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The anatomy of a best-seller: the making of "Come in spinner"

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THE ANATOMY OF A BEST-SELLER:

THE MAKING OF COME IN SPINNER

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Honours Master of Arts by Coursework
(Post-Colonial Literature)
from the University of Wollongong.

by

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B.A. T.Cert.

Department of English: 1990
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Florence James, co-author of *Come In Spinner*, subject of the biography from which this dissertation has arisen. At 88 she has brought a keen intellect to our interviews on the biographical work, and has been both friend and mentor during this research.

Dr Paul Sharrad - lecturer, intellectual guide and friend.

Elisabeth Thomas, who assisted in transcribing and indexing the taped interviews.
Although I had, like many female readers of my generation, read and re-read *Come In Spinner* as a teenager in the late 1950s, the book first actively engaged me in 1978 when I assisted in setting up the methodology for a market research project aimed at establishing its viability as a twentieth century film. I went on to research the biography of Florence James, one of the book's co-authors, a task I have been engaged in more intensively since late in 1986. The tentative title of that biography is *The 'Spinner Years*, for I became increasingly fascinated by the strong influence which the book has had on the life of Florence James herself, and, to a lesser extent, on the lives of her daughters and grand-daughters. It was as if the book had taken on a life of its own and exercised a power which drew others into its net. As Jean-Paul Sartre observed, a book "is an emanation of intersubjectivity, a living bond of rage, hatred or love between those who have produced it and those who receive it." [1.] This dissertation is the immediate result.

* * *

The 'anatomy' of the text itself of *Come In Spinner* is evident in the contents of the three Appendices. Appendix III dissects the novel (Angus & Robertson 1988 unabridged edition) into its component 'scenes' and indicates (in italics) the scalpel marks of the five or six revisions, thus highlighting the material omitted from the 1951 First Edition. These were the censorable scenes and subplots which fell victims to the fray, as those with a vested interest in preserving the book's integrity battled with those who wished to excise its dangerous content, calling it "libellous" and "obscene". Appendix II lists the 'cast' alphabetically, for easy reference. One day a social historian may match their names - as composites or individuals - with the real characters of 1944 Sydney. Appendix I lists the enclosures which give the flavour of the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper under Brian Penton's editorship, in reproductions from microfilm copies of articles relevant to the social, political and cultural 'climate' of the mid 1940's. There are also three photographs from the NSW Government Printer's archives - showing the precise location of Dymphna Cusack's atelier flat at 223 Macquarie Street from which she observed the power brokers entering NSW Parliament House during Premier McKell's first period in State government, and which also locates the approximate site of the fictional Hotel South Pacific.
The process of writing, editing and revising the book itself to its final 1951 published form is described in the five chapters which trace through the people and the events which gave Come In Spinner form and life. Chapter I focuses on Brian Penton's editorship of the Daily Telegraph (1941-1951), his relationship with Frank Packer and the 1946 Novel Competition. This chapter also pries beneath the surface of the nexus between politicians and media barons - and finds the birth of the public relations industry in Australia.

Chapter II provides an original literary biography of Dymphna Cusack (a task which involved considerable and complex research), giving an historical and sociological portrait of the background, people and experiences which formed Dymphna Cusack and informed her creativity, as one of Australia's internationally best-known writers of her time.

Chapter III provides an original biographical portrait of Florence James, and endeavours to depict those factors in her life which provided a very different formative background from Dymphna Cusack's, as well as those influences which gave her similar ethical impulses - all of which would come together in the collaboration on Come In Spinner.

Chapter IV traces the chain of people and events which Come In Spinner's manuscript engaged from October 30, 1946 to February 15, 1951. It is a careful weaving from primary sources which include three separate holdings of correspondence by the major actors, and interviews with those players who are still alive.

Chapter V briefly attempts to place Come In Spinner in its literary and socio-historical context as a 'social realist' novel in late 1940s Australia.

I have tried to keep the integrity of what Cusack and James set out to do with Come In Spinner, that is - to "tell it how it was." The main difference is that I have time and distance on my side, and so can name the names which they could not.

* * * * *

1. Jean-Paul Sartre
"We Write for our Own Time"
CHAPTER I

THE MAKING

OF THE 1946 DAILY TELEGRAPH

NOVEL COMPETITION:

THE CAST:

The Editor: Brian Penton - a brilliant man with bifurcated vision.

The Proprietors: Frank Packer - ex-pugilist turned media baron.
Edward Granville Theodore - former Labor Deputy Prime Minister & Treasurer

The Re-Write Man: W. Stewart Howard - Premier William McKell's PR officer, Robert Menzies's image maker: a lit.crit. and fixit man.
The 1946 Daily Telegraph Prize for the great Australian post-War novel was the initiative of Brian Penton, writer, and editor of the Telegraph from 1941 (at only 27 years) until his death from cancer on August 24, 1951. Frank Packer's tribute to Penton in the Sydney Morning Herald's obituary, in part reveals the source of Penton's crusading zeal and visionary commitment, which won him either friends or enemies:

Personal authorship ... became secondary to his devouring belief that freedom of expression and of the individual was something more worth fighting for than individual success as an author. His editorship of the Daily Telegraph gave him the opportunity to pursue this belief and crusade for freedom of expression.

In the history of journalism, when it is written, no editor will receive greater recognition than Brian Penton for his fearless and undeterred pursuit of truth at all costs - not always a popular policy, and one that was many times not appreciated by politicians, pundits of industry or unionism, but that was never successfully challenged or criticised as being insincere or dishonest.[1.]

Come In Spinner by Dymphna Cusack and Florence James was initially championed by Penton as the judges' choice for the novel competition prize out of over 380 manuscripts, and indeed, as his personal one. However, as the forces shaping socio-political events in the mid to late 1940's came closer to Consolidated Press and to the manuscript itself, Penton became either powerless to defend it, or he became a part of the media manipulation process which was setting the agenda and governing the minds of the majority of the Australian public.

Early in 1946 We Were The Rats by Lawson Glassop had been seized and tried and declared an "indecent publication" and a "menace" by Judge Studdert, and the distributors, Angus and
Robertson were fined. [Appendix I:1,2 and 3 enclosures] The poems of the 'Ern Malley' hoax had already been prosecuted in Adelaide for obscenity in 1944. The issue of censorship led to a coalition of cultural groups into The People's Council for Culture, which made a deputation to State Premier William McKell on May 8, 1946 protesting the power of NSW "back block's Magistrates" in banning books and proposed instead on an expert Tribunal. *Come In Spinner*, loaded as it was with the socio-political realities of corrupt war-time Sydney was an obvious target for censorship or suppression. As if it had a life of its own, the *Spinner* manuscript gathered around it a chain of people and episodes which formed its pre-publication saga, played out in the uneasy psychological post-War climate in Australia. The climate was insecure and reactionary: the public psyche wavered between persecutory self-righteousness and outright denial of the sins of the past — the sinister 'blossoming', in effect, of the bifurcated mentality that had been evolving in the inter-War period, combined with a guilt reaction to the permissiveness of the Wartime culture. In the arts generally in the mid to late '40's it was a case of conformity for very survival, or else 'revolution' - producing a disjuncture in an evolving culture. In literature this was particularly marked, suffering, as it had been, from decades of drought. The need for a "national literature" was the constant topic for debate amongst intellectuals:

*The absence of good publishing houses, the prejudice of those that did exist, poor publishing conditions generally, the lack of good regular reviews and reviewers, the unavailability of Australian books were all characteristics of the literary situation*
Brian Penton saw the regeneration of culture as part of his mission, and integral with the social responsibility of his role as editor of an opinion-forming daily newspaper. In his polemical tract, *Think - Or Be Damned* - written and published with Frank Packer's support in 1941 - Penton wrote:

> In so far as Australians have any imaginative associations with any country it is with England. Tradition and literature are responsible for this. In a queer way, a place has no imaginative reality until the artist has written about it, painted it, distilled it into your mind. For this reason Piccadilly has more imaginative reality to most Australians than Pitt Street or Collins Street has.

> Because distance lends enchantment? I do not think so. Because the mind of the pioneer survives - the man who came here to make his money and get back to England's green and pleasant fields, away from this strange, old, grey, hard, lonely, remote land.

> By and large we are still, as Wells said, more English than Australian - colonisers, reluctantly sojourning on the periphery of the world, in an uncouth spot, which is good only to exploit. [3.p.60-61]

Born in Queensland in 1904, Penton was educated at Brisbane Grammar and Queensland University. He worked on the *Sydney Morning Herald* from 1925 to 1928 and then headed for London, where he was co-editor, with Jack Lindsay, at Fanfrolico Press from 1929 to 1933. He followed Percy Reginald 'Inky' Stephensen in this role - another ex-Queenslander and crusader for cultural nationalism, although 'Inky' panned Penton's first novel, published in 1934, *Landtakers*, as being "an historical novel ... which wallows in the sensationalism of convictism and flogging" [4.p.65] Penton's fictional 'colonist', Derek Cabell, is a Nietzschean protagonist, a man
who conquers the land making himself into "superman by destroying every human tie of community or obligation." [5.p.106] An anti-pastoral vision, Penton's book was most courageous in its time. With brutal realism it depicts the rejection of civilized values necessary in conditions of survival at all costs. He prefaced it with a quote from Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*:

> A perilous crossing, a perilous journeying, a perilous looking back, a perilous trembling and hesitating. [6.Title page]

Hence, Penton himself had a somewhat radical fiction writing past. The *Inheritors* continued his theme, exploring the destructive family relationships of the brutalised conqueror, Cabell; journalism was to prevent the completion of an intended trilogy. He would certainly have been intellectually predisposed to a book such as *Spinner* which took on the hypocritical veneer of a self-congratulatory national self-image and stripped it bare, to show the ugly realities underneath.

In October 1940, after seven years on the *Telegraph*, Penton was the chief sub-editor when an uncorroborated news flash from Reuters, that the German troops had invaded Romania, caused a disturbance in the Telegraph ranks. Syd Deamer, the incumbent editor, didn't want to go with it until it was confirmed, but Penton did - and Packer backed him. They were right and scooped the *Herald* on the news. Penton was appointed editor. [7.] It is of significant interest, given the history of *Come In Spinner*, that during World War II Penton was internationally acclaimed for his war coverage and
his stand against government censorship. He wrote:

Resistance to tyranny is a habit of mind in the people and their governors. The governors become tyrannical when the people have lost their habit of checking them. [8.p.173]

In 1943 there was a draconian tightening of political censorship and he joined Fairfax's Rupert Henderson in taking on Arthur Calwell's ludicrously extreme rules in suppressing information.

He printed a letter from Calwell to Henderson and a copy of Henderson's reply indicating that it had been censored by

leaving a blank space equal to the quantity of copy the censor had cut. This showed that censorship had occurred and was the first shot fired against the blanket rule forbidding newspapers to indicate that censorship had taken place - the most precious and vital of the censor's regulations. [8.p.175]

In mid-April 1944 the Censor seized papers and stopped presses. On a ruling that the Censor had exceeded his constitutional powers, the High Court intervened and freed the presses: "Censorship was defeated and the Government compelled to amend its censorship regulations. "[8.p.183] Penton wrote the full account in his 1947 book Censored [9.] which he dedicated to his employer - "For the only true begetter of this fight - Frank Packer." After the War Penton threw his considerable intellect and work capacity into the paper's role in the regeneration of culture. According to former Telegraph features' writer and close colleague, Zelie McLeod:

Frank Packer and Penton were like brothers, except in size, Penton was a slight five foot seven and a half inches. Through him Packer got a glimpse of a world he didn't know existed. He got involved with Bill Dobell through Penton - The Women's Weekly ran big art competitions, and Penton sold Packer the idea of the orchestral concerts at the Town Hall and
the novel competition. [7.]

There were many who resented Penton's proximity to the Packers, and one of his proteges, Donald Horne observed:

*The great public question about Penton may have been whether he had 'sold out' but the favoured personal weakness found in him by office gossip was 'untrustworthiness'; he was said to be 'malicious', 'feline', 'spiteful'; he played favourites, he promoted sycophants. [10.p.273]*

Horne had edited 'Honi Soit' at Sydney University and knew the slings of envy: "My sympathies were with Penton." [ibid.]

Zelie McLeod maintains, however, that if anyone was to wear what turned out to be a Con Press public relations disaster - the great Australian novel competition run by the Daily Telegraph in 1946 - it would have been Penton. [7.] Packer was a bottom-line man. Horne relates that rumour was that Penton had known Lenin in Zurich and that this was "given credence by the fact that he still wore a wide-brimmed Latin Quarter black hat." [10.p.273] This confirms the image of the Left-Wing sympathiser who returned from Europe wide-eyed and idealistic, but who, ironically, like his own hero Derek Cabell, would have to face the ethical pressures of 'frontier' Antipodean (journalistic) survival. David McNicoll maintains that "the closer he got to Packer, particularly to Mrs Packer, he stopped wearing the hat (he liked to look like a Spanish Liberationist) and it was very noticeable to me how his gear started to improve." [11.] Zelie McLeod tells of the work standards demanded by Penton, his morning to midnight commitment, his follow through to galleys of copy, his own subbing down of Quiller Couch's *The Art of Writing* as a handbook to staff. [7.] Horne records the famous Dobell
portrait of Penton, commissioned by Packer, as showing him in "leering, satyr pose, set in a background of red and black which might have set a brothel scene." [10.p.273] Penton, it seems, was somewhat Machiavellian. However, the most important factor to Packer was that the readers were liking what they were getting. The circulation of the Daily Telegraph rose from 212,000 in 1941 to 318,000 in 1946 and 345,000 in 1950 - a gain of 133,000 purchasers in under a decade; in the same period the Herald gained a mere 94,000 - and the Daily Telegraph had passed it in sales since 1946! (Following Penton's death the growth declined until the Sydney Morning Herald took the lead again in 1957. [12.p.215]

Circulation rules all in daily newspapers. Usually the managing-editor takes final credit for marketing strategies. However, Penton had acquired so much de facto power at Consolidated Press in the early '40's because both the managing-directors and the managing-editor (which Packer was "both in fact and in title" [8.p.146]) were absent, co-opted by the Curtin Labor Government in February 1942 to the official War machine. John Curtin had personally asked his former Parliamentary colleague E.G. Theodore to become Director-General of the Allied Works Council (AWC) -

an organisation whose task it would be to coordinate the efforts of all contractors and public instrumentalities which were carrying out construction work for the rapidly growing United States Forces in Australia. [8.p.152]

E.G. Theodore immediately co-opted the now Lieutenant Frank Packer to take charge of the Civil Construction Corps (CCC), the manpower management side of the colossal enterprise of the
AWC which began with a budget of 66 million pounds - spending at the rate of 4 million a month. It is not difficult to imagine the resultant degree of personal power and the potential it held for personal gain.

The third significant member of the AWC/CCC Club was Stewart Howard, whose name is strangely absent from the R.S. Whittington biography of Frank Packer [8]. However, the hand-indexed cards of the John Fairfax Library show, in newspaper sub-headlines of the era, that Frank Packer brought Howard into the club very rapidly - as Deputy Director of Personnel. Howard became a negotiator and a trouble-shooter, increasingly indispensable to Government and the Con Press media barons. There is evidence of controversy in the appointments - and of accusations of public drunkenness against Howard. Howard had been Premier McKell's closest confidante during his first term as Premier of NSW. Sydney underworld folklore concerning corruption in the period has been now largely substantiated by crime writer Bob Bottom:

Bottom noted that McKell had become so compromised by his involvement with them (underworld heavies) in the sly grog rackets that they began to regard him as their puppet and would arrive at his Dowling Street home with hordes of women for late night drinking sessions. [13.p.20]

A recent tell-all by a former Detective Constable Joseph Stanley Grady, now in his mid eighties, gives the nitty gritty details of "the sly grog rackets and its chief participants' links with SP bookmaking and illegal casinos." [ibid.p.21] As Stewart Howard's job was managing the image of his then employer, Premier McKell, all this detail would have been
familiar daily truck to him. Moreover, living at 223 Macquarie Street in an atelier flat opposite Parliament House, as she was in the late 1930's, and moving in journalistic and literati circles, it would have been the subject of 'inside' and authoritatively fuelled exchanges between Dymphna Cusack and her network of friends.

