wide, culturally diverse readership. Issues such as gender inequality and racism could then be addressed in a polemical fashion that did not lessen the entertaining aspect of her writing.

As I have suggested, "average readers" were interested in social issues while desiring to be entertained by the love story. The hybrid genre which catered to this readership attempted to stabilise gender relations, as required by (heterosexual, white) romance and polemical, social realism. My discussion of Joy's political awakening and eventual self-realisation in chapter two demonstrated the operation of gendered assumptions about the humanist subject. Women were expected to be politically ignorant, and were confined to the domestic sphere. Cusack's women, however, often succeed in breaking from these assumptions and become social agents of change.

Even minor characters such as Matron Cutts (Picnic Races), Doreen (Say No to Death), Luella Dayborn (Heatwave in Berlin) appropriate masculine power and knowledge, and thus fail to live up to the demands of their gender. In the "all-women" plays, The Golden Girls and Morning Sacrifice, the manipulative anti-heroines Angelica and Kingsbury have ursurped men's privilege and source of power: financial and economic control over women. The conventional romance of Southern Steel also contains examples of women who attempt to influence the public domain, whether it be through their own employment and financial independence or ambition exercised through their husbands' careers. Nevertheless, the agency of the individual has been generally masculinised in postwar literary theory. Literary criticism in the English-speaking world has been greatly influenced by Sartrean existentialism, Lukac's theory of realism, Althusserian Marxism, Russian Formalism, American New Criticism, Levi Strauss' structuralism, Saussure's semiotics and Barthe's poststructuralist readings. These theories all assume that the subject is masculine, as none of them discuss "the woman question" at length.

Cusack's women tend to be caught between the illusions of romance and the hardships of realism, as I have argued in chapter four. Characters such as Alice in The Sun is Not Enough are frequently set in opposition to female models of emancipation like "Pen" in The Sun in Exile. As the section on "Postwar Gender Roles" in chapter four argued, Alice seems to embody the pitfalls endured by women who embrace the social discourse of romance, even when they acknowledge their domestic folly and express the desire to become "someone else" or to escape their situation. I have extended Janice Radway's thesis to explain how the conventional love story acknowledges the frustration and desperation of these women, typified

as working and lower middle-class. At the same time, the text serves to pacify readers who have become overly critical of gender relations.

Radway argues that the romantic narrative's function is, then, to reassure women that ideal love and marriage is not only attainable, but also the most desirable goal for females. By differentiating Cusack's romantic narratives in the first part of chapter four, I showed how the failed and parodic romances seemingly counteract the generic conventions of the love story which informs the narrative. Moreover, I established that most of Cusack's women are aware of the pacifying, reassuring function of the love story, even when the protagonists themselves resemble the heroine of popular romance. Logically, her romanticised, female protagonists are most sceptical of ideal love in the failed and parodic narratives. Nonetheless, they do not wish to abandon the historical concept of romance entirely, as represented by the doctor Dallas in Come in Spinner and the dilettante Marc in Jungfrau.

Table One separated romantic narratives that either clearly followed the generic requirements of popular romance or else those which failed to be resolved ideally, due to the disillusionment, self-realisation and political awakening of the heroine. It is important to note that both groups of romantic narratives in Table One are, at the same time, harsh critiques of society, thus incorporating the generic features of polemical, social realism. I suggested that the failed and parodic romances should still be consid-ered love stories, since the heroine was frustrated in her attempt to secure her "one true love" by external circumstances, indeed social problems of gender, race and class. Realism is, then, effectively interwoven in the romantic narrative, regardless of its reso-lution.

Both groups contain female protagonists who are splintered by conflicting desires and realities, although they manage to consolidate a sense of themselves and assume control over their lives, whether it be a decision to marry, leave or live with a lover. In Come in Spinner, Guinea, Deb and Dallas, Australian women with different talents and oppor-tunities, represent these various decisions and all are shaped and influenced by the social discourse of romance and the harsh, wartime reality of their lives. Similarly, the trio in Jungfrau symbolise the conflicting demands of society, prevailing morality and enticement of becoming a Modern Woman. As my close examination of Thea, the "Della Robbia child", demonstrated, these three women of the thirties were "differently gendered" because they did not recognisably belong to the same sex.

