Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE4321

Cusack, Dymphna

(1902 - 1981)

Born	19020921, Wyalong New South Wales Australia
Died	19811019, Manly Sydney New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Author, Cultural Commentator, Political activist, social activist, Teacher

Summary

Dymphna Cusack was one of Australia's most prolific and translated writers. Educated at St Ursula's College, Armidale she won an Exhibition and Teaching Scholarship to the University of Sydney, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts and a Diploma of Education. While at the University of Sydney, she developed life-long friendships with fellow authors Florence James and Christina Stead, and lawyer Marie Byles. After graduating she worked as a teacher until her early retirement in 1944 due to ill-health.

Cusack's literary career took off in 1935 when her first novel, *Jungfrau*, was published to critical acclaim. A further eleven novels, seven plays, three travel books, two children's books and one non-fiction book followed. Two of her novels were collaborations: *Pioneers on Parade* (1939) with Miles Franklin; and *Come In Spinner* (1951) with Florence James.

Cusack's books were translated into over 30 languages worldwide, making her one of Australia's most translated authors. Her anti-bomb play, *Pacific Paradise* (1955), written in response to the United State's atomic tests on Bikini Atoll, sealed her reputation across Asia, Eastern Europe and the Pacific.

During the 1950s and 1960s Cusack spent long periods overseas with her partner (later husband) Norman Randolph Freehill, a journalist and founding member of the Community Party of Australia. After returning to Australia in 1962 she became associated with Faith and Hans Bandler, leaders of the Aboriginal rights movements.

In 1963 Cusack was a foundation member of the Australian Society of Authors. In 1975 she was named Woman of the Year by the Union of Australian Women. In 1976 she refused the Order of the British Empire due to her republican ideals, but in 1981, soon before her death, she was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for her contribution to Australian literature.

Details

The following list represents some of Cusacks more important publications:

Novels

Jungfrau (1936)
Pioneers on Parade (1939), with Miles Franklin
Come In Spinner (1951), with Florence James
Say No to Death (1951)
Southern Steel (1953)
The Sun in Exile (1955)
Heat Wave in Berlin (1961)
Picnic Races (1962)
Black Lightning (1964)
The Sun is Not Enough (1967)
The Half-Burnt Tree (1969)
A Bough in Hell (1971)

Plays

Shallow Cups (1934)
Red Sky at Morning (1942)
Morning Sacrifice (1943)
Three Australian Three Act Plays (1950), comprising Comets Soon Pass, Shoulder the Sky, and Morning Sacrifice
The Golden Girls (1955)
Pacific Paradise (1963)

Travel books

Chinese Women Speak (1958)
Holidays Among the Russians (1964)
Illyria Reborn (1966)

Children’s stories

Kanga-Bee and Kanga-bo (1945)
Four Winds and a Family (1947), with Florence James

Non-Fiction

Caddie, the Story of a Barmaid (1953), edited and introduced only

Biography

Norman Freehill with Dymphna Cusack, Dymphna Cusack, T. Nelson, West Melbourne (Vic.), 1975

Dymphna Cusack, A window in the dark, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1991, introduced and edited by Debra Adelaide

Events

1981 - 1981
Appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for her contribution to Australian literature

1963 - 1963
Helped establish the Australian Society of Austhors

1975 - 1975
Named Woman of the Year by the Union of Australian Women

1976 - 1976
Refused to accept the Order of the British Empire due to her republican ideals

Published resources

Edited Book
Yarn spinners : a story in letters, Dymphna Cusack, Florence James, Miles Franklin, North, Marilla, 2001

Book
Dymphna Cusack, Freehill, Norman, 1975

A window in the dark, introduced and edited by Debra Adelaide, Cusack, Dymphna, 1991

Caddie, a Sydney barmaid : an autobiography / written by herself ; with an introduction on by Dymphna Cusack, Caddie, 1953

Come in Spinner, Cusack, Dymphna and James, Florence, 1951

Heatwave in Berlin, Cusack, Dymphna, 1961

Book Section
Dymphna Cusack (1902-1981), North, Marilla, 2002

Resource Section
Dymphna Cusack (1902-81), Middlemiss, Perry, 2006,
http://www.middlemiss.org/lit/authors/cusackd/cusackd.html

Cusack, Ellen Dymphna (Nell) (1902 - 1981), North, Marilla, 2006,
http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A170280b.htm

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

Mitchell and Dixson Libraries Manuscripts Collection
Florence James - papers, 1890-1993

Miles Franklin papers, mainly literary manuscripts, [1900-1954?]

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection
Correspondence and literary papers 1887-1954 [microform]

Papers of Nancy Cato, 1939-1995 [manuscript]

Papers of Dymphna Cusack, 1937-1983 [manuscript]

Papers of Donald Crick, 1955-1993 [manuscript]

Pacific paradise, 1955 [manuscript]

Cuttings book of Dymphna Cusack, approximately 1951-1983

National Archives of Australia, National Office, Canberra
CUSACK, Ellen Dymphna (Freehill) [76 folios of which 24 contain exemptions]

Ellen Dymphna Cusack [154 folios of which 101 contain exemptions]

CUSACK, Ellen Dymphna Volume 2

CUSACK, Ellen Dymphna Volume 3

Eternal Now by Dymphna Cusack

National Archives of Australia, Sydney Office
Drama and Features - Correspondence with Playwrights - Dymphna Cusack

Author Details
Isobelle Barrett Meyering

Created 14 September 2009
Last modified 16 September 2009