The name often used by Howard in his 'lit.crit' mode was 'Miss Bronte', and on October 20, 1945 Miss Bronte's by-line announced "A Blood Transfusion for our Literature." [14.] in the Daily Telegraph. The write-off box announced:

In this article Miss Bronte gives you some idea of the kind of novel the Daily Telegraph one thousand pound contest hopes to discover. The judges will be Mr H.M. Green, librarian of the Fisher Library, University of Sydney; Professor A.J.A. Waldock, professor of English Literature at the University of Sydney; Katherine Susannah Prichard, one of the best known of Australia's novelists; Sir John Morris, Chief Justice of Tasmania and Chancellor of the University of Hobart; Dr J.V. Duhig of the University of Queensland; Mr Vance Palmer of Melbourne, an eminent critic; Mr Brian Penton, Editor of the Daily Telegraph. [14. See Appendix I:27]

It was a public relations coup in the line up of the literati. The underlying Penton objective of 'cultural regeneration' was injected in his inevitable editor's rewrite:

I expect that the war, with its dynamic emotional effect, and the impact of the uneasy early years of peace, will make some changes in Australian literature. [ibid]

The first reference to the competition in the only archival file extant of the Daily Telegraph of the period end-1945/early-1946 (in Sydney University Library stores) is dated October 6, 1945 [Appendix 1:25] and reads:

Australian writers and literary critics yesterday

Page 10
commended the *Daily Telegraph*'s offer of a prize of one thousand pounds for a novel written by an Australian in Australia. The competition has been delayed until now to enable returning servicemen and women to compete, but the prize novel need not necessarily deal with the war. [15.]

The commentators include Katherine Susannah Prichard, Nettie Palmer, Kylie Tennant (who had won a similar competition in 1935 with *Tiburon* to which Dymphna Cusack's *Jungfrau* was a runner-up) and Miles Franklin, and an assortment of literary academics. On Thursday October 18, 1945 the front page carried the official line-up of judges and their credentials, and a statement of the rules: basically an 100,000 word limit and six months prior residency by the author in the Commonwealth: the judges' decision would be final - and the closing date was extended to October 1946. [16.] On September 30, 1946 the editorial page carried a reminder "One month to finish your Australian Novel", and the bold announcement:

*In addition to winning the thousand pound prize, the successful novel will be published simultaneously in Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, South Africa, and the United States, with a guaranteed sale of 100,000 copies.*

and a repeat of the Penton aspiration for cultural regeneration:

*What is hoped for is a new and vital contribution to Australian literature, which will define the aspirations of Australian people today as movingly as Lawson, Tom Collins and Henry Handel Richardson defined the Australia of yesterday. [17.]*

It was no longer war news which sold the dailies. The public relations industry was new in Australia at this time; the wartime American invasion had done a great deal to raise the level of sophistication in the media industry, but Clinton
Hartley Grattan, a Carnegie Research Fellow in Australia had individually done a great deal as a 'culture carrier' during the thirties and forties. He was an acquaintance, at the least, of all those in 'the cast' of the *Daily Telegraph* Novel Prize, and the authorship of *Come In Spinner*. His name appears frequently in the Dymphna Cusack-Florence James correspondence. On October 28, 1945 the serialisation had begun in the *Daily Telegraph* of Kylie Tennant's fifth novel *Time Enough Later* - billed as "the first Australian novel to be serialised in the Sydney Press since the War" [18.] and promoted for its 'vivid realism' and the fact that the author had dyed her hair blonde and gotten herself arrested to spend a week in Long Bay gaol in order to experience her subject matter first hand. As a boost to circulation the inclusion of serialised novels proved a winner. By July 1946 complete 'free' novels, perforated for 'tear out' consumption in the *Sunday Telegraph* [Appendix I:7 and 8], as well as the serialisations in the daily, were helping the *Daily Telegraph* sales leap 35,000 ahead of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. This was the biggest differential Penton achieved in his unique era of outselling 'Grannie' with a tabloid. [12.p.215] [The invaluable lesson of cross-stable media promotions was to become the strength of the Consolidated Press (and indeed, later, the TCN-9) Packer empire.] Titles of the perforated pull-outs included *The Breath of Death* by Richard Sale (July 7, 1946), *Love is Not Reasonable* by Micheline Keating (July 14, 1946, *Ten Cent Wedding Ring* by Elisabeth S. Holding (July 21, 1946). In the same aggressive post-War promotional thrust Packer and Penton had sent David McNicoll to study the Walter
Winchell and Drew Pearson columns in the American papers, and on February 8, 1946 "Town Talk" appeared - "the first regular front page column to appear in an Australian paper."

[19.p.115]

But the *Sydney Morning Herald* had not ignored the October, 1945 *Daily Telegraph* challenge. On December 5, 1945 the *Herald* announced -

The *Sydney Morning Herald* Competition judges for the Literary Competition to be held under the provision of the grant by the SMH of thirty thousand pounds for the development of Australian Literature and Art are: Dr A.G. Mitchell, T. Inglis Moore, Leon Gellert and R.G. Howarth. [20.]

On December 8, 1945 the *Sydney Morning Herald* advised the entry closing date - October 1, 1946. It was a direct promotional confrontation; a veritable competition for novel manuscripts. Clem Christesen in *Meanjin*’s 'Newsreel' in the last quarter of 1945, gave a tongue-in-cheek summary:

*Peace has brought in its train a multitude of bewildering happenings, but few so fantastic as the rivalry between the proprietors of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and Consolidated Press Ltd for the sponsorship of Australian Culture.*

Opening move was made by the *Daily Telegraph* ... A few days later the *Sydney Morning Herald* announced that thirty thousand pounds was to be set aside 'to stimulate the development of Australian art and literature.' Not to be outdone when culture was at stake, the *Daily Telegraph* then stated that 'plans had been completed for a series of orchestral concerts under the baton of well known conductors from abroad.' In addition prizes were to be offered for Australian compositions: and for good measure it was 'decided to send William Dobell to America and England to paint a series of portraits of notable men and women'. Mr Dobell said: "All artists need something like this to lift them out of the rut after spending years at home."
When details (of the first part) of the 'Heralds's scheme were announced it was revealed that a prize fund for novels, short stories and poems of 'approximately five thousand pounds a year' (for five years) would be established. There would be a special prize for a war story during the first year; and five thousand pounds would be allotted to art, details to be announced later. The first prize for the novel is to be two thousand pounds (one thousand up on the D.T.); for the 'best story of the war' one thousand pounds; short story five hundred pounds; poem fifty pounds. [21.]

On January 10, 1947, The Sydney Morning Herald ran a leader announcing its winning novel - Harp in the South by Ruth Park, who received her prize of two thousand pounds from the Editor-in-Chief, Mr H.A. McClure-Smith; the second prize was won by Jon Cleary with You Can't See Round Corners. The Daily Telegraph had not yet made an announcement. Australian literati and cognoscenti were waiting with bated breath. Rumours were rife. In the same month the Labor Premier of NSW, William McKell (now notorious for his criminal connections, but at the time still protected by his media mates), was appointed Governor-General of Australia, and was sworn in on March 11, 1947.

It was not until July 23, 1947 that the Daily Telegraph wrote to Sydney Wybourne (alias Dymphna Cusack & Florence James) requesting a meeting regarding the 'prize' manuscript of My Unabated Spring. Norman Freehill, then Finance Editor of Consolidated Press's The Bulletin observed, following his first reading of the draft of the novel which would eventually be published as Come In Spinner, that:

It had everything: contemporary history; obviously its documentation thorough, with that understatement that novelists so often find forced on them. At the time I was a daily paper executive and knew the
facts, appreciated the wide sweep of the writing. [22.p.57]

The 'understatement' of course refers to the 'factionalising' of people and places which could be libellous. The Hotel Australia, or 'The Pub', as it was universally referred to at the time ("It is Sydney's Casino." wrote Arnold Haskell in 1940 [23.p.336]), becomes the South Pacific Hotel (the SP) - and characters such as the "infamous medical criminal Dr Reginald Stuart-Jones" - "wild and flamboyant, an abortionist, playboy, extravagant racetrack punter and sometime nightclub proprietor." [13.p.21] becomes the unidentifiable Doc - or Doctor Mark Smethers. [CIS/U.p.563,572]

It was however August 18, 1947 when Dymphna Cusack (replete with new dentures which were merely gums when the summons for Sydney Wybourne was first received) arrived in Brian Penton's office, and subsequently wrote to Phyllis Kayberry a vivid and humorous account of that first negotiation. It warrants some lengthy quotation, both to savour the wit of the Cusack epistolary style, and for the early tone of Penton's response to the text itself, before the wider politics of Consolidated Press and its political mates' public relations had entered the debate. Having been deflected by a secretary who insisted that Mr Penton would only see a MISTER Wybourne, Dymphna Cusack wrote that she dramatically swept across the "two acre carpet in his Hollywood sanctum, with Brian Penton watching with horror". She explained the pseudonym for herself and Florence James:

Part of our anonymity was due to the necessity of keeping me out of sight. Ten years ago or more when
Brian Penton had returned from Spain all basque beret, bull-fighting Ernest Hemingway and Latin love I reacted the wrong way to the Latin pass, and he's never forgiven me... (but)... I was waved most politely to a chair. [24.]

BP : Are you Sydney Wybourne?  
ME : Yes.  
BP : My God, you're Dymphna Cusack. I might have known. (Just what that remark meant I did not ask. Was I going to anger the great?)
ME : At least I'm part of Sydney Wybourne. It's a collaboration.
BP : A man?  
ME : No.  
BP : A woman?

(Whereupon I called out Florence's ghost. I could see Brian Penton doing mental calculations trying to work out how anyone who would turn down 'Latin love' had ever managed to get all the improper information with which 'Spinner reeks. Then his face cleared and a wistful look came in his eye.)

BP : Where is this Florence woman?

So now Florence is responsible for all the ban-able bits we had to discuss. For this is the position: 'Spinner's great sprawling unrevised script is in the balance with one other. There were 380 entries. He had to ask me, ask that is Sydney Wybourne, if he, she, we would be prepared to make various cuts all of which, thank heaven we'd already anticipated in the revision because we knew nobody would publish it as it stood. So now I wait.

... Only one of the six judges didn't place 'Spinner in the first three, and he placed it fourth. Four out of the six placed it first with the proviso of shortening, obscenity etc. All points we had anticipated in the second draft thanks to Kay's priceless criticism.... The other two finalists are Dora Birtles and Dal Stivens. My God. If we win it means a thousand pounds prize between us and promised publication of 100,000 copies! It will also mean that I will have to leave the country! [24.]

An addendum to a copy of the above letter, dated September 5, 1947, after her second visit to Penton on August 21, and directed only to Florence James, displays a characteristic of Dymphna Cusack's correspondence - multiple carbon copies, annotated for a second recipient. Cusack added (for Florence James' eyes only):
Taking time to tell you the rest of the story that concerns only Sydney Wybourne. Haven't told it to anyone except Miles as it would never do to have it known. Brian Penton wanted to know if we were prepared to cut the manuscript by sixty to seventy thousand words. He brought up all points re language with situations we had already anticipated in revisions, and was overwhelmed with joy when I said there was already a second draft and demanded to know when he would have it. I said tomorrow and he swooned. Problem of how to overcome the Hotel Australia suing us for libel is racking their brains. I said we'd co-operate with all points except 'fact' unless the 'fact' was obscene or libellous. Then he read me the judges' reports. All but one placed us in the first three - and he placed it fourth.

All made the same criticism - over-long, repetition in dialogue, ban-ability. Words like 'vital', 'vigorous', 'masculine', abound and 'best work here in the last ten years.' Someone else said - 'salty humour, astringent satire, powerful drama.' Guinea is the general favourite. BP delighted to hear she is officially promoted to heroine. He is for Sydney Wybourne! Wax ed most enthusiastic. So now actually all but one judge placed us a provisional first 'provided that etc etc', but we'll never mention that second draft. As Miles said, it was actually judged from the literary point of view from the first draft, and if the second has any effect it is on the publication possibility. I refused to hope, to panic, to do anything but wait. [25.]

However, by October 27, 1947 Dymphna Cusack wrote to Florence James

that:

'Spinner is out. Not out in the ordinary competition sense but in something less manageable and tractable, infinitely subtler. Today exactly one year since the Daily Telegraph competition closed I saw Brian Penton. It is about ten weeks since last I saw him on August 21 and as I told you in our brief discussion, it came down to the fact that if the manuscript was reduced by about seventy thousand words and some of the libellous and obscene scenes taken out (which we had done on the second draft) it would definitely be in the running for the prize. Brian Penton also spoke quite slightingly of the other finalists ... and expressed his own admiration for our manuscript. We parted quite amiably with my promising to bring in the second draft, cut by seventy thousand words, and wait for a final decision. As you know, when I wrote after that I thought that we had a fair chance if not the
prize then of publication. That was implicit and explicit in what BP said and what he read me of the judges' reports. I thought we mightn't get the prize because of technical difficulties but I definitely felt publication, if we pulled the manuscript together, was reasonably certain. The revised manuscript went to him on August 22, and then I settled down to wait. Poor simpleton, I even hung off sending you a telegram for your birthday thinking the news would break by September 3rd. But September went and most of October, till last night came a ring for Sydney Wybourne to see Brian Penton this afternoon at 5.00pm.

BP greeted me with "I'm afraid I have bad news for you." I said nowt; there's nowt to be said to a remark like that. "I've submitted your manuscript to the man I consider our best critic," he went on, "And his report is bad. Just doesn't see that we could ever make a novel out of it. Much to my own opinion you'll remember."

Silence. What can one say.

"Best thing I can do is read what he says."

So he read four typed pages of completely adverse criticism. Unfortunately I didn't get a copy but I'll summarise it for your as far as I can:

Completely lop-sided picture of Sydney like a picture giving a man all his vices and none of his virtues. Only relieved by occasional glimpses i.e. Deb at her sister's place, Guinea at home. This tends to be corny with a good deal of obvious working class propaganda - only decent characters had marched in an Eight Hour Day procession (sic). Val obviously designed to prove that a working class girl can be faithful to her husband - apart from that picture all too black. All clients of a beauty salon aren't worn hags or bitches.

(Interruption by BP - "That's what I told you isn't it?"

Not everyone who goes to a pub like The Australia is successful and wealthy and is vicious.

("Didn't I say that?" Silence. There is no answer to that sort of thing.)

Continue with the criticism:

Main fault of story was that none of the main characters have their lives resolved satisfactorily except Guinea who is the usual tough with a heart of gold.

(BP had previously drooled over Guinea.)

I remember how he went mad feeling that everyone had a crisis all at once and that we were overdoing her rounding off.

(BP then interrupts: "I want to see Jack, Deb's husband. He should come in the final crisis.")
I refrain from saying what I thought of hauling in a new character at the end of two hundred thousand words. Anyway, I wasn't capable of anything else except obscenity.