The "femme fatale" and "the good wife" could be contrasting types within a single nar-rative, such as Say No to Death and Southern Steel. When we analyse the construction of gender in these postwar texts, the way a single protagonist may embody several types makes the notion of a unified, identifiable sex unworkable. The spectrum of multiple genders encompasses the diverse experiences of ethnicity, (homo)sexuality and the var-ious local struggles for power and knowledge that inform subjectivity. As I have argued, this was more than a matter of assuming certain gender attributes of femininity, since each individual subject responded in varying ways to the discourse of gender and becoming sexed. Each was constituted as "a being" other than necessarily "female", as the preceding chapter showed with the extension of this argument to sexuality and race.

Table Two expanded my observations made from the first classification and further divided Cusack's texts into "Primary Love Story Succeeds" or "Fails". I demonstrated how the "minor" love stories run counter to the "primary" one between the heroine and hero. The result of this analysis is an exposition on the way the romance is not con-tained in one single figure or narrative, rather the conventions of the love story embedded in realism produce a type of multi-narrative. Even if the heroine does not find her "one true love", one or more of the minor characters may successfully discover happiness and fulfillment in love. Conversely, in texts where the primary love story succeeds, there are a number of minor romantic narratives which fail. It might be argued that the love story's failure to conclude with a Happy End is a result of its realism. I prefer, however, to point to the hybrid genre's inherent cultural critique, its incorporation of social issues and the pragmatism of the women, rather than define a text as realistic merely because it does not have a conventional romantic resolution or fails to depict ideal love and marriage.

Typical of Cusack's melodrama, the heroines may even decide to commit suicide, as in the romantic realistic texts Jungfrau, Morning Sacrifice, The Sun is Not Enough, Black Lightning and A Bough in Hell. Several of Cusack's women feel so trapped by the demands on her sexuality and constraints on her gender that they opt to suicide rather than struggle further. Women often suffered from moral double standards against which Cusack consistently adopted a progressive stance by supporting abortion on demand and female promiscuity. The author seemed angered by the oppression of women. She repeatedly insisted that women

must decide for themselves "what kind of human beings" they would like to be. In the postwar period, she maintained that females were "caught between the practical harem idea" and latent notions of chivalry. Thus women were continually defined and constrained by their gender, adaptation to femininity and expressions of sexuality.

Although these constraints are depicted in Cusack's fiction and plays, the author, the texts and their reception do not unequivocally criticise the institution of heterosexuality that has shaped modern conceptions of motherhood, female desire and constructions of the "feminine". In fact, a distinct homophobia can be traced in her, paradoxically, "les-bian texts". I demonstrated this with my analysis of homosocial love and the conserva-tive reception of Jungfrau, Morning Sacrifice and The Sun in Exile in chapter five. Cusack was nevertheless highly critical of the social pressure on women to conform to a set standard of femininity or social code of sexual behaviour, as chapter four's discussion of "differently gendered women" showed. Of more significance for literary criticism, is the fact that up until this decade, with the renewed theatrical interest in Morning Sacrifice and a second edition of Jungfrau, reviewers have simply ignored the lesbian characters in the play and the homosocial overtones of the novels.

As my discussion of Australian masculinity in chapter five explained, male protagonists also experience pressure and ambivalence about appropriately or correctly gendered attributes of their sex. In some instances in Cusack's texts, men also become "differ-ently gendered", especially when they fail to live up to romantic conventions of a love story and remain the ordinary, average subjects of "real life". For both sexes, becoming a gender is a process and as Butler has proposed, it may at times result in a being which cannot be classified as man or woman. As I have shown in chapter five, this is clearly the case for homosexual subjects with respect to the conventional love story; even in realism, homosocial love was generally repudiated until the last decade of the twentieth century, when texts from the marginalised, "underground gay culture" began to have a wider impact.

Furthermore, my analysis of national cultural types, indeed nationalist stereotypes, has led me to the conclusion that the black woman as a subject of romantic realism is another "being that neither man nor woman" can describe. Even though the polemic of Cusack's "black texts" vividly portray the Australian Aboriginal Movement, the activ-ism of people of colour in

England and the pan-Africanism of the sixties, the heroines are white while the black women assume minor roles in the narrative. By contrast, the Aboriginal and African men are given long political speeches which are, occasionally, matched by the polemical monologues of the black women in Black Lightning and The Half-Burnt Tree.