Kim admitted as a well drawn character and the Guinea story had too much of Monnie altogether. Most of the brothel stuff should come out. All it aimed to do was give routine of a high class brothel in a slightly hysterical city under pressure of war. That, and the pimps and the black marketeers etc. while well-drawn gave an unrelievedly sordid and untrue picture of Sydney which would be ludicrous for other people overseas.

(Interuption by BP: "It's not aesthetically true, not enough contrast, not enough of the good side of life." And this was one of the original criticisms we felt justified, and thought we had anticipated in the second draft!)

The critic went through all the characters and stories and was on the whole strongly critical of all. Deb was well drawn but not all wealthy cultured men are seducers of soldier's wives! Alice only an excuse for an over-drawn abortion of the sordid kind and I must try to get that documented so that I'm not reporting unjustly! General summary was that while there was good material for a novel it wasn't a novel at all and in present form entirely unpublishable.

At that stage I broke in - "Well where does all this get us after all you have had twelve months to find out all this?"

BP: (with some passion) "It's your book that has held up this competition trying to see what could be done about it. I've done my best."

I assured him I appreciated that fact. I think he genuinely has but that now something more powerful than BP had intervened and has put a spanner in the works, and that he's justifying the change of face. I felt rather sorry for him. He is such a positive person, overbearing, difficult, power-mad - but positive! At least you knew where you were with him, or did. But the BP who discussed the manuscript the first time ten weeks ago! Oh, what super costiveness, what a different person.

BP: "I don't care how long it takes this competition to be decided, and I don't care if in the end we state that there is no novel worthy of the prize. We have promised overseas publication and we have a reputation."

(Judging from some of Shakespeare Head stuff no-one would guess it.)

BP: "Our critic says it's no good for serialization - we didn't want it for
that anyway, or, .. well we can’t afford to publish something the police will jump on immediately. A long way from the aesthetic objections. And I’m not going to turn out prize stuff like the trash from the SMH competition. Before we could consider publishing this book it would have to be completely re-written. Our critic says he would have to go over it line-by-line and make his objections known. Are you prepared to do this?"

"We’re prepared to re-write it for the purpose of producing a better book," I said. "We have a reputation too you know, but I couldn’t agree to any change in the abstract."
BP : "But would you like to see this critic and discuss it with him?"
"I certainly would."
BP : I’ll make an appointment with him early next week. You’ll find him tough but sound."
"That’s alright, I want honest criticism and I want to know why he feels there is no novel."

So it is arranged that I am to see the mysterious Mr X next week. More waste of time. [26.]

On reflecting, Dymphna Cusack returned to Penton’s office before she left the building that afternoon and questioned him further as to the gains – prize or publication – from the re-write. She felt he was intractably stone-walling:

So far as they’re concerned we’re out for some reason, I’ll swear, outside Penton; some pressure political or social. "Don’t think my criticism has anything to do with political or social issues," he assured me at one stage.
I’ll find out what I can from the critic, pump him dry and get it down in notes. Then I shall say I must go away and write to you and discuss it and, by God, their competition can wait. [ibid]

On November 10, 1947 Dymphna Cusack wrote to Florence James that she had met with the ‘infallible critic’, one Stewart Howard, who seemed "quite a nice bloke", and that she was invited to Church Point for the weekend with him and his wife to discuss his criticism. [27.]
In 1933, the year an idealistic, even radical young Brian Penton had returned to Australia with the manuscript of *Landtakers* in his bag, Packer and Theodore had launched, on June 10, their fabled future 'milch cow', the *Australian Women's Weekly*. A journalist and friend, W. Stewart Howard, had been given the job of both literary critic and book reviewer, and hence the opportunity of shaping the Australian female opinion of what to read: an incredible agenda setting power. Stewart Howard was to exploit the lessons from this role when he later became the fixit man and confidante for early War years' NSW State Premier, William McKell, and later for Liberal leader, Robert Gordon Menzies.

By mid-1947 Stewart Howard's previous employer, William McKell, was safely ensconced at Government House in Yarralumla, and Menzies had just engaged him to take on the Liberal Party image building campaign for the next Federal election. In *The Bulletin* of November 1, 1983, in a brief obituary notice, Stewart Howard was given credit as "one of the pioneers of public relations in Australia." [28.]

Dymphna was so right. Something "infinitely subtler" was going to ensure that *Come In Spinner* did not get published in Australia - not in the 1940s.
1. Sydney Morning Herald.  
'Death of Mr B.C. Penton.'  
Saturday, August 25, 1951. pp.44. col.4

2. Brian Matthews  
"A Kind of Semi-Sociological Literary Criticism: George Orwell, Kylie Tennant and Others."  

Think Or Be Damned.  
A Subversive Note on National Pride, Patriotism, and other forms of Respectable Ostrichism practised in Australia.  
Angus & Robertson Ltd. Sydney. 1941.

4. P.R. Stephensen  
The Foundations of Culture in Australia.  

5. John McLaren  
Australian Literatures.  
An Historical Introduction.  

Landtakers. The Story of an Epoch.  
The Endeavour Press. Sydney. 1934.

7. INTERVIEW. Zelie McLeod/Marilla North.  
(Tape Held) Elizabeth Bay. January 26, 1990

8. R.S. Whittington.  
Sir Frank: The Frank Packer Story.  
Cassell Australia. Victoria. 1971

9. Brian Penton  
Censored.  
A True Account of a Notable fight for your Right to Read and Know, with Comment upon the Plague of Censorship in General. Angus & Robertson Ltd. Sydney. 1947.

10. Donald Horne  
Confessions of a New Boy.  

11. INTERVIEW. David McNicoll/Marilla North.  
(Tape Held) Tuesday January 16, 1990.

12. Murray Goot.  
Editors: Peter Spearritt and David Walker  
"Corruption in High Places"  

14. 'Miss Bronte'  
"A Blood Transfusion for our Literature."  

15. Article: 'Thousand Pound Prize for Novel Commended.'  

16. Article: 'Judges for Thousand Pound Novel Competition.'  

17. Daily Telegraph.  
p.10 September 30, 1946.

18. Article: "Our Australian Novel."  
The Daily Telegraph.  

19. David McNicoll  
Luck's A Fortune.  
An Autobiography.  

p.2. December 5, 1945.

21. 'Newsreel.'  
Melbourne University Press.

22. Norman Freehill with Dymphna Cusack  
Dymphna.  

23. Arnold Haskell  
"Sydney Cafe Society." in  
The Sydney Scene. 1788 - 1960.  
Alan Birch and David S. McMillan.  
Melbourne University Press. 1962.

24. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.  
Dymphna Cusack to Phyllis Kayberry. September 1, 1947.

Dymphna Cusack to Florence James.

26. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.  

27. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James  
CHAPTER II

THE LIFE AND WORK OF DYMPPNA CUSACK

A LITERARY BIOGRAPHY

A historical and sociological portrait of the background, people and experiences which shaped the writer, with an emphasis on the elements which shaped her psychological, ideological and literary development in the years 1901 - 1951, and so played an integral part in the making of *Come In Spinner*. 
DYMPHNA ELLEN (Nell) CUSACK: 1902 - 1981

In her own words:

I believe that a writer should be in the vanguard of society, analysing her community, its influence on people, and describing through her characters its benign or malign results. I am a socialist, believing that no country or individual should own less than another. As a humanist I believe that all persons are equally important in life. [1]

According to Florence James, her life-long friend and co-author of both the children's book Four Winds and a Family and the international best-seller Come In Spinner, Dymphna Cusack was "a compulsive writer, she couldn't help herself", always working out life's meaning in words and committing them to paper. Moreover, she was always intellectually and actively engaged in her society and in her world to the extent that her partner Norman Freehill observed that she was what the French call -

an 'ecrivain engagee', a committed writer whose work is inspired by contemporary themes like war and peace, racism, slavery and freedom, as well as the eternal themes of love and death." [2.p.2]

She clearly conceived of herself and her work as part of a social change process which she both sought and constantly defined in terms of the social realities which confronted her. Grappling for 'truth' led her away from the Catholic faith and towards a humanistic socialism, one which she found expressed in much of the work of her contemporaries and forbears of the radical school of literature and journalism which flourished in fact - if not in university study or learned criticism - in the 1920's and 1930's in Australia. Miles Franklin in particular bridged the traditions of the pioneering past of the nineteenth century (Henry Lawson wrote the foreword to My
Brilliant Career) and Dymphna Cusack's own settler heritage. It was especially in their collaboration on the social satire of the Sesquicentenary, Pioneers on Parade (1939), that Miles Franklin pulled into the same "continuing stream that forms and shapes a new and growing literature"[3.] her own personal style ("brusque touches of caustic commentary...a curious polysyllabic word-play"[4.]) and her literary past (shades of Sybylla in My Career Goes Bung!) together with Dymphna Cusack's Irish settler heritage and idiosyncratic tendency to lampoon pomposity, or to 'take the mickey' out of classist aspirations. Florence James, at 88, speaks with the undeniable wisdom of hindsight:

Miles was a great inspiration to Dymphna. Dymphna had the authentic Australian material to use and Miles helped her realise what riches she possessed. Miles was her touchstone, bringing out her Australian identity. [5.]

* * * * *

The Australian Dictionary of Biography published by Melbourne University Press in 1981 has only one entry under 'Cusack'; it is for John Joseph (Jack) Cusack (1868 - 1956). He was Dymphna Cusack's father's brother, both were sons of Michael Cusack of Roscommon, Ireland and the widow Ann Kenny (nee Boughan) of Galway, immigrants who had settled at Yass, NSW in the 1850s. The last line of this one-and-a-half column entry notes that: "Dymphna Cusack, author, is his niece." [6.p.183]. Jack Cusack's biography details his blacksmithing, coach building, pastoralist and municipal, State and eventually Federal Labor political career. M.L.A. for Queanbeyan and later Albury, he won the House of Representatives seat of Eden-Monaro in 1929.
Outspoken, unpredictable and tenacious, Cusack enjoyed parliamentary debate, fought hard for his constituents and for improved conditions for all workers. (ibid)

Florence James relates that he had appointed Dymphna Cusack as his literary executor in his will, but that his surviving family destroyed his personal papers (There are nonetheless quite a considerable number of card entries under his name in the Mitchell Library.). Uncle Jack and his ethos survives in Dymphna Cusack's novel Picnic Races (1962).

Dymphna Cusack's maternal ancestry derived from Limerick and County Clare, settlers in the Berrima-Wollongong region, also in the 1850s. Grandfather Michael Joseph Crowley had been a rebel back in Ireland and had come to Australia as a gold digger during the Snowy' Rush. He had subsequently pioneered businesses in Wagga, Junee and Coolamon [2.p.12] finally settling in Temora, where he owned and lost the Harp of Erin Hotel, and then pegged out his selection and raised his children, including daughter Beatrice, who first became a governess and then married James Cusack. James pegged out the famous 'True Blue' mine in 1892 outside the settlement of Wyalong where on September 21, 1902 Ellen Dymphna Cusack was born, third of six children in a good Catholic family. There were four girls and two brothers, Leo and Margaret were older than Dymphna, Mollie, Beatrice and John were younger (One cannot but remark on the similar family structure of Guinea and the Malones in Come In Spinner). At the time of her birth the family were very well off indeed, with gold from the legendary mine in abundance. The Crowley grandparents were
very close to the children, and to the young Dymphna Cusack especially her grandfather told his stories in rich Irish brogue, of the fairies and of Irish history - from a Fenian perspective of course. In her seventies, Dymphna Cusack recalled those earliest years and their lasting influence:

In a materialist community like ours I can only be grateful that I was reared on such romantic fare, that for us the cry of the banshee was heard even in this new land, and that long before I knew the meaning of the words, freedom and justice were the touchstones on my childish faith. Only later was I to realise how anti-clerical Grandfather was, so different from the religious bigotry common at the time. The first song I heard from him was 'The Wearin' of the Green'. When I asked him who Napper Tandy was he answered: 'He was a good Prodestan Dublin rebel like Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmett - Prodestans all of them.' I often think how lucky I was in my family background. Like Joseph Furphy's (of Such is Life fame) people: mine put more into the country than they took out of it. In my childhood they gave me riches that lasted me all my life. [2.p.14]

At the age of three Dymphna Cusack was apparently an unusually delicate child, who suffered in the dry heat of the NSW central plains. Thus she was despatched to the care of her Aunt Nell and Uncle Tom Leahy, publicans at Cooma in the Southern Alps. (This began a peripatetic lifestyle which lasted to her mid-seventies when she and her husband Norman Freehill bought into the Wesley Heights retirement village in Manly.). After Cooma the Leahys moved to Narrandera on the Murrumbidgee River, and it was here that she first heard her Labor politician uncle, Jack Cusack, on the public platform. Dymphna Cusack did not begin formal schooling until she was eight (at Wyalong convent where "the Cartholics go to hell while the Prodestans ring the bell" [2.p.1]). Family legend has it that she wrote her own name at the age of three and at
five used to read aloud to her Aunt Nell the 'casualty' [sic. 2.p.15] columns of the Sydney Morning Herald and the 'in memorium' notices. A healthy cynicism for middle-class forms was so inculcated, and yet this went hand in hand with an intense family loyalty and a 'put your money where your mouth is' expression of filial duty. The family lost everything when her father had to surrender his part-ownership of the 'True Blue' Mine: a 'bad businessman' by family accounts, but James Cusack was probably yet another victim of the white-collar criminality which came with the importation of the American gold fields' fiscal/legal games into the Australian laissez-faire frontier. The newly impoverished James Cusack family moved to Sydney, initially to a boarding house which her mother ran in Cleveland Street, Redfern, but, when the marriage broke under the strain of penury and her father's obsessive jealousy, Beatrice and the six children moved to 'bug alley', another boarding house in Coogee. Just before World War I broke out Dymphna Cusack left the rowdy joys of inner-city schools to rejoin her Aunt Nell and Uncle Tom Leahy, this time at Guyra, a small town on the Eastern Tablelands where, at the Public School, she later recalled -

*I had the first real education from headmaster Paddy Hawe, an Irishman who never spoke of Ireland. I count him as the best teacher I ever knew. He remains in my educational life with the warmth of mind and spirit that I was only to find once again in my history course at Sydney University. Through Paddy Hawe's 'Firstlings' chart I discovered something of natural history. The first opening leaf (Guyra was 4,000 feet up), the first fruit blossom, the first potato-flower... the first bird returning... it gave me an interest in and knowledge of my environment that has never left me... [2.p.17]*

Her childhood reading encompassed the ubiquitous rainbow-on-
the-cover Cole's Funny Picture Book, an amazing colonial compendium whose author, E.W. Cole, born in Kent, England in 1832, died in Essendon, Victoria, in 1918, having established a very successful Melbourne retail Book Arcade and produced this text, 'The Best Child's Picture Book in the World', to support his commitment to "The Oneness of Man and the Coming Federation of the World." [7]. She also read her brothers' Chums, and -

... everything I could put my hands on. From Dot and The Kangaroo, Pretty Dick, Geoffrey Hamlyn, Gulliver's Travels (unabridged), Ethel Turner and Mary Grant Bruce. I knew many of Lawson's and Kendall's and Banjo Paterson's verses by heart. [2.p.17]

Dymphna Cusack, with the benefit of hindsight, recalled in her seventies that she was never regarded as 'a fine figure of a woman' in her youth, but was constantly told, almost in compensation, that she was "a clever little thing", and so she set her heart on a path of study and things cerebral. This was a little self deprecatory and over - mythologising perhaps, for a woman who counted Xavier Herbert and Brian Penton amongst her admirers in the inter-War period, when she cut a not inconsiderable dash as a blue stocking amongst the socialist-sympathising intelligentsia of the Sydney 'push'. Yet she was tomboy by instinct, or early nurture: her Uncle Tom Leahy had taken her camping and fishing along the banks of the Dumaresq River, and her 'pure bush' experiences of those times were constantly recalled and built on over her lifetime. Her letters are sprinkled with references to the scent of brown boronia, and she carried a gumleaf in her handbag whenever she travelled abroad.
In 1917, at the age of fifteen, she was sent, most generously by the Leahys, to St Ursula's Convent in Armidale, only twenty miles from Guyra. The Ursuline nuns, exiled from Germany by the repression of liberal, anti-Prussian, Catholic sentiment, had wandered in exile across half of Europe until the Bishop of Armidale offered them sanctuary in NSW; five of the original order, and an English acolyte, formed the core of the community which Dymphna entered. A truly ascetic regimen was maintained at the school, 5.00am till 9.00pm; but the compensation lay in the intellectual and spiritual riches.

My years at St Ursula's took me into a mystic world in which all my awakening adolescent emotions were transmuted into poetry - a rarefied world. I learned to serve Mass. I prayed with adolescent fervour that was mistaken for piety. I won five Christian doctrine medals and shocked Father Foley, our instructor, by launching into a long and passionate argument on the injustice of condemning the souls of unbaptised babies to Limbo. [2.p.22]

The said Father Foley expressed fears that she'd become a heretic with such a questioning mind. However, he taught her astronomy despite his misgivings. She remembered especially Mother Aloysius, Mother of Boarders, and Mother Columba, as lavishing their time, intellects and gentle affections upon her - in spite of her 'independence of thought and action'. [ibid] Part of her 'questioning' was an inevitable Irish refusal to toe-the-line of the official history book and its "high-faluting account of the virtues of British Imperialism in India." [2.p.23]. Three of her close friends at St Ursulas joined the Order, and she, emotionally, also aspired to spiritual commitment - but only briefly.

As always, even up until her mother's death in 1947, filial
duty took precedence over personal aspiration, and her mother and younger siblings occupied a great deal of her time and resources. Thus, it was not until 1922 that she took up her Exhibition and Teacher Training Scholarship at Sydney University. There, in Manning House and Fisher Library, she met Florence James and in burgeoning friendship they joined Sydney University Dramatic Society (SUDS) and the Debating Society, of which they became co-secretaries. The 'Russian Experiment' occupied much idealistic conversation, and indeed many students on campus at that time joined the Communist Party, in a surge of youthful belief that a social revolution would occur. Christina Stead and Marie Byles (who became the first woman to practise law in NSW) became friends of both Dymphna Cusack and Florence James in their final year (1925).

During her university years Dymphna Cusack enjoyed a romance with a six foot two (to her barely five foot) engineering student, a lad by the name of Thackery (known to all as 'Thatch'), and wrote stories under a nom-de-plume for The Bulletin and the Woman's Mirror. The lack of Australian texts studied and the Anglophile narrowness of the English Department turned both Dymphna Cusack and Florence James away from literature studies at the university - quite a tragedy when their subsequent careers are considered: one who would be a novelist translated and published in over thirty countries, the other, following her brief co-authorship, who would work as a literary agent promoting Australian writers in the UK. Dymphna Cusack was appalled at the 'cultural cringe' evident in the highest seat of Australian academia, and termed it 'the garrison mentality' - which colonial, psychological
climate was common to Canadians and New Zealanders as well in the inter-War isolationist epoch. Instead, History and Philosophy offered more liberal tutelage - especially Professors G.A. Wood and James Bruce, and in Psychology Professor Tasman Lovell, a very humanizing influence whose teaching bridged the school/church - university chasm. Lovell was Dean of the faculty, cultivated and empathetic, and he took his subject back to basic instinct and environmental influences. But it was Professor G.A. Wood and his lessons on the Industrial Revolution in England, and, almost aberrantly, on the founding and colonising of Australia, that had the most profound effect on Dymphna's sensibilities and set her agenda for social reform.

G.A. Wood's effect was to focus her Irish rebelliousness, which never suffered fools gladly nor brooked injustice and which, at one end of the spectrum, was to 'take the (literary) mickey' out of petty tyrants such as Mrs Molesworth in *Come in Spinner* or the ambitious Deputy Headmistress in *Morning Sacrifice*. However, at the other end of the spectrum her radicalised stance would eventually see her 'live, eat and breathe' the social circumstances which gave rise to an oppressive or unjust situation, in order to produce a 'social realist' documentary whose influence was sufficiently populist, and whose barb was sufficiently accurate in its political aim to ensure its influence on the 'climate of opinion' and, hopefully, its contribution to the process of social change. She recalled Professor Wood's opening remarks to the Class of '23:
With over 200 capital offences in 18th century England, the poor, the hungry and the enterprising came to Australia. The real criminals stayed in England. [2.p.27]

She was increasingly cynical about the rest of her university curricula and most of the lecturers, almost all of whom were entirely oriented towards Europe:

*We were not only disoriented in place but in time, for the world of which our cramped minds dreamed was the Old Europe which died in the First World War. One of my great regrets is that this narrowing university education prevented me from getting more than a smattering of our fascinating early history which my grandmother had actually lived. [2.p.28]*

Love thwarted her taking out a First Class honours degree, and during the Diploma in Education year, whilst practice teaching at Fort Street, she met Pip Kayberry, who was to become a noted anthropologist and author of *Aboriginal Women (Sacred and Profane)* and Kay O'Hanlon (later Keen) whose illness and tragic death in 1947 was to inspire the novel *Say No To Death* which actively reformed TB medical treatment and preventative practice in NSW. Other friends in their university cohort have woven in and out of the literary lives of Dymphna Cusack and Florence James. They include Marjorie Wood (later Lady Howard Beale), Fred Wood (the son of their history professor and mentor), Mildred Waite (who married Alan Watt ambassador to Russia, Germany and Japan), the Lo Schiavo family, Kitty Young who co-secretaried the Catholic Women's Club with Dymphna Cusack, and Ken Flavell - "the eternal student who was in year seven when we began." [8.].

By Dymphna Cusack's own testimony, her 'real' education did not begin until she began her own teaching career with the NSW
Department of Education, imparting her passion for literature and history to the students of the state school system. She began at Neutral Bay in 1926, the youngest of a staff of three under a brutally tyrannical and physically violent headmistress. During this period she became involved in the 'little theatre' coterie of cosmopolitan inner Sydney. She had her SUDS credits behind her, but this venture brought the real lure to take on the playwright's role:

*Sydney drama circles owed much to Duncan McDougall, founder of the Playbox, and later to the famous club run by his remarkable wife, Pakie. Duncan inspired me to write my first play in 1927. I remember Florence James and me sitting over the manuscript of my first play and her first short story, admiring in awed voices the few positive things we had managed to translate from our environment.* [2.p.30]

Norman Freehill notes that the play she referred to was a runner-up in the 1927 Triad Magazine competition for the best Australian three-act play, won by Katherine Susannah Prichard with *Brumby Innes*. It's title was *Safety First* and to all intents and purposes its content is lost. I can find no trace in the Mitchell nor in any reference text to a published play before the one-acter *Shallow Cups*, which was published in 1934 in *Eight Plays by Australians* [9.] and recorded as first performed at Pakie's Club, Sydney, on September 20, 1933. *Red Sky at Morning* is her first recorded published three act play (1942); set in 1812 the plot has the convict hero (transported for political activities) triumph over the arrogant military officer and carry off the heroine across a flood-swollen river [4.p.133].

In 1928 she was transferred to Broken Hill. In the first
month of her first term there she wrote to Florence James (then in Europe, having earned her passage, in wages, as her father's secretary for the two years since graduation). In typically ironic, self satirical correspondence style, she writes as:

... an exile to the outpost of civilization - 700 miles from Sydney - 50 from the South Australian border and about 300 from Adelaide. Long hours of travelling (25 hours really) over a lonely desert. About 10 p.m. the train enters the desert country (the Express leaves Sydney at 8 a.m.) but fortunately one is spared the horror of that part of the journey - till the morning. Then on wakening the true appalling reality dawns on one. The carriage is full of dust - a fine red sifting sand that penetrates everywhere. Eyes, nose, mouth, clothes were sand-logged and my face the colour of a Red Indian ...

... I haven't yet grown accustomed to the six foot youths I have to teach. In fact I still feel as though I should address them as 'Sir'!

I posted a letter to you telling you of the play result and have sent along the 'Triad'. I was thrilled that Katherine Prichard won the prize, and to think that little Ellen D. got sixth out of 100 or so entries!

I've been doing a good deal for the "Mail" - went to see Mr Charlton and after embracing me he ordered an article on B.H. So that's another three guineas in my pocket. [non de plume - L.N.D.] Saving for the Tasmania trip... Barrier Reef... but with the thought of the Matterhorn before me I shall be firm. [10].

Broken Hill was an indelible experience of far outback Australia to add to the memories of Wyalong and Guyra and Narrandera as the sources for the mental construct of her native land which she would mentally inhabit in Europe or Sydney, wherever she was writing. More important, perhaps, was the working class deprivation which she witnessed in the face of corporate capitalist exploitation in the raw. It was a naked and irrefutable case study in oppression and inhumanity which would certainly have mobilised Dickens.

Dymphna Cusack recalled:
Broken Hill with a population comprising many nationalities - Yugoslavs, Russians, Italians, but Australians in the majority... with the closing down of its biggest mine was in a Depression two years before the crash on Wall Street... The companies had taken hundreds of millions in profits out of the lode - are still doing so - but had put practically nothing back into the city. There was not even a decent water supply, because the companies refused to build a pipe line from Menindee on the River Darling. It was in the middle of a long drought. The water from the dams outside the city stank. [2.p.30]

The lead poisoning and silicosis from the mines lay insidiously dormant in the young men, usually manifesting as their children entered adolescence. Dymphna Cusack's own chronic disability, trigeminal neuralgia (later diagnosed as multiple sclerosis) dates from illness and accidents she suffered in her two years in Silver City. It was also whilst in Broken Hill that she gave up the outward show of what had become an intellectual sham - the attendance at Catholic Mass.

Over a school holiday period in 1928/29 she met Norman Freehill, then the financial editor of The Bulletin. His recollection of the event was that Dymphna Cusack invaded the all-male precincts of the Press Club (where Norman Freehill was then President) to show him the manuscript of a play, which led to their corresponding and the development of a literary friendship which, at a much later date, (in fact in 1948) led to him becoming her lifelong partner (his Catholic wife could not divorce him) and eventually her husband. She was in fact a contributor at that time to The Bulletin, usually as 'L.N.D.' or 'Ellen D.', and this period of her work is enshrined in her inclusion as a "representative contributor" in the S.H. Prior section of the centennial
edition - The Bulletin Centenary. 1880 - 1980. Souvenir Edition [11] - with a piece which they first published in 1930. When he joined The Bulletin in 1903, S.H. Prior had been the editor of the Barrier Miner at Broken Hill - at the precocious age of 21 - and became the editor of The Bulletin in 1915, until his death in 1933. His encouragement of young writers also embraced Kenneth Slessor, Jack Lindsay and Brian Penton. Dymphna Cusack's piece from 1930 entitled The Gateway concerned the tragedy, the loss, the futility of war shown in a phantasmal ANZAC reunion, a life-in-death fantasy tale of a Domain-dossing, unemployed old digger who meets again in a midnight parade his comrades of the "old 13ths", and joins his mate Peter (whom a Turkish sniper had killed a few minutes before dawn at Gallipoli) at the Gates - "I've been waiting for you Johnno!" [12].

After Broken Hill there was a hospital stint for two broken knees from an accidental fall during a ju-jitsu match with her younger brother Jack, (who as John Bede wrote They Hosed Them Out, a posthumous World War II classic). She was then transferred to Goulburn, where she was resident teacher at the Girls' High School Hostel, 1930 - 1931. She was then moved to Parramatta High, 1932-34, initially living at Strathfield but, as she wrote to Florence James, she -

> grew weary with living in the family circle with all my young sisters growing up and the place littered with their swains, so I betook myself off to a thoroughly metropolitan spot..."[13]

an atelier flat at 223 Macquarie Street: "the fact that it’s up high and there’s no lift makes it absurdly cheap." [ibid]
It certainly gave her a bird’s eye view of Macquarie Street and the goings on in the environs of Parliament House and Martin Place, which would later enrich *Come In Spinner* with such an authentic and detailed evocation of place. Her poetry and play writing dominated her non-teaching non-family-occupied time. Norman Freehill records a one-acter, *His Honour Comes to Tea*, as being produced and broadcast during this time, and certainly *Shallow Cups* survives in print in *Eight Plays by Australians* [9.] which Norman Freehill refers to as "the blending of the supernatural with the bitterly realistic" [2.p.38].

Produced by Dymphna Cusack herself in 1933, it is a somewhat Gothic psycho-melodrama of the motives of the bereaved. The corpse lies on white draperies, against a black curtain; the nameless ‘She’, only defined by her relations to the others in the cast - wife of Arthur, sister of Marian (played by Dymphna), friend of Olive, daughter-in-law to Mr Lipscombe. In essence 'She' has been a sex-role stereotype used by all present - except her sister Marian to whom, it is revealed, 'She' has bequeathed the tidy annuity which her husband’s deceased mother had previously left to her. This testamentary revelation disturbed the males. In the words of Mr Lipscombe:

> I always feel it militates against the happiness of a home for a woman to have an independent income. It tends to destroy the sense of protectiveness every man should enjoy; it prevents in some measure that growth in mutual dependence. [9.p.86]

Marian’s retort is straight emancipatory feminism:

> In short it removes man's greatest weapon. [ibid]

The dialogue has echoes of Ibsen in "The Doll’s House":

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Marian: Oh the money! You don't realise that it stood to her as it stood to your wife - as a symbol of freedom! And that's why she left it to me. I'm free now. I needn't wonder in the mornings any more - 'Will he be in good humour when I get to the office?' I needn't tremble when I'm called to see him for fear he's decided to put on someone younger and I'll have to go. No, I'm free...

The Ibsen-like pro-feminist social realism is cut short by the entry of the spectral 'He', who, dressed and equipped as if for a Black Mass, in quite un-Catholic necromancy offers them the opportunity to restore her to life:

If, when the candle burns to this mark, there is one among you who truly wants her, whose cries have come from the heart, whose tears have washed away all thought of self - then - she shall stay! [SCp.89]

Of course the test fails and 'She' sings her life-in-death song:

Their shallow cups have held the sea enchaliced
As she the drifting tides of all the world. [SCp.91]

and as the candle flutters out she sinks to the floor - dead forever! Her sister Marian's scream rends the final curtain:

I couldn't help you - I couldn't help you. It was my freedom. [ibid].

A damning message from 31 year old Dymphna Cusack - damning of greed, capital, money-lust - which she didactically portrays as outweighing even sisterly love and somehow corruptive of feminist loyalties. It was a message that continued to underscore her perceptions in much of her later social-realist writing, as she worked towards a more committed socialist position in her life and art. Susan Sheridan's remarks concerning the 'communities of women' in Dymphna Cusack's early works support this observation:

(Jungfrau, 1936; the play Morning Sacrifice 1942; Come In Spinner, 1951) - the strength of 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. [14.p.323]

Sheridan attributes this in part to the 1930's climate -

The general backlash against feminism as divisive and old fashioned, and the isolation of women intellectuals from other women (despite their progressive politics) ... Claiming a group identity as women was not on their agenda, whereas claiming a part in the revived struggle for national identity was." [ibid]

Her inclusion of 'Spinner is appropriate. As Robin Gerster points out - "Cusack and James deal with the opportunism of Australian women in their relations with the American GI.." [14.p.347] - supporting my own view that money is the prime mover of the plot in Come In Spinner. The seeds of this conviction are clearly sown in Shallow Cups.