More importantly, the romantic narrative in the West has precluded people of colour from the love story, as the uproar, rejection and racism expressed towards Zanny's mar-riage with Christopher most clearly demonstrate. The physical assaults and hostility which the Nigerian Olumide suffers because of his requited love for the white Australian Vicky exemplified Western societies' exclusion of the black man and woman from the conventional love story or discourse of romance in the postwar era. The mixed marriages in Black Lightning and The Sun in Exile represent not only a fear of miscegenation, but also a continued anxiety about the potency, self-determination and "unintelligibility" of people of colour and their sexuality. Consequently, terms of abuse and discrimination have been used to persecute these subjects. It has especially affected the woman of colour since abusive, demeaning language attempts to regulate her sexuality which has been considered a threat to the moral strictures of white society.

With regard to Cusack's feminism, she was a reformist or a liberal feminist, as I have defined the term in chapter two and summarised in the first section of this chapter. She proposed that the successful union of a man and a woman should be based on an egali-tarian partnership resembling the socialist ideal of gender relations. Consequently, like communist reforms regarding marriage and relationships, Cusack's narratives often left many of the pre-war gender roles intact, even though these were modified in accordance with the liberal humanist idea of an emancipated subject. According to postwar ideas on females, the professional woman still aspired to have a family and raise the children herself. She would not abandon her "domestic responsibilities" nor trade her femininity for independence. In Cusack's many interviews and in her work, the prevailing belief is expressed that women workers and professionals were still obliged to be "domestic" and competent mothers, although they should be "homemakers" rather than obedient, dependent housewives.[195]

[195] Dymphna Cusack, "A Woman a Dual Role," Adelaide Advertiser Marion March's First Page for Women, 29 Sep. 1964. See also Cusack's interviews with "communist" women in professions and trades in Chinese Women Speak (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1958); Holidays Among the Russians (London: William Heinemann, 1964) and Illyria Reborn (London: William Heinemann, 1966).