[In 'Spinner, Deb makes her choice for Angus McFarland and his preferred lifestyle (which only money can buy!) over her return to the 'hard yakka' of life with happy-go-lucky returned serviceman husband Jack; Claire constantly urges her employees in the ironically named 'Marie Antoinette' salon to make the most financially rewarding male choice - herself the victim of an obsession for an addictive gambler, her 'fatality' Nigel Carstairs; only Guinea resists temptation - by putting family responsibilities above her own pleasure-seeking - in searching for her runaway sister Monnie she finds her real values, and opts for love and a family with her working-class childhood sweetheart Kim Scott (good old-fashioned Irish Catholic values). Florence James states candidly that "Guinea was Dymphna's character, Deb was mine, although we wrote and rewrote each others' sections." [15.]]
In the same year as she produced *Shallow Cups*, Dymphna Cusack completed her first novel, which she had begun in Broken Hill. According to Dymphna Cusack herself, it was - "prompted by Hodder and Stoughton's competition for a religious novel and it mirrored my own slow emancipation from Catholicism."

[2.p.34] She wrote to Florence James in April, 1933:

I've finished a novel - really, the first one I did, completely recast and was wondering what to do with it. Sent it to Gerald Duckworth with a note to return to me if not accepted. All that is over a month ago and by now my little novel may be on its way to you. I'd be awfully glad if you could do something with it if Mr Duckworth fails to cherish it. Anyway read it and let me know the worst. It rejoices under the title *This Nettle Danger* and I tried to make it alive. As a matter of fact once I started writing the wretched thing simply possessed me. I'm on a second one now and hope to have it done by the end of the year. It is still a bit of a strain combining chef d'oeuvres with training the young idea. But it's worth it. I'm growing increasingly to feel that there's nothing so worthwhile as writing something that honestly reveals some phase, some experience, some idea. And to do this I feel I must live every moment, taste every experience. Do you remember Henry IV? "But I tell you, my Lord Fool. Out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety." [16.]

Florence James wrote back with a mild criticism - .."you name too much.. but agree to offer to London publishers. Turned down by Duckworth May '33, Phillip Allan & Co September '33, Hamish Hamilton October '33." [17.] Later in the year Dymphna Cusack asked for the return of the manuscript, and confided to Florence James:

However, on looking over the MS carefully I have definitely decided not to publish it on any account. I hadn't realised how intensely personal it was - rather like being vivisected publicly - or how thinly disguised people and situations were. That itself wouldn't have mattered so much - one can always lie! - and I flatter myself that most people wouldn't realise just how autobiographical it was. But it's badly balanced - incoherent in parts - slightly formless - someday I shall do it again on
rather different lines though. So home the infant comes and thank you many times for all you've done... I'm going to concentrate on my 'woman' novel in the vac and we'll hope for something better from that. You know I feel that I can write better plays than novels (that mightn't be saying much!) but somehow it's easier to depict characters through dialogue than any other way; at least I find it so. [18.]

This Nettle Danger had been a major lesson in her craft. The 'transmuting' of experience into fiction thereafter was done more self-critically, and tested on others to ensure objectivity. She finished her 'woman' novel at Katoomba during the mid-winter vacation in May 1934. She had written to Florence James that it was -

... concerned with women as they are. Not as Galsworthy would have us believe they are, or Aldous Huxley draws them, or as Eleanor Glynn presents them, all wrapped in icing and sugar like Turkish delight! But women as we know them. Thinking, working, loving, desiring, growing weary of this freedom, and yet knowing there's no other illusion to take its place that will be half so interesting, so worthwhile. Moving between ecstasy and despair. Full of longing for the wider horizons - and a little afraid of the snapped cables and dragging anchors. I find them fascinating and utterly incalculable. [19.]

Massive pernicious anaemia and over work led to a collapse and extended sick leave from teaching, and in the latter months of 1934, in a generous but practical gesture, Marie Byles insisted on underwriting a three-month holiday in Ceylon for Cusack. This gave her her first experience in a mixed racial community - the Australians, the English and the 'natives': the passenger body on board ship - resulting in her indignant awakening to the petty bigotries of racial prejudice. Moreover, the poverty in Ceylon, her first Third World experience, appalled her, especially the paradox of unemployment and hunger in a resource rich land. She also
listened to the experiences of Jewish refugees on board the ship, and suffered vicariously, horrified at their tales of Nazi persecution. Her moral conscience was jolted; the experience reinforced her earlier realisation that "no writer can be silent while one child dies of hunger, one man is exploited, one woman enslaved." [2.p.40] Her agenda was set against Nazism and racism - two sides of the same coin. On the return journey the liner called in at Melbourne where Norman Freehill was then working, and she lent him a first draft of her 'woman' novel, Jungfrau. Florence James, as usual, was forwarded a copy of the 'baby' for possible placement. James had by this stage widened her own horizons, from freelance journalism and copywriting to literary agent, specialising in Australian writers seeking publication in the UK. It was a jubilant Dymphna Cusack who this second time recalled her manuscript:

*The Bulletin* has just started a literary prize, the S.H. Prior Memorial Prize and *Jungfrau* succeeded in getting second - there were 250 entries so I was duly thrilled. I am told that the final decision was made on the fact that *Jungfrau* was not 'typically Australian'. However *The Bulletin Press* are publishing it - one of the conditions of the competition was that they could publish any they chose. I hope to have the pleasure of sending you a copy ... The *Bulletin* hold the right of publication overseas as well as here. [20.]

Stewart Howard, a critic with acknowledged high standards, had favourably reviewed *Jungfrau* for the *Australian Women's Weekly*, (he was later to play an important role in the making of the final, published manuscript of *Come In Spinner*) and Frank Dalby Davison, editor of the Red Page of *The Bulletin* stated that - "It stands alone because it is the first Australian novel to take the liberated young woman as its
theme." [2.p.42] From 1935 until 1939 Dymphna was appointed Vocational Guidance Officer at Sydney Girls High School, and in her early months there she overheard a senior teacher tell another that she had hidden her copy of Jungfrau in her wardrobe, lest it be seen on her bookshelves by any chance visitor. Its clear headed treatment of adultery and (potential) abortion shocked the vestiges of Victorian sexual repression. She won the ANZAC Fellowship Prize in 1935 for a play entitled Anniversary (unpublished and unable to be located) based on the same material as the 1930 short story The Gateway [2.p.44]. It was played at the NSW Conservatorium with the 18 year old fledgling actor Peter Finch in the leading role (presumably as Johnno, the Domain dossing digger). It was a milestone year for Dymphna Cusack, for she also jointed the Fellowship of Australian Writers (FAW) and Mary Gilmore, Katherine Susannah Prichard, Miles Franklin and Louis Esson became her friends and mentors.

Formed in 1928, the FAW was in all but name a union, its aim was to counter the establishment belief in the poor relation / inferior status / 'branch' literature sub-classification of Australian literature. Mary Gilmore claimed credit for its inception, and its initial major task was to resuscitate the Commonwealth Literary Fund which had begun as an Alfred Deakin initiative in 1908, but had withered ignominiously by the 1920's. They had quadrupled the fund by 1939, and moreover, had broadened its reach to include the support mechanisms of fellowships, university lectures and magazines such as Meanjin, and later Overland and even Quadrant. [14.p.285].
1935 was the year of Dymphna Cusack's true radicalisation. She proceeded to become involved with politics - initially very basic humanitarian issues such as free milk provision for poverty stricken children. Then with the NSW Teacher's Federation, the New Education Fellowship (1938-39), the AICD, and in 1941, with the United Associations of Women (UAW) which eventually got the Act forbidding women teachers to marry rescinded. She was an active committee member of the Fellowship of Australian Writers (FAW) from 1939-44. Her later memberships were of allied organisations - PEN International, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and so on.

The years as Vocational Guidance Officer at Sydney Girls' High School gave her a great deal of insight into the impact of the Depression and the War on the social fabric of the family and the community, and the consequences on adolescents. She learned first hand the operations of the Children's Courts and the cynicism of those who would profit at the expense of young lives. This painful insight was given creative expression in Monnie's tragic rape and unwitting recruitment into prostitution in Come In Spinner. Meanwhile her FAW activities had led to a collaboration with Miles Franklin in Pioneers on Parade, a novel which proclaimed its intentions of critical social satire from the first page:

*All the world knew that in 1938 Australia was to celebrate her Sesqui-centenary Anniversary, for the news had been gladly proclaimed in colourful posters*
by a variety of shipping companies and travel bureaux, as well as by the Australian Government ...

... Yes, Australia was to fling a party as far-flung as herself - in Sydney, the sardonic siren of the south - to which the world was bidden ...

The du Mont-Brankstons ... were alert and uneasy. It had been as surprising to George Brankston, the money-spinner, as chagrining to Audrey, his spender, that his name had not been in the 1937 honours list, and that he had not been approached for that of the coming New Year ... no one had touted more assiduously in a correct way than Audrey: George had given generously to things likely to get him in the public eye ... [PP]

The piece speaks for itself. Little wonder that the Establishment reacted. This, plus her membership of the Left Book Club and her increasing civil rights stands against the bureaucracy of the Department of Education were colouring her 'troublesome Red'.

The book had what Miles called a 'succes de scandal'. The Press on the whole were immeasurably shocked. Of course, there were Australians who came out with extravagant praise in our defence. We were alternately snubbed and feted from one side of Australia to the other. [2.p.46]

Miles Franklin's 'succes de scandal' links their tone and purpose with the comedy of manners tradition, with the plays of Congreve and Sheridan, with Restoration drama and the ways of the world, and not a little of this Miles Franklin influence seeps through into Come In Spinner. Chronic bouts of illness with the arrested pernicious anaemia at the root, leading to hospitalisation for weeks, and sometimes months on end, took enormous toll of her energy. However the fight to survive cleared her mind once and all of the lingering malaise of Catholicism with its guilts and punishment. In 1938, the night before a dangerous operation, a priest offered her the Last Rites and she refused. "Now at last I'm the kind of
person I shall continue to be - for good or for ill." [2.p.47]
She had put that demon to rest. Recuperation was spent in
bush seclusion. She managed to write an essay on freedom for
a text Frank Dalby Davison was editing, and a biographical
piece on Mary Reiby for Flora Eldershaw's anthology - The
Peaceful Army. A Memorial to Pioneer Women of Australia.
1788-1938. [4.p.162]

Early in 1940 the Department of Education posted Dymphna
Cusack to Bathurst - to a supernumary position. She had,
unfortunately, actually won a landmark Worker's Compensation
case against the Department following an accident on school
premises the previous year. Much newspaper publicity ensued,
which, coupled with the 'succès de scandale' and her
Federation and FAW/UAW politics had created a public profile
of radicalism which the ultra-conservative were quick to label
'Red'. Her time in Bathurst was well spent, however, for she
spoke to Bathurst Rotary on the Problems of Youth, was
labelled a 'Communist' by the local industrialists, was
defended publicly by none less than Ben Chifley himself, and
the outcome was a mobilisation of that conservative community
resulting in a youth club being established. In 1941 she had
to take six months long service leave, as her mother fell
gravely ill and she had to look after the family boarding
house in Kings Cross. Situated amidst the black marketeers,
the brothels and the illegal gambling dens, with the
servicemen on leave throwing their accumulated money around to
the delight and corruption of all, here was the 'root of all
evil' experience for the murkier depths of Come In Spinner.
Her futile attempts to clean up the neighbourhood earned her the wry nickname of 'The Sky-Pilot of Orwell Street.' She spent the last term of 1941 in Parkes, and in 1942 was transferred to Newcastle Girls High School - the final source for the assembled all-female staff-room of malice and persecution in Morning Sacrifice, which won the Western Australian Drama Festival Prize in 1942, and was premiered in Perth on October 8 that year. Red Sky at Morning, researched assiduously for historical detail in the Mitchell Library, was also published in 1942, by Melbourne University Press. Her first three-acter, it was set in 1815 with an Irish political convict as the hero. In 1943 Dymphna Cusack was transferred to Newcastle Boy's Technical High School, and whilst living in a terrace at Parnell Place near the Newcastle beach-front she experienced War time in the industrial city "a maze of barbed-wire, tank traps and other protective devices that the blackout turned malevolent." [2.p.51] Here she wrote down Comets Soon Pass (out of previous experience), and took in the material, which ingested by her own creative 'blender' would later emerge transmuted as Southern Steel. Conceived, thanks to a Commonwealth Literary Fund grant, in the Blue Mountains in 1946-47 whilst redrafting Come In Spinner, written in Lower Belgrave Street. London, it is "the only Australian novel about an Australian industrial city during the second world war." [2.p.73] As such it is vital social history, and is also a marvellous evocation of the city in its 1940's time-warp. Through the highly realistic and pungently local dialogue the very values of the time come alive on the page and make this a multi-dimensional work. As always, Dymphna
Cusack is at her best when her gift for dialogue carries the characterisation and the inevitable socialist-humanist message.

In 1944 she was invalided out of the Department of Education on a pension, with pernicious anaemia, trigeminal neuralgia, suspected cancer and tuberculosis. The latter two proved, mercifully, to be incorrect. Florence James had been back in Sydney since 1938 with her two small daughters and an absentee RAAF husband. A demanding, high-flying job in charge of Appeals and Public Relations at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital had sapped her vigour, and, with Dymphna Cusack’s pension and James’ service allotment the two friends decided to set up a household in the Blue Mountains, initially as fresh air and bushland therapy, where the city of Sodom, Sydney ('the sardonic siren of the south') could be looked down upon from the Pisgah heights of the Hazelbrook ridge. James' nine and seven year old daughters and Cusack's niece plus assorted animals made for an untidy menage, and, as the writing collaboration developed (initially with the children's book Four Winds and a Family, and, as they exchanged their wartime experiences Come In Spinner evolved) a weekly 'help' was engaged. Her yarn-spinning so engrossed the collaborators that they soon had her writing too - a book that was to capture many hearts, Caddie: The Autobiography of a Sydney Barmaid. (Dymphna Cusack completed an editorial rewrite of 'Caddie's' - Mrs Catherine Elliot's - final redraft in Menton-Garavan on the Cote d'Azur in 1952, and it was published by Constables in 1953. It became the second best-seller written
Friends came and went at 'Pinegrove', but the Dent family, down the hill at the farmhouse and orchard of 'Hazeldene', with six children for picnicking and games became part of the 'family', and all the children entertained themselves, adventuring day after day as the collaborators dictated and typed relentlessly on. Miles Franklin and of course Norman Freehill watched the progress of the novel, as did Connie Robertson, Women's Supplement editor of the Sydney Morning Herald (who referred to *Spinner as the 'magnum opus' from which it became known as 'magnumpus'); and so did many other friends including Kay Keen, a friend of both of Dymphna and Florence from Sydney University days. Kay Keen's husband Barry, a rather dashing playboy, took Dymphna Cusack to the gambling clubs of the 'Cross to research the accuracies for Claire and Nigel Carstairs' gambling sequences for the book. Kay Keen was by then very ill with TB and, in a letter to Lydia Lo Schiavo (another mutual friend who had gone to live on the West Coast of the USA and was writing gossip journalism about Hollywood) in August 1947 asking about new TB therapies there, Kay Keen refers to a First Draft copy of the manuscript which Dymphna Cusack had forwarded to Lydia Lo Schiavo (then Mrs John Carra):

Wouldn't it be a great thing if you could do something with Dymphna's work. The novel she and Florence collaborated on would make a marvellous film. I've told them I thought its chief value was its potential filming because to me it was more panoramic than well knit as a work of writing. But please keep that to yourself as it's Nell's place to make such a statement. They both know that's my attitude however as I've written it many times to
them. [21.] 