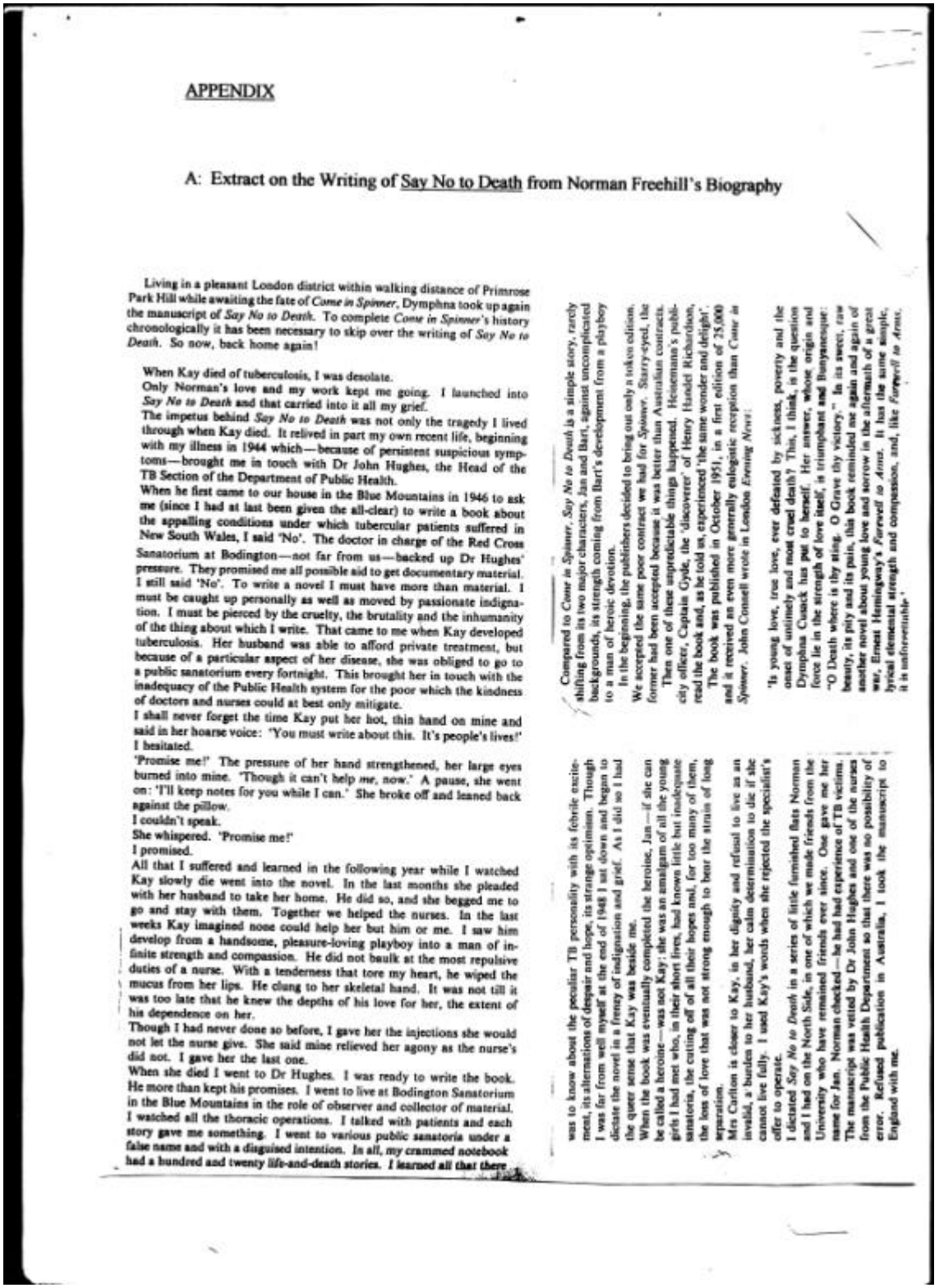
Significantly, this stance contradicts the cynical, critical attitude to gender relations assumed by many of her female and even male characters: from the androgynous Marc in Jungfrau, to the ex-alcoholic Roslyn in A Bough in Hell; from the ruthless Keith, to the Fijian Australian activist Hope in Black Lightning; and from the Vietnam War veteran Paul, to the embittered recluse Brenda in The Half-Burnt Tree. The reformist attitude of women as "homemakers" runs counter to Cusack's other statements made in the broadcast and print media, especially in her wartime radio programme "Calling All Women" in which she challenged the social dictates governing femininity. Thus Cusack herself is an example of the postwar female subject whose contradictory articulation of her experiences as a woman leads to a multiplication of gender itself. Cusack's life and work illustrate the need for further research that integrates questions of gender, representations of race and sexuality, historical discourses and the production of cultural texts.

APPENDIX

A: Extract on the Writing of Say No to Death from Norman Freehill's Biography

APPENDIX

A: Extract on the Writing of Say No to Death from Norman Freehill's Biography



Living in a pleasant London district within walking distance of Primrose Park Hill while awaiting the fate of *Come in Spinner*, Dymphna took up again the manuscript of *Say No to Death*. To complete *Come in Spinner*'s history chronologically it has been necessary to skip over the writing of *Say No to Death*. So now, back home again!

When Kay died of tuberculosis, I was desolate.
Only Norman's love and my work kept me going. I launched into *Say No to Death* and that carried into it all my grief.
The impetus behind *Say No to Death* was not only the tragedy I lived through when Kay died. It relived in part my own recent life, beginning with my illness in 1944 which—because of persistent suspicious symptoms—brought me in touch with Dr John Hughes, the Head of the TB Section of the Department of Public Health.
When he first came to our house in the Blue Mountains in 1946 to ask me (since I had at last been given the all-clear) to write a book about the appalling conditions under which tubercular patients suffered in New South Wales, I said 'No'. The doctor in charge of the Red Cross Sanatorium at Bodington—not far from us—backed up Dr Hughes' pressure. They promised me all possible aid to get documentary material. I still said 'No'. To write a novel I must have more than material. I must be caught up personally as well as moved by passionate indignation. I must be pierced by the cruelty, the brutality and the inhumanity of the thing about which I write. That came to me when Kay developed tuberculosis. Her husband was able to afford private treatment, but because of a particular aspect of her disease, she was obliged to go to a public sanatorium every fortnight. This brought her in touch with the inadequacy of the Public Health system for the poor which the kindness of doctors and nurses could at best only mitigate.
I shall never forget the time Kay put her hot, thin hand on mine and said in her hoarse voice: 'You must write about this. It's people's lives!'
I hesitated.
'Promise me!' The pressure of her hand strengthened, her large eyes burned into mine. 'Though it can't help *me*, now.' A pause, she went on: 'I'll keep notes for you while I can.' She broke off and leaned back against the pillow.
I couldn't speak.
She whispered. 'Promise me!'
I promised.
All that I suffered and learned in the following year while I watched Kay slowly die went into the novel. In the last months she pleaded with her husband to take her home. He did so, and she begged me to go and stay with them. Together we helped the nurses. In the last weeks Kay imagined none could help her but him or me. I saw him develop from a handsome, pleasure-loving playboy into a man of infinite strength and compassion. He did not baulk at the most repulsive duties of a nurse. With a tenderness that tore my heart, he wiped the mucus from her lips. He clung to her skeletal hand. It was not till it was too late that he knew the depths of his love for her, the extent of his dependence on her.
Though I had never done so before, I gave her the injections she would not let the nurse give. She said mine relieved her agony as the nurse's did not. I gave her the last one.
When she died I went to Dr Hughes. I was ready to write the book. He more than kept his promises. I went to live at Bodington Sanatorium in the Blue Mountains in the role of observer and collector of material. I watched all the thoracic operations. I talked with patients and each story gave me something. I went to various public sanatoria under a false name and with a disguised intention. In all, my crammed notebook had a hundred and twenty life-and-death stories. I learned all that there was to know about the peculiar TB personality with its febrile excitement, its alternations of despair and hope, its strange optimism. Though I was far from well myself at the end of 1948 I sat down and began to dictate the novel in a frenzy of indignation and grief. As I did so I had the queer sense that Kay was beside me.
When the book was eventually completed the heroine, Jan—if she can be called a heroine—was not Kay: she was an amalgam of all the young girls I had met who, in their short lives, had known little but inadequate sanatoria, the cutting off of all their hopes and, for too many of them, the loss of love that was not strong enough to bear the strain of long separation.
Mrs Carlton is closer to Kay, in her dignity and refusal to live as an invalid, a burden to her husband, her calm determination to die if she cannot live fully. I used Kay's words when she rejected the specialist's offer to operate.
I dictated *Say No to Death* in a series of little furnished flats Norman and I had on the North Side, in one of which we made friends from the University who have remained friends ever since. One gave me her name for Jan. Norman checked—he had had experience of TB victims. The manuscript was vetted by Dr John Hughes and one of the nurses from the Public Health Department so that there was no possibility of error. Refused publication in Australia, I took the manuscript to England with me.

Compared to *Come in Spinner*, *Say No to Death* is a simple story, rarely shifting from its two major characters, Jan and Bart, against uncomplicated backgrounds, its strength coming from Bart's development from a playboy to a man of heroic devotion.
In the beginning, the publishers decided to bring out only a token edition. We accepted the same poor contract we had for *Spinner*. Starry-eyed, the former had been accepted because it was better than Australian contracts.
Then one of those unpredictable things happened. Heinemann's publicity officer, Captain Gyde, the 'discoverer' of Henry Handel Richardson, read the book and, as he told us, experienced 'the same wonder and delight'.
The book was published in October 1951, in a first edition of 25,000 and it received an even more generally eulogistic reception than *Come in Spinner*. John Connell wrote in London *Evening News*:

"Is young love, true love, ever defeated by sickness, poverty and the onset of untimely and most cruel death? This, I think, is the question Dymphna Cusack has put to herself. Her answer, whose origin and force lie in the strength of love itself, is triumphant and Bunyanesque: "O Death where is thy sting. O Grave thy victory." In its sweet, raw beauty, its pity and its pain, this book reminded me again and again of another novel about young love and sorrow in the aftermath of a great war, Ernest Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms*. It has the same simple, lyrical elemental strength and compassion, and, like *Farewell to Arms*, it is unforgettable."