Forty two years later, Lydia Lo Schiavo (now Mrs Bruce Templeman) was to write, in a letter to another mutual friend Marie Armstrong of Sydney's 'New Theatre' (who gained her first professional television role as Bessie, wife of Blue the penny tossing lift attendant in the ABC's mini-series 1990 production of *Come In Spinner*), that - 

... with Dymphna's OK to sell and to act as technical adviser I had sold 'Spinner to Twentieth Century Fox in 1947 for what was then a large sum (US$35,000). Lamarr Trotti who was to sign the contract was waiting for me in his office. When I was ushered in he had Ingrid Bergman there also. She had not read 'Spinner but she had read *Under Capricorn*, liked it very much and it was her option and her preference - which she later made with Joseph Cotton. I had the satisfaction of seeing 'Capricorn bomb... I grieved over that loss for months. [22.]

Dymphna Cusack herself wrote to Lydia Lo Schiavo in August 1947, sending best wishes on her marriage and bemoaning Florence James' return to England with the girls and the end of the menage at 'Pinegrove':

The closing up and packing up of 'Pinegrove' were very sad but we'd had a rich and lovely two and half years - a kind of sunlit island in Time. Florence and the nips would have reached England last Thursday. Hope your copy of *Four Winds* arrived. I posted it a month ago... Kay in hospital having streptomycin injections, we are hoping and hoping but it's too early to tell yet... Was thrilled to get your letter. I'm awfully grateful pet, and warn John IF anything comes of it he can expect a very disruptive visitor. We'll just keep our fingers crossed but I'm too old a bird to hope and break my heart over disappointeds. Do you think with the craze for costume stuff *Red Sky at Morning* might attract them? Shall write a real letter later - this is being done while I'm sitting my mother who is very ill. The shock of Uncle's death has completely prostrated her. [23.]

With the death of her Uncle Tom in June 1947, her mother in December, then her Aunt Nell (who had part reared her) and
finally her dear friend Kay Keen on May 3, 1948, Dymphna Cusack had had an appalling year. Brian Penton’s telegram to 'Sydney Wybourne' and the ambivalence of the "prize" from the Daily Telegraph competition, with its contingent rewrite demands, was a mixed blessing. In her own words: "Only Norman’s love and my work kept me going." [2.p.66] The Head of the TB section of the Public Health Department, Dr John Hughes, had approach her in 1946 to write the book which would expose the iniquities of the health system in its treatment of TB sufferers in NSW. She had refused. Kay Keen had begged her to write it as well, and had kept notes for her as long as she was able. In mid 1948 Dymphna Cusack went to see Dr Hughes and accepted his offer of access to the system and research co-operation. She actually lived in Bodington Sanatorium for a month and, in her words -

in the role of observer and collector of material I watched all thoracic operations. I talked with patients... 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 excitements, 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... Refused publication in Australia, I took the manuscript to England with me. [2.p.67-68]

Published on the wave of 'Spinner's success, it came out in the UK in October 1951 in a first edition of 25,000. In Australia it caused a scandal with Parliamentary objections to its very publication, arguing that it would damage tourism. [2.p.69] 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.p.2] Like its author, the book thumbed a nose at politicians. It had reached 600,000 sales in 1968, and possible over a million by 1980 (there is no reliable source for USSR figures), when Dymphna Cusack again wrote to Lydia Lo Schiavo:

_Say No To Death_ - her book (Kay Keen’s) or at least her story - is still being published in the USSR purely as a love story since they have totally eradicated TB. The Health Department tell me that the closing of our sanatoria is due to that book and that is the greatest reward I could have. It is now in the Australian Classics series and I have a film contract for it. Of course it will never be made. It took them seven years to raise the money for _Caddie_. [24.]

This brief analysis of _Say No To Death_’s emotional creative source, and the virtual social-anthropological research methods used by Dymphna Cusack to write the book, presents a typical ‘anatomy’ of her literary talent and ethics in practice. Moreover, once it had performed its work as reformist social documentary, the novel could then stand alone as literature - in this instance as a tragic love story, and one characteristic of the deeply committed humanist writer which Dymphna Cusack was. An overview survey of her subsequent opus confirms this evaluation of her as a social-realist writer - but with a romantic, indeed poetic gift of emotional sensibility and intellectual insight into human motivation, which breathed the life force into her works.

In the years 1945-48, in addition to the novels, she wrote a documentary piece on Sturt’s inland voyages, two documentaries for Newcastle’s Sesqui-Centenary in 1947, as well as the play
Stand Still Time (or Eternal Now) which was eventually filmed by BBC-TV in 1954, and the anti-War three-acter Shoulder the Sky set in an Australia League voluntary canteen for the services in Newcastle, and which was a prize winner in the 1945 Playwrights' Advisory Board Competition.

On May 22, 1949, aged almost 47 years, Dymphna Cusack finally set sail for London on the 'Georgic' "carrying letters from Jessie Street to most of the famous feminist women in the world." [25.] and the manuscripts of four novels. The ship had disgorged its 3,000 migrants in Sydney and sailed back to Europe via New Zealand, the Panama Canal and the Caribbean where it took on 700 West Indians also bound for London, the centre of their Commonwealth Empire as well. Cusack recalled that she saw "race hatred shaped in action under my very eyes". [2.p.87] She was reminded of the patronising racism which she witnessed on her trip to Ceylon in 1934. The book that formed out of this shipboard microcosm of racial and colour prejudice, The Sun in Exile, was partially based on the Hollands, a couple with whom she made a shipboard friendship which lasted a lifetime: he was a Singhalese doctor, she was English. It was not published until 1955, when it receive a Book Society Recommendation and the praise of Pamela Hansford Johnson and was the centre of considerable controversy. According to Norman Freehill this was "probably because it was the first in a spate of books about the influx of immigrants from the 'coloured' Commonwealth." [2.p.89] More significantly, it brought Dymphna Cusack's work to Indian, African and Caribbean readers and writers, and sealed her real
participation in the world-wide community of people with a social realist perspective and humanist concerns. With the very positive review in the *West African* - "It is impossible to believe this penetrating and sympathetic book was written by an Australian!" [2.p.90] - the status of her work in the post-colonial debate was confirmed.

Norman Freehill joined her later in the Autumn of '49, and in 1950 they moved into a maisonette in Belgravia from which to conduct their thorough historical-geographical mapping of London, and where Dymphna Cusack worked on the manuscripts of *Say No To Death* and *Southern Steel*. Norman Freehill had retired by this time, and indeed his emotional devotion and managerial nous were indispensable, both to Dymphna Cusack's physical survival and her writing career. After a year in London the climate and British ethos were anathema to Dymphna Cusack's Antipodean, egalitarian soul. In 1950 she wrote a 'London Letter.' for *Meanjin*, in part a reaction to the stalwart British voice at the P.E.N. International meetings:

*But there is a stage at which endurance ceases to become a virtue and becomes an evil. I think that stage has been reached today when, ostrich-like, the micro-cephalic head is buried in the sands of unhappy illusion while the whole vast rump of the British Empire is exposed humbly to the boot of Uncle Sam. [26.]*

Her contempt for American neo-colonialism is quite clear. In fact she was never to visit the USA. This was sometimes lamented in her correspondence with Lydia Lo Schiavo, and veiled allusions were made to her persona non grata status regarding an American visa. In October 1957, after a two and a half year sojourn in China, she wrote to Lydia Lo Schiavo
about her impending flight back to Sydney for her niece, 'young Dymphna's' wedding:

Would have loved to drop in on you on the way South but that, in terms of certain diplomatic problems your way, alas, is not to be thought of. [27.]

Of course her anti-bomb testing play, Pacific Paradise (which followed the nursing profession tribute Golden Girls in 1955), had by then rocked the West with its populist success. It was runner up to Summer of the Seventeenth Doll in a national competition, had been broadcast by ABC national radio, produced by amateurs in New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, and bought by Independent Television in the UK, paid for, cast and scheduled three times but "for reasons beyond our control" [2.p.96] after a year the script was returned. The British Government was joining France and the USA and testing the hydrogen and atom bombs in Monte Bello, Bikini AND Maralinga in South Australia. But the play outwitted the politicians and became international, ahead of its time:

It was translated into Japanese, Hindi, Spanish for Latin America, Albanian, and produced as well in Czechoslovakia, Romania, Cuba, and the Soviet Union where it was also published. Eight years later when it was published by the magazine 'Theatre', Leslie Rees remarked: 'What Dymphna Cusack said in 1955, everyone is saying in 1963.' And it will be said as long as people will protest against atomic bomb tests, wherever they are made. [2.p.96]

It was to be her last incursion into the genre at which she certainly excelled, except, of course, for her script involvement for the filming of Caddie in 1976. [1.p.131]

Following a disagreement with Heinemann about 'colonial' terms, Dymphna Cusack moved her business to Constables and the cultured publisher Michael Sadleir. In 1953 Southern Steel
broke another repressive 'culture cringe' barrier when -

for the first time in publishing history the then rule of the so-called 'colonial' (i.e. Commonwealth) royalty of 5% of the price sold to the Australian bookseller was broken. Dymphna's contract gave her 10% of the sale price, an innovation which publishers finally accepted. [2.p.73]

The translation and publishing across socialist Europe of Dymphna Cusack's novels and plays produced the wherewithal in royalties to provide herself and Norman Freehill with a peripatetic literary lifestyle, from the early fifties until their 'final' return to Australian residency in 1976. (And even after that they undertook sporadic expeditions to Japan and the Pacific and South America which continued until the penultimate year of Dymphna Cusack's life.)

In those days royalties in these countries [Eastern bloc] were untransferrable, their need of hard currency being greater than even the hardest hit lands of the Western world. We thought it a hardship at the beginning but soon learnt that our long stays in these little-known countries - still under the shadow of the Cold War - made us unique as writers. [2.p.103]

As ever the experiences were ingested, and, if a socially significant message was the crystallised outcome, a novel was conceived - or - increasingly a 'travelogue', an undisguised social documentary - with greater or lesser gestation periods, sometimes dependent upon her nervous system disabilities.

Her 1957 correspondence to Lydia Lo Schiavo includes a reference to "a gallup poll" which "gave 80% of Australians in favour of recognition" [of China] and a plaintive "I do like the sound of Whitlam" [27.] Of course Gough Whitlam and the Australia-China Friendship Association were also ahead of their time in Sino-West relations. [Whitlam has remained
willing and eager to be counted on the issue, even after
Tiannamen Square, as certainly would have Dymphna Cusack.]  

Chinese Women Speak (Angus & Robertson, 1958) was her own
constructive effort in Cold War communication bridge-building.
It evolved out of her 1956-57 'retracing the steps of Marco
Polo across China' [27.] and interviewing women of every age
group and walk of life:

> a Manchurian princess who was once lady-in-waiting
to a Dowager Empress, women members of Parliament,
women in large village co-operatives, women from the
sampans of Canton, wives of rich industrialists,
factory workers, housewives and former prostitutes
and beggars. [CWS.Prologue.]

Serialised in seven UK newspapers and in the Lagos and
Nigerian Press, it was translated into Cambodian, German,
Albanian, Japanese, Russian (and many dialects of the USSR),
and into Spanish for the South American countries. The
Chinese themselves hailed it as a classic, being the first
sociological study, in depth, of Chinese women (Professors
Wood and Lovell would have been proud of her). Heatwave In
Berlin (Heinemann 1961) was seeded in West Germany in 1956,
and continued to grow as she and Norman Freehill travelled
across Europe and she developed an understanding of Nazism and
shared Europe's dread of a neo-Nazi resurgence. In 1959
(again built-up royalties supported the travel, this time from
Pacific Paradise) they spent four months in a castle
originally belonging to the Czech aristocracy but later
inhabited by a German dynasty. There Heatwave took real
shape. The book "dropped like a bombshell into a world
already disturbed by the line the West were following."

[2.p.138] It was serialised over 14 days on the BBC and in a
Parisian Sunday paper, and all the leading reviewers were impressed by its power. It was also published immediately in France, Holland, Denmark and Norway - only the Americans baulked: Dymphna Cusack was far too tarnished by her Iron Curtain connections, China and her anti-bomb play. In 1962 it was published in Moscow and over all sold well in excess of two million copies. She was now truly an international literary figure - a prophet ignored in her own country. The Brisbane Courier Mail summed things up well:

*Dymphna Cusack is an Australian author who, much to the annoyance of the Establishment Order in Australian Literature has become itinerant, controversial and successful. She is writing books which are getting world attention.* [2.p.139]

The Menzies era had indeed legitimised the prurient, repressed sexual mores and the Reds-under-the-bed mental climate which had been evolving in Australia in the 1930's and '40's. Robert Menzies' Liberal-Country Party coalition beat Ben Chifley's Labor Party in the December 10, 1949 Federal election on a 'ban the Communist Party, reject socialism' platform. [28.p.698] Set in concrete by the 1950s, the witch-hunting ethos founded expression in the dailies' headlines, 'exposing' such events as the Petrov Affair, the Royal Commission on Espionage in 1955 and the Sir Eugene Goossens' pornography scandal in 1956. The banned book list in Australia had never been so extensive. (Read like the Vaticans' 'Index Librorum Prohibitorum'.)

*Picnic Races* (published 1961) was in many ways a nostalgic recreation, in her self-imposed exile, of the outback New South Wales of her childhood. Gubba was a composite town (a
hybrid of Guyra, Narrandera and Bathurst) but where the working class labourers and the Aborigines still had half a chance against the rapacious values of the rich 'woolcrats' with their snobbery and pretensions. The caricature elements stung the classist 'new-rich newcomers' whom it was intended to satirise, yet the Sunday Telegraph (in ironic contradiction to Consolidated Press's apparent refusal to publish 'Spinner) made it Book of the Week. Within its pages lay a sympathetic account of the fringe Blacks' Camp, which later prompted the Aboriginal Fellowship's request for Dymphna Cusack's patronage, and led to the landrights novel, Black Lightning (Heinemann, 1964) an indictment of white oppression and developer greed.

*Holiday Among the Russians* (Heinemann, 1964) and *Mary Gilmore: A Tribute* (Australasian Book Society, 1965) added to her prolific penmanship in the '60s. Pamela Hansford Johnson praised *Holiday Among the Russians* in the Sunday Times and the Evening News declared that: "Dymphna Cusack throws another strand across the great divide." [2.p.111] Russian royalties from her books and plays ensured them a somewhat privileged lifestyle in the countries of the Socialist Republics where they frequently holed up in Writer's Homes for seasons at a time. *Illyria Reborn* (Heinemann, 1966) is another 'reportage travelogue', of Albania, where they spent five and a half months following its emergence from near-feudalism - including purdah, polygamy and a vendetta sociology.