B: Contents of the Dymphna Cusack Archive at the National Library of Australia

B: Contents of the Dymphna Cusack Archive at the National Library of Australia

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Papers

1937 - 83

4.72 metres (30 boxes) and two folio items

MS 4621

Available for reference

Dymphna Cusack's papers were acquired in many consignments between 1959 and 1983. The last consignment was received after her death, from her stepson-in-law, Mr Jim McGrath.

Consignments received up to 1972 were sorted into one collection and each item was numbered. An index to the correspondence in Series 1 was created on the basis of these item numbers, and is located at Appendix A.

Consignments received subsequently have not been fully sorted, item-numbered or indexed; a preliminary list to these additions is located after the main descriptive list. This preliminary list and amendments to the descriptive list, were made by Valerie Helson. The boxes are numbered from 1 to 30 throughout the entire collection, but becaue the first part of the collection was finitely item-numbered, and for other practical reasons, the additions could not be interfiled with the first part of the collection. Each addition, therefore, is folder-numbered from 1 to the end of the addition, and is separately listed. Readers should be aware that material they are looking for could be in any part of the various lists.

Books by Cusack are held in her manuscript collection as well as in the main book stack of the National Library. During her long association with the Library, and with her help, the Library sought to collect all translations as well as original editions; they may be identified from the Library's main catalogues.

In her will, Dymphna Cusack bequeathed her collection of books to the Sydney City Library, where her friend, Mrs Sarah Walters, is City Librarian. The transfer took place in 1983.

A number of dictated drafts of Cusack's works are held in the Oral History Collection of the National Library:

TRC 38 Notes for a book on Albanians (4 reels)

TRC 82 Black lightning, original dictated version (13 reels)

TRC 119 The half-burnt tree (13 reels)

C: Media Interviews with Dymphna Cusack in the German Democratic Republic

C: Media Interviews with Dymphna Cusack in the German Democratic Republic

„Ich gehe von Tatsachen aus, und ich ziele auf Tatsachen; Phantasie ist für mich das Arbeiten in und mit der Wirklichkeit." So die australische Schriftstellerin Dymphna Cusack, deren frühen Roman „Southern Steel" wir nunmehr kennenlernen. Ein Buch unterschiedlicher menschlicher Entwicklungen, dargetan an den Mitgliedern zweier Familien; und ein Roman über bestimmte gesellschaftliche Gegebenheiten und soziale Erscheinungen in ihrer Heimat während des zweiten Weltkriegs, an dem der Australische Bund aktiv teilnahm, durch Entsendung von Truppen nach Nordafrika und Griechenland, die an der Seite englischer Verbände gegen den Mussolini- und Hitlerfaschismus kämpften; in Abwehr der japanischen Angriffe auf die britischen und amerikanischen Positionen im Pazifik. Angriffe, die – wie der Roman zeigt – auch australische Städte wie Newcastle bedrohten, über denen sich dunkle Wolken drohend zusammenzogen. Die faschistischen Aggressoren wurden geschlagen. Doch mögliche soziale Vorhaben der damaligen Labourregierung Australiens, etwa die Verstaatlichung der Grundstoffindustrien, blieben Debatte.

Ein bewegter geschichtlicher Hintergrund. Vor ihm leiden und handeln die Menschen Dymphna Cusacks. Bar Sweetapple, durch den Weg nach oben in Gefahr geraten, sein Menschentum preiszugeben; sein Bruder Rod, der – der Arbeiterklasse verbunden – für einen gangbaren Weg nach vorn kämpft; und der jüngste Sweetapple, Landy, wie sein Vater ein Seemann. Neben ihnen die Frauen ... [illegible] grenzenloser High-Society-Ehrgeiz; und andere, die um ihre Liebe ringen und unter Mühen und Freuden eine oft schwere tägliche Pflicht erfüllen; in der Familie, im Stahlwerk, dessen Rauchwolken mal grau, mal rotdurchglüht über die Dächer von Newcastle treiben. Und über dem Hafen, aus dem Stahltransporter auf das Meer hinausdampfen, wo feindliche U-Boote lauern. „Ich gehe von Tatsachen aus ..."

Von den Realitäten her legt die australische Autorin – wie ihre sozialkritischen Romane „Jagd nach Glück", „Und jeden Morgen neue Hoffnung", „Der halbverbrannte Baum" oder „Wie ein schwarzer Blitz" erhärten – gewisse arge und überständige gesellschaftliche Erscheinungen des kapitalistischen Australian Way of Life bloß. Gleichsam unter dem Käthe-Kollwitz-Motto „Ich will wirken in meiner Zeit" versucht Dymphna Cusack auf ihre Weise, mit dem Wort des Dramas und des Romans die Frage nach den Lebensrechten der australischen Ureinwohner einer Antwort näherzubringen oder will – wie in „Wolken über Newcastle" – mithelfen, die Arbeitsbedingungen der Stahlwerker und Hafenarbeiter zu heben und die soziale Stellung der Frau in Australien zum Förderlichen hin zu verändern. „Dieser Roman", sagt die Autorin, die Tschechow und Gorki als ihre großen Anreger betrachtet und Hemingway schätzt, „gibt ein vollkommen dokumentarisches Bild einer Stahl-Stadt während des Krieges." Der Roman wurde von Kritikern als die beste Darstellung einer australischen Arbeiterfamilie seit Henry Lawson bezeichnet. „Mit dem Volk leben und über das Volk schreiben. Das ist meine Devise. Ich betrachte mich als Arbeiter, nicht als Teil einer separaten Schicht." Von daher schreibt die australische Schriftstellerin, die bislang siebenmal die DDR besuchte und ihre vielen Fahrten durch die Sowjetunion in dem Reisebuch „Holidays Among the Russians" („Urlaub in der Sowjetunion") fixierte.

Wie andere Arbeiten entstand auch ihr Roman „Wolken über Newcastle" in ständigem Gedankenaustausch mit ihrem Gatten Norman Freehill. Viele Jahre war er Mitarbeiter der „Tribune", dem Organ der Kommunistischen Partei Australiens, war langjähriger Präsident der Gesellschaft für australisch-sowjetische Freundschaft. – Er hat sich jetzt – unter Mitwirkung von Dymphna Cusack und Norman Freehill – eine Gesellschaft zur Entwicklung und Festigung der Freundschaft zwischen der DDR und Australien zugesellt. Nach dem Einsatz für Frieden in Vietnam – „Wir haben viel im Kampf gegen die Beteiligung Australiens am Vietnam-Krieg zu tun" – bekannte sich Dymphna Cusack jüngsthin zu dem völkerverbindenden Satz: „Wir müssen endlich lernen, miteinander zu leben, in allen Ländern, mit allen Rassen."

Deutlich ist also Dymphna Cusacks Ziel: ein literarisches Hineinwirken in die Epoche, ein Einwirken auf nach vorn zu verändernde Verhältnisse – in diesem Sinne versteht Dymphna Cusack sich von fern als eine Art Sinclair Lewis Australiens. Eine dem Fortschritt verschworene Autorin, deren Werke in mehr als dreißig Sprachen übersetzt wurden und allein in der Sowjetunion Millionenauflagen erreichten. Dramen und Romane einer [illegible] den und zugleich auf [illegible] sinnten Unterhaltung, [illegible] gesellschaftlicher Verantwortung", wie es in einer kurzge[illegible] Selbstcharakteristik heißt.

ERICH PETTER

Berlins ältestes Auto f[illegible]
Berlins weitgereiste Gäste durch
Berlins berlinischste Straße zu einem

Rendezvous Unter den Linden

Wat, drei Monate? – Nee, 14 Tage!

Auto: Gestatten, MAF, Abteilung der Markranstädter Automobilfabrik – Vierzylinder. Und mit wem habe ich die Ehre?

Gäste: Dymphna Ellen Cusack. Und das ist mein Lebens- und Reisegefährte Norman Freehill, beide Schriftsteller aus Sydney, Australien. Wir freuen uns, Ihre Bekanntschaft zu machen. Uns scheint, Sie sind schon ziemlich lange auf den Beinen – oh pardon – auf den Rädern.

Auto: Seit 1909. Damals gab es noch als [illegible] geflügeltes Wort: „Was ist schneller als ein Gedanke? – Ein Berliner Droschkengaul. Du denkst, er fällt, und da liegt er schon." – Sie können sich denken, daß unter diesen Umständen mein Auftauchen eine Sensation war. Ist es übrigens heute auch wieder. Aber das ist mir nicht zu Kopf gestiegen. Schließlich ist man ein Auto mit Charakter! Sie haben ja wohl auch [illegible] Kilometer zurückgelegt. Von Sydney nach Berlin – das ist ja schon eine halbe Weltreise!