*The Sun is Not Enough* (Heinemann, 1967) was the result of her
loathing of Nazism fuelled by an increasingly educated awareness, as they travelled, of the blindness of Australian Foreign Policy which, whilst damning Communism was turning a blind eye to former, and even currently active terrorist Nazis were entering the country via the post-War immigration programs. Following a visiting lectureship at Sydney University in 1964 she began gathering actual case evidence of pro-Nazi local Australian activity. The plot centres around anti-Vietnam protest in the sixties University student generation, and gradually insinuates the realities of the Croatian Ustashi terrorists and the growing neo-Nazi movement. Returning to East Germany, Roumania, Hungary and Yugoslavia she researched the backgrounds of holocaust massacres and of 'factional' characters (usually hybrids), completing the manuscript in 1966 in Dubrovnik. Norman Freehill quotes the ABC's reviewer Clarice McNamarra, who encapsulated both the reason for the book's international success and the motivation of Dymphna's own creative urge:

*Her wide popularity is probably due not only because she writes an enthralling story in terms of vital characters, but because her novels are a palatable way of discussing the burning issues of the day.*

[2.p.173]

England, France and Belgium gave it best-seller status and in 1969 it was published and subsequently dramatised in the Soviet Union. In 1970 a 'cheap edition' of 2.2 million copies was released in the USSR. [2.p.174] It is very interesting to note the frequency with which Dymphna Cusack's novels were dramatised, especially in the socialist countries where a strongly didactic, populist theatrical tradition existed.
The Half Burnt Tree (Heinemann, 1969) was written on a return ocean voyage from Europe to Australia in 1967 on a Norwegian freighter. The image of the title (and the closing page) survived from the memory of a real tree at 'Pinegrove' in 1945. The bush-fire-blackened apparently dead plum tree outside her window in the spring miraculously put out new buds, boughs, flowers and even fruit, and so became Dymphna Cusack's own icon, symbolising her recovery to a creative life only partially marred by her chronic disabilities. The novel's theme is the enduring one of hope in male-female love, but it is idiosyncratic to Dymphna Cusack's distilled learnings from her own emotional experiences, that "love should be a by-product of life as we live it, a fusing of mind as well as heart." [2.p.179] She spoke of the book's conception as being "like the instantaneous flash in which a poem lit up my mind in the days when I wrote poetry, vibrant, quivering with life." [2.p.180] The book evolved yet further when Faith Bandler loaned her the files of the Aboriginal Advancement League. This living record of the fight for active social rehabilitation gave Dymphna Cusack the material to fully develop Kemmy, the little Aboriginal boy, a victim of racism who is the catalyst in fusing the relationship of the adult protagonists, the badly disfigured Vietnam War veteran and the woman who had been victim of a bigamous marriage and enforced abortion. (It is an interesting contrast to contemplate the censorship which this plot would have been subjected to in 1947 at the hands of the Newspaper Establishment Mafia).
In *A Bough In Hell* (Heinemann, 1971) Dymphna Cusack moves further into the individual psyche and examines a woman protagonist's efforts to escape from the addiction of alcoholism. Two personal encounters - one in Europe and the other back home in Australia - triggered the novel. The latter case was of a family friend with whom Dymphna Cusack shared intimately the struggle, the shame and the abasement - in and out of hospitals and mental institutions. The book at first was another *Caddie*, with Dymphna Cusack exhorting her friend to write it down "as a form of catharsis". The woman had poured forth her "haunting memories in a series of badly written bald narratives" [2.p.185] and eventually, using these as an Ariadne's thread, Cusack began her own research into the labyrinth of alcoholism. She spoke to psychiatrists, went to AA meetings, spoke with alcoholics and stayed at the Langton Clinic and the Salvation Army Clinic. Similar to the writing of *Say No To Death* a close personal crises with first-hand emotional distress had prompted her to investigate the medical/psychiatric/legal system - society's 'answer' to the problem - which of course was fraught with social inequities. Alcoholics in crisis were then usually dealt with by the police and entered a punitive legal spiral rather than a therapeutic medical one appropriate to a disease syndrome. The title, as usual, was poetically allusive, to James Elroy Flecker's line "A linnet that had lost its way/Sang on a blackened Bough in Hell." [2.p.186] A return journey to Europe by sea in 1970 gave her the months to polish it in peace.
In 1971 Dymphna Cusack and Norman Freehill spent their last year of living as literary world travellers; Norman Freehill was by then well into his eighties and Dymphna Cusack turning seventy the following year, with her health, as always, difficult. In 1972 they returned to make Australia home for good, initially taking a flat in Old Cremorne on the Point where Dymphna Cusack set to editing for publication the manuscript of her brother Jack's ("John Bede") war epic, They Hosed Them Out, which he had left to her when he died. She later wrote to Lydia Lo Schiavo (in October 1979):

Max Harris (our leading critic) called his war book 'the Australian War classic'! Now I have been editing his story of his Depression days; gruesome...

From Cremorne they moved to another furnished rental in Plant Street, Seaforth and then a unit in South Steyne, Manly, before acquiring the closest thing to owning property that Dymphna Cusack's rigorously anti-materialist self had ever conceded to - as 'resident donors' and founding residents of Wesley Heights retirement complex in Birkeley Road, Manly. In a two-bedroomed unit with sweeping views across the harbour entrance and the sea, a self-sustained and dignified old age was assured. Dymphna Cusack maintained a working routine of writing in the mornings with an afternoon siesta and social activity in the early evenings. Florence James also bought into Wesley Heights a few months later in 1976, as did Eileen Barnard Kettle and her husband Eric and sister Nora Surridge, all Blue Mountains' friends. Florence James recalls that Dymphna Cusack spoke frequently at women's meetings during the mid to late seventies, especially for Women's International
League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and for the Soviet Friendship Society. She also did frequent book reviews, for the Department of Education's periodical among others, gave television interviews and in fact took up most invitations which gave her the opportunity to speak on her burning issues - education, Australian writing, travel ... and above all Peace. She was also President of Manly-Waringah branch of the Fellowship of Australian Writers (FAW) from 1975-1980.

Her health degenerated rapidly over 1978-79 and she spent months between Royal North Shore Hospital, Ryde Hospital (for speech therapy) and the convalescent home 'Mandalay' in Addington Road, Manly. However in 1979 she still managed to travel to Hong Kong, Japan, Bali and Singapore. Hospitalised on her return, she wrote to Lydia Lo Schiavo:

..they came out with the cheerful diagnosis that my spine showed I should have had Multiple Sclerosis forty years ago but not having developed it then, won't develop it now. Too old! I feel extremely well but the sad result of it all is that our doctors won't give us permission to go abroad again. And I haven't been to Tahiti or the South Pole!

[29.]

Ironically, the Mark Twain Society of the USA elected her a 'Daughter of Mark Twain' in 1980. Although she had accepted a Coronation Medal in 1951 and a Silver Jubilee Medal in 1977, she had declined an OBE. However, she accepted an Order of Australia for her contribution to Australian Literature, also in 1980.

The eventual diagnosis was indeed multiple sclerosis. Dymphna Cusack then moved into the Nursing Home stage of Wesley
Heights where she died on October 20, 1981.

Three unpublished manuscripts remained with her papers in the National Library in Canberra. *Nurse No Long Grief* (about ageing) and *Triple Concerto* were her final novels, unable to find publishers before her death. A third manuscript however is about to see the light of day. *A Window in The Dark*, Dymphna Cusack's autobiography of her teaching years, edited and with an introduction by Debra Adelaide will be forthcoming by the National Library in 1991. Dymphna Cusack wrote to Lydia Lo Schiavo in 1979:

No, my book on my teaching experiences hasn't been published yet. The Federation kind of commissioned it. Half of them love it and half of them detest it. Hung on to it until it was too late for the Centenary in '80. Then I had the greatest difficulty to drag it from them. Now trying someone else. A&R 'loved it' but not commercial. Ah well. As I say; "You don't have to be mad to be a writer but it helps." [29]
1. **Who's Who of Australian Women**  
Compiled by Andrea Lofthouse.  
Based on Research by Vivienne Smith.  
Methuen Australia Pty Ltd. North Ryde, NSW. 1982.

2. **Norman Freehill with Dymphna Cusack**  
*Dymphna.*  

3. **John K. Ewers** "Creative Writing in Australia" p.215-6. quoted on page 222 of  
*Mary Wilson*  
The Perceptions of the Novelists into Australia and Australian Society: 1920 - 1939.  
M.A. Thesis. La Trobe University, Melbourne. 1972.

4. **E. Morris Miller and Frederick T. Macartney**  
Angus and Robertson. Sydney. 1956.

5. **INTERVIEW.**  

6. **Australian Dictionary of Biography.**  
Volume 8. 1891 - 1939. C1 - Gib. p.183  
General Editors: Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Searle.  

7. **E.W. Cole**  
*Cole's Funny Picture Book*  
No. 2 (Copyright)  

8. **INTERVIEW**  
Florence James, by Marilla North. December 5, 1990.

9. **Eight Plays by Australians.** pp. 81-91  
The Dramatists Club. Melbourne, Australia. 1934.

10. **CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.**  
Dymphna Cusack to Florence James. February 24, 1928.


13. **CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.**  
Dymphna Cusack to Florence James. April 24, 1933.

14. **The Penguin New Literary History of Australia.**  
General Editor: Laurie Hergenhan.  
15. INTERVIEW

16. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James
Dymphna Cusack to Florence James. April 23, 1933.

17. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James
Dymphna Cusack to Florence James. June 20, 1933.

18. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James
Dymphna Cusack to Florence James. November 16, 1933.

19. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James
(Sydney Girls' High School)

20. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James
Dymphna Cusack to Florence James. September 30, 1935

21. CORRESPONDENCE / Lydia Lo Schiavo
Mrs Kay Keen to Mrs John Carra (nee Lydia Lo Schiavo)
August 5, 1947.
(Wakehurst 1. Royal North Shore Hospital.)

22. CORRESPONDENCE / Lydia Lo Schiavo
Mrs Lydia Templeman to Marie Armstrong. 1989.
Brea. California

23. CORRESPONDENCE / Lydia Lo Schiavo
August 6, 1947.
85 Bream St, Coogee.

24. CORRESPONDENCE / Lydia Lo Schiavo

25. Dymphna Cusack
'Foreword' in
50 Years of Feminist Achievements. A History of the
United Associations of Women.
by Winifred Mitchell.
United Associations of Women.189 Liverpool St, Sydney.1979.

26. Dymphna Cusack
'London Letter' pp. 286-289

27. CORRESPONDENCE / Lydia Lo Schiavo
Dymphna Cusack to Mrs Lydia Templeman. October 20, 1957.
C/- Bank of NSW. Threadneedle St, London.

28. "Bob Menzies Back as Australian P.M." pp. 698 in
Chronicle of the 20th Century.
John Ross
Editor-in Chief.
29. CORRESPONDENCE / Lydia Lo Schiavo
Dymphna Cusack to Mrs Lydia Templeman. October 12, 1979.
Wesley Heights
This chapter concentrates only on the relevant literary and publishing activities in Florence James' long, multi-faceted and productive life. Her feminist, peace and Quaker activities will be given their full due in the biographical work which is still in progress.
Florence Gertrude Russell was born of British settler stock in Gisbourne, on New Zealand's North Island, on September 2, 1902. Her mother, Annie Gertrude Russell was born in England, in Northamptonshire, and emigrated with her parents, William and Hannah (nee Bletsoe) Russell on the "Wave Queen" in 1884. The Russells and their nine offspring settled in Napier, on the east coast of the North Island. Florence James remembers clearly watching Halley's Comet with her English grandmother Hannah at her aunt's house in Napier - and the close relationship that she enjoyed with her. Florence James was named after a maternal aunt, (Mrs) Florence Voeautier, whom Hannah had named in admiration for Florence Nightingale "the lady with the lamp". Florence James recalls that:

I grew up with a very great regard for the fact that I too was named after Florence Nightingale.

... There was an enormous amount of folklore around about her when I was a child. I had to learn later that she was the lady who cared about drains so intimately! [1.]

One of the important outcomes of the amount of early childhood time spent with her maternal relatives, especially her grandparents, was the imprinting on her mother and herself of their tremendous pride in their English origins:

The pride showed itself in a very practical way... in my mother's onslaught on my vowels all through my school days. [ibid].

The 'English-ness' of the Russells is a very typical New Zealand settler trait, and, in rural parts, quaintly fossilized habits of Victoriana still remain. Florence James remembers her mother's 'at homes' on the first Wednesday of each month, when visitors left their cards on a silver tray,
and elegant lace-edged cloths were brought out on which to display the silver tea-service from Sheffield and the Royal Doulton china. Three-tiered cake stands held - of course - the cucumber sandwiches and iced cakes. She remembers the talk always of 'home', 'the old country', England - where many of the letters went which her mother rose at five each morning to write. There were at least fifty cousins, and Annie James prided herself on her letter-writing accomplishments.

Florence James recalls:

*She held the whole family together with her letters. She wrote to everybody on both sides... She had a tremendously matriarchal feeling... for Russells and James's. I really grew up with a 'tribal' attitude of belonging to both clans.* (ibid).

The Anglophile Russells were balanced in influence later in her childhood, when the family moved physically closer to the James' sphere of influence. Her father George Llewelyn Denton James had been educated as an engineer, specialising in refrigeration works construction. They were as peripatetic in her growing-up years as the Cusack family had been in Australia (Florence went to eleven schools) - but a little more exotic, eventually, in their destinations, and certainly more establishment middle-class than the descendants of the Irish rebel Cusack. Wellington was the James' settler stronghold, and it is where William James, born in Wales, had disembarked in 1851 after his six-month journey on the "Wild Duck". He subsequently married one Euphemia Farmer, who was actually born in New Zealand, of Scottish parentage from Cupar in the Kingdom of Fife (Fifeshire, in the atlas). They balanced the James's Anglophilia because they were proudly, adamantly New Zealanders, with no pretensions about their
origins. Grandfather William James had dealt first-hand with the Maoris; one of the earliest land-acquirers, he had leased his lands directly from The Chief of the Waikato on a fifty year basis, and his sons had carried on the agreement "until in the end there was no written word between them" [ibid]. Florence James remembers only great respect between her family and the Maoris, especially the Waikato tribe. At boarding school, at Wellington Girls' College, the granddaughter of her grandfather's Maori chieftain colleague - Hannah Love (an Anglicization of Waikato) and she were delighted to find themselves connected by the past. In the dining-room of the James' home hung an oil painting of the old chief with his "moko" tattooed on his chin, wearing the black frock-coat of a Victorian gentleman.

In 1911 Florence James made her first crossing of the Tasman, "three days each way and I was never so sick in my life" [ibid]. They stayed at the Hotel Mansions in Bayswater Road, Kings Cross. Her second crossing was in 1916, when the family, now with a baby sister Berwyn, came over at George Llewelyn's summons, to join him in Darwin, where he was in charge of the development of Vestey's freezing works. Vestey's owned "Wave Hill", the biggest cattle station in the Northern Territory, plus the "Blue Star" Shipping Line, and in true capitalistic 'vertical integration' style, they developed the freezing works to prepare the meat for transit shipping to their European markets. She remembers the car number-plate, NT-13, and the small European community there, clinging to a European lifestyle. The Shadforths had sailed to the
Territory with them on the Burns-Philp vessel "Mataran". Mr Shadforth was to be the new manager of the Elsey Station, which had been given its legendary place in Australian settler literature by Mrs Aeneas Gunn's books *Little Black Princess* (1905) and *We of the Never-Never* (1908). Florence James recalls that they settled into the strange architecture of their 'frontier' home - "three large rooms with a twelve-foot verandah all the way 'round with slat-blinds [ibid]." The Chinese cook proved none other than Ah Cheong, who had rescued the 'Little Missus' and the Maluka of Aeneas Gunn's stories. In her pith helmet and white holland safari shirt ("tailored in the only Chinese-shop-for-everything, WING CHEONG SING - the department store of Darwin" [ibid]) Florence James would ride across the sands of Myilli Point with her only local companion, Grace Beckett, daughter of the Protector of Aborigines. Sometimes she would hitch her pony to a sulky and take her little sister Berwyn for a trek across the pearl-grey sands of the tropical beaches, flanked by miles of coconut palms. It was a very outdoors year for Florence James; no school was available and her only literary input was Ah Cheong's stories, and the volumes of *Boys' Own Paper* and *Chums* which she had brought with her.