Gäste: Weltreisen ist sozusagen unser zweiter Beruf. Wir besuchen seit vielen Jahren alle Länder, in denen unsere Bücher gedruckt und unsere Stücke gespielt werden – also auch die DDR.

Auto: Toll! Und wo – wenn man fragen darf – waren Sie überall?

Gäste: Fragen Sie lieber, wo wir nicht waren, das ist einfacher: am Nord- und Südpol, in Südafrika und Lateinamerika. Sonst überall. Allein in China waren wir zwei Jahre; der sowjetische Minister für Kultur sagte uns: „Sie kennen die Sowjetunion besser als ich". Denn wir haben das Land in allen Himmelsrichtungen durchreist.

Auto: Enorm! Dann dürften unsere alten „Linden" wohl kaum dazu beitragen, Sie zur Begeisterung von [illegible] zu reißen?

Gäste: Da irren Sie [illegible] Wir lernten Berlin schon [illegible] Weltkrieg kennen. 19[illegible] der hierher. Und seitdem haben wir

D. Extract from the Catalogue of an Exhibition on Women's Labour in the GDR

Qualifizierung der Frauen ist Trumpf

Die Verwirklichung der Beschlüsse zu der Kombinatsakademie in Ei-

Die ständige Erhöhung des Anteils an weiblichen Arbeitskräften bleibt auch in den 60er Jahren ein wesentliches Thema. Die Bemühungen des vorangegangenen Jahrzehnts haben Wirkung gezeigt, damit aber auch gleichzeitig ein neues Problem in den Vordergrund gerückt: Die mangelnde Qualifizierung der Frauen.
Zwischen 50 und 60 Prozent der weiblichen Bevölkerung im erwerbsfähigen Alter ging 1960 bereits einer regelmäßigen Tätigkeit nach. Da der größte Teil der Erwerbstätigen älter als 25 Jahre war, besaß die Mehrheit berufstätiger Frauen keine Berufsausbildung. Damit waren dem Einsatz von Frauen in den Betrieben Grenzen gesetzt, die so nicht mehr weiterbestehen konnten.

Der erste spezielle Frauenlehrgang mit einem Fachschulabschluß als Chemotechnikerin wurde im Kombinat von Dr. Jentzsch im Jahre 1961 ins Leben gerufen. Acht Frauen schlossen diese Ausbildung nach vier Jahren Abendstudium ab.

Mai 1952: Ministerratsbeschluß zu Frauenförderungsplänen als Teil der Betriebskollektivverträge, Haushaltstag für verheiratete Frauen, April 1962: Ministerratsbeschluß zur Förderung der Frauen und Mädchen in Beruf und Gesellschaft,

Sie wurden auf den Schachten zum Beispiel als Lokführerin, Rangiererin, am Kompressor, als Fahrdienstleiterin, an den Wetterturen und an der Schlepperhaspel eingesetzt.
Die Frauen waren freiwillig in den Schacht gegangen aber sie schieden keineswegs alle freiwillig aus dem Unter-Tage-Betrieb aus. Für sie bedeutete der Einsatz über Tage, in Lampenstuben etc., oft den Verlust eines Drittels ihres Lohnes.
Aber nicht nur die Bergbaubetriebe, sondern das gesamte Kombinat brauchte Frauen als Arbeitskräfte, und die Betriebszeitungen aus dieser Zeit legen beredtes Zeugnis dafür ab.
Die Betriebe schufen verstärkt soziale Einrichtungen, in denen wieder Frauen arbeiteten, um Frauenerwerbstätigkeit in größerem Ausmaß zu ermöglichen.

Juni 1969: 2.Frauenkongreß der DDR zur Rolle und Stellung der Frau in der Gesellschaft, Mai 1970: Einführung des Frauensonderstudiums an Hoch- und Fachschulen, Juni 1970: Richtlinie zu Frauenförderplänen mit den Schwerpunkten Aus- und Weiterbildung.

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