A holiday in Java made necessary for her father to recuperate after malaria, preceded their return to New Zealand. In Java she first experienced the exoticism of the Dutch East Indies which later would become part of her kinship network, by marriage. Her father went to Venezuela for a year in 1916/17, and the James women again entered the Russell enclave, staying
with Aunt Florence Voeautier. Florence James went off to school at Iona College outside Napier. Her father's brother had been architect for the school, where for a year she became part of the community of fifty boarders, instilled with Presbyterian Scottish principles and given role models of high achieving, intellectually outstanding women. This was continued when she transferred to St Cuthberts P.L.C. in Auckland, following her father's return from South America. Pioneer women graduates taught maths and science to the 'gels', and one, Mona Martha Brown - whose great grandfather was Dr Charles Armitage-Brown, a close friend of John Keats - imparted English literature and rekindled Florence James' latent Anglophilia.

In 1920 the family moved to Sydney, and initially settled in Cremorne on the lower North Shore. Florence James attended the NSW Conservatorium of Music for several years, as nicely bred young women did, and studied piano with the city's official accompanist, Henry Penn. Through her father's office location, Adyar House in Bligh Street (a building which as a civil engineer he helped design) the James family became involved with the Theosophist Society. The owner of Adyar House, Mr Van Gelder, had introduced the James family to the rarefied realms of this new, Eastern-inspired, exotic brotherhood. Madame Blavatsky and her disciple, Annie Besant, were injecting the spiritual body with a solid dose of feminist and social-reformist ideologies. And so, George Llewellyn James could not object when his elder daughter enrolled in Sydney University. This move resulted from her
meeting William (Pym) Heyting, newly arrived at the Sydney headquarters of Theosophy from where he was reared in the Dutch East Indies. Florence James and William Heyting were attracted, and discussed philosophical and academic pursuits together. Young Heyting spent the whole of 1923 in Florence James' company, but he was then sent on an extensive Theosophical lecture-tour of the United States. She proceeded to complete her degree with Honours in Philosophy, and graduated with the University Medal in 1926. Heyting returned from the USA that year and they were formally engaged.

It was not a big engagement. It was very much a Theosophical event. It was a beautiful ring, square diamond with shoulders of small diamonds and a sapphire... After our engagement he left to study law in New Zealand and I went to work in my father's offices. [ibid]

Florence James' University life had been dominated by the intellectual influence of her psychology lecturer, Professor Tasman Lovell, who took her into pioneering thoughts on the workings of instinct, behaviour and the human mind. It was also in her university years that she struck up a friendship with Dymphna Cusack. This took her further into literature, drama and debating and possibly introduced her to more radical and socialist notions than even the Theosophists were embracing. Certainly she recalls the period as one of constant and exciting debates on such topics as "the Russian Experiment", social equality and revolution. They were indeed "heady days", especially for one who had lived in such relatively protected security as Florence had enjoyed. Her intellect, however, was engaged; her lifetime commitment to issues of philosophy and peace was formed during this period.
She continued evening studies after graduation in the 'Extra-mural Evening Classes' run by Sydney University, and it was there that she continued to argue and explore, with friends such as Marie Byles and Christina Stead:

Heavy political things, about which we knew nothing but debated passionately. Like the promise of the USSR. That was full of social promise. That was going to be Christian Communism without the Christians. This was going back to the principles of primitive Christianity. But we were all a bit ashamed - none of us had come to terms with what Christianity was - except that it was the Churches we'd all been brought up in. [ibid]

Florence James decided that the freedom to explore included seeing first-hand the world her grandparents had always spoken of as "home". She must travel - and alone - and so she saved her fare to Europe, working as her father's secretary and departing on the 'Balranald' which sailed via South Africa to England in 1927.

I went to Paris for the Christmas of '27. Then to Holland for the Autumn in '28. I stayed with my future in-laws, and as they were all Theosophists we had much in common... I then went to Germany for the Winter, as au pair for a wealthy German family. Frau Von Arnem was my employer, at 'Neuescholss' (or New Castle) a handsome estate with eight servants. Never had I touched such social heights before! Her sister was married to Chancellor Bruning - the government which preceded Hitler.[2.]

Florence James settled down in London in 1929, sharing a bedsit with Christina Stead who was working in an office by day and writing her first novel, *Seven Poor Men of Sydney* at night. Florence James knew the UK and the Continent quite well by this stage, and she acted as a 'guide' for newly arrived Australians and New Zealanders. She got a job as a copywriter in a London advertising agency, E. Walter Stanley, and started placing freelance stories with various magazines.
and newspapers. She eventually landed an administrative job in a Fleet Street syndicating agency which kept a staff of writers supplying articles to the press throughout the English-speaking world. The Empire Literary Agency taught Florence James how to run a small team - and about the kind of journalism which sold to women's sections in newspapers and magazines around the world.

She had broken off her engagement to William Heyting after her six-month voyage to Europe (and several other proposals later), but their respective family exertions plus Theosophical interests brought them together again following a long period which he had spent at Columbia University in the USA doing further legal studies. It took them less than a week to decide to marry this time, which they did in Hampstead Registry Office in 1932. It was the Depression. William Heyting had been admitted as a barrister and possessed two law degrees - but the only occupation available was as a litigating clerk. He worked at this whilst Florence James developed freelance journalism for women's features - at which she earned her living for a decade.

An event which led to a fruitful specialisation, and conjoined her journalism with her academic training in psychology, was meeting Dr Maria Montessori. Montessori was so impressed by Florence James' "popularisation" of her theories and practical demonstrations of educational innovation that she gave her world syndication rights of her articles, relying on James to turn them into language which would capture the attention of
the young mother, and communicate valuable child-rearing practices which would better develop the individual child's potential. In 1933 Florence James' mother had died, tragically young, in the beautiful Gordon home which George Llewellyn James had bought for her at the peak of his consulting engineering prosperity. Then the banks crashed, and George Llewellyn James lost everything. (Florence James was well able to recreate her own family's tragedy in Deb Forrest's story years later in *Come In Spinner*). Florence James and William Heyting decided to have children. In 1935 Julie was born, and in 1938, another daughter Francis. Florence James was well versed, by then, in Maria Montessori philosophy, and the girls' respective educational and career development had the hallmarks of enlightened childrearing. In 1938 Florence James' father fell very ill. By this stage War in Europe seemed inevitable. It was decided that she should take the girls to Sydney - whilst Heyting joined the RAAF.

Once back in Australia, and temporarily living with her father, James became involved in syndicating her Maria Montessori material on pre-school education, and found other opportunities in radio-broadcasting for her honed skills in female media markets. Florence James' Clip Book is an impressive record of a woman journalist attempting to use the women's pages of the newspapers to increase enlightenment in applied behavioural science within the home.

Florence James soon met up again with Dymphna Cusack, who was living at 223 Macquarie Street and working at Sydney Girls'
High. They had maintained close contact in the intervening years, and a sporadic but always lengthy correspondence evidences the fact that they never lost the continuous thread of each other's lives. (James had tried to place *This Nettle Danger* and was marketing *Jungfrau* when Dymphna Cusack joyously recalled it following its 1935 Competition success.)

When War came, and the men were called to the forces, women gained entry to previously forbidden places where their skills could at last be shown. The Royal Prince Alfred (RPA) Hospital Gazette records the call to military duties of several male staffers in early 1940, and in a March 1940 entry it cryptically signals the changing status-by-title which occurred as women took over executive positions:

> So important a matter as the Board of Directors' decision to change the title of Organising Secretary to that of Public Appeals Officer must be recorded.

> The new title, with its corresponding duties and the work of Lieutenant Colonel Burrett's successor as Secretary of the Auxiliary and Editor of "RPA", has fallen to Miss F.G. James. Editorial modesty forbids an article on the new appointment.

> But plans are not modest! Already they are afoot in a big way. Money for the equipment and furnishing of the new King George Memorial Hospital for Mothers and Babies is the task ahead - a tremendous undertaking in which Royal Prince Alfred will need the help of all its friends.

> The new Public Appeals Officer extends a warm invitation to all those who wish to make closer contact with the hospital or who would like to help in any capacity, either with gifts of time, or money, to visit her as early as possible at the City Office, Challis House, Martin Place. [3.p.24]

In March 1945, the RPA Gazette records that:

> At the end of January, Miss F.G. James resigned her post as Public Appeals Officer after five years service with the Hospital. Miss James - Mrs W.J.
Heyting in private life - plans to return to her home in London when war conditions permit. In the meantime she has taken her children to Hazelbrook, where she is continuing to edit RPA. [4.]

Those five years gave Florence James the complete range of Sydney society to observe during wartime. She worked on several levels in the charity fundraising activity which the job entailed. Her "socialite" committee comprised the wives of the Honorary Doctors at the Hospital, and their network of friends. Most were genuine in their efforts, and people in their own right, but some of them took on the status and projected the importance of their husbands' roles. One, Florence remembers in particular, had achieved social prominence through her husband, an eminent surgeon. James cites her as the source of the caricature of Mrs D'Arcy-Twyning in Come In Spinner. She had treated Florence James as a paid minion, and had -

...dared to patronise me. So perhaps I had my tongue-in-my-cheek in the characterisation of Mrs D'Arcy Twyning. Most of my Committee treated me with respect as we were dependant on each other. But she treated me as a lackey, made uninformed criticism, to the point that one day I asked her - "Would you like to take over my job?" [5.]

The RPA Gazette over Florence James' five years at the helm of one of Sydney's leading social focal points (especially for social photographers and gossip columnists), records one glittering social event after another. In particular, there is the annual Stork Ball: held at the Hotel Australia, it was preceded annually by a flurry of tennis and bridge tournaments, cocktail parties and theatre nights, all designed to defray the expenses of the event itself. The RPA Gazette,
June '40, records that over the two months prior to the ball "there was no week without Press photographs and descriptions of Ball Committee parties." [6.] Florence James, of course, was leading a double life. Often she lived in very restricted accommodation - it was War, the Yanks were here, accommodation was scarce, especially for a working mother with two children under ten years of age. When her father re-married she had to find a share-residential where after-school care for the girls could be incorporated. Francis's frequent asthma, and her own Montessori-driven concerns not to deprive them emotionally in their most vulnerable years (especially with one parent absent for the duration), led Florence James to push herself in the parental role as much as she did in her commitment to a demanding job. She also managed to include voluntary publicity work for the Australian Child Welfare Association (probably in support of Dymphna Cusack's social work agenda) in her hectic double life.

When Dymphna Cusack physically collapsed there is no doubt that Florence James was, in today's jargon, also "burnt out". "Pinegrove" cottage in Hazelbrook on the Blue Mountains was a retreat and a sanctuary where the two friends of over twenty years took their physically and emotionally exhausted selves. However, after a brief do-nothing recovery, they found that they were so stimulated by "catching up on life", by finding out how much of what they had learned and experienced matched up with their ethical positions, that they decided to fulfil their early War-time pledge to "keep a record", pool their perspectives, and tell it how it was!
In 1951, Florence James had to prepare the public relations material to send to the USA and to Clem Christesen in Melbourne to promote the book which resulted from this collaboration. Florence James' carbon file copy is worth quoting from, as it has a proximity to the time itself which cannot be recaptured in recalled memories:

In February 1945 the joint household was begun in a large, ram-shackle cottage in the bush outside the little township of Hazelbrook. It consisted of Dymphna and (for a while) her niece, Florence and her two children, three bantams presented by Miles Franklin, and two cats presented by the carrier and the goat presented by some neighbouring children. The three children took to bush-life with such enthusiasm and energy, and Dymphna and Florence found the problems of house-keeping and bush inconveniences so unpredictable that they decided to write a children's book out of their adventures as a practice at collaboration. The result was *Four Winds and a Family* which will soon be published here.

All through the war they had been collecting documentary material and making sketches of significant incidents and characters, and they now started on the big job of organizing the material and planning the form of their novel. Their friends had all helped. Men and women had told them service experiences, social workers brought them first-hand stories from suburbs and city streets and they themselves had gathered so many authentic stories that were amusing, terrifying, sensational and tragic, that it was difficult to know where to begin, and how to make the brutal realism of their documentary materialism acceptable, even within the wide limits of the contemporary outspoken novel. When they started the actual writing they found that collaboration presented them with a number of special problems. For instance, there was the preliminary work which would not have been necessary if they had been writing separately. They had to work out the biographies and physical characteristics of their characters in considerable detail before they started writing, and they scanned the papers for portraits that embodied their conceptions of the characters, and these were pinned up for constant reference. In fact every spare inch of wall in both their rooms and the connecting hall was covered with maps of Sydney, typical pictures of places and characters' biographies, and notes, cuttings and occasional rude remarks designed to pep up production. Towards the end the production chart
was chalked up, which it was the privilege of the children to add up every day. The book was nearly finished before they decided on the title. In the letters to the Daily Telegraph they saw the phrase 'Come in spinner', used in quotes, and realized they already had their title in the two-up scene in the opening chapter of the book. There was a further development when they told Miles Franklin who immediately sent them a copy of Ian Mudie's poem Unabated Spring where the poet had used the spinner as a symbol of fate:

And sometimes "Come in Spinner", laughed the Gods.

The search was over! There could be no other title. They wrote straight to Ian Mudie who gave them permission to quote the poem on the title page. Come In Spinner is dedicated to Miles Franklin not only because of the authors' personal affection for her, but also because of the significant part she has played in Australian literature and their own development as writers. [7.]

During the almost two year gestation of the first draft of Come In Spinner Florence James lived up to her nursing namesake many times. Dymphna Cusack's trigeminal neuralgia and other disabilities required care, and Florence James gave much of this as she managed their menage and the children and the role of co-author and sole mid-wife to the manuscript.

Dymphna was indefatigable. As soon as she could hold her head up from the neuralgia which laid her low she would dictate to my typing. In the afternoons while she rested, I edited and wrote. Journalism had been my job and novel writing was a new experience, but it was amazing how I took fire from working with Dymphna. [8.p.198]

Following their joint completion of the second draft of "magnumpus" as the epic comedy-of-manners was known at "Pinegrove", Florence James sailed with the girls for the UK in mid-1947, hoping to piece together her marriage which wartime pressures had sundered. However this didn't prove to be the case, and she began divorce proceedings in 1948. [Her role in the final two years of 'Spinner's lengthy gestation is
Florence James' skills in journalism contributed considerably to 'Spinner's overnight best-seller status. It was in this process of promotion (known only too well today to all authors who wish their book to be "heard" above the noise, but in 1951 not the norm at all) that she and Dymphna Cusack met Michael Sadleir, and the next phase of her varied career would begin:

Michael Sadleir was the great authority on Victorian fiction. He had a famous specialist library and was also chairman of Constable Publishing Company. He had started the reviews for 'Spinner by writing a rave review for The Sunday Times. The ABC in London invited him to meet Dymphna and I and we did an interview for Radio Australia. That is how I met him. He was Katherine Mansfield's publisher (he'd also been George Bernard Shaw's). Constables was a magnificent firm. He actually asked me if I would like to read for him, any Australian and New Zealand manuscripts which came to him. And I said I would. A reader is a reporter on literary quality and market possibilities. At the same time I was already reviewing New Zealand and Australian books for The Times Literary Supplement.

... I eventually attended the manuscript conference with the directors once a week. From that ... I began editing for them. Because they liked my reports they thought I would be a good editor, and they gave me the opportunity ... that is how I became a talent scout for Australian and New Zealand authors.

... As Constable was a very high quality publisher I found a literary agent in London who would consider the books that were not suitable for Constable and yet were for another kind of publisher. This was Richmond Towers & Benson (later Benson & Winant).

... I was paid a reading fee for reading - three guineas for a task which may take well over a day... and I got a very small percentage on sales for anything I placed.

... I built up quite a feeder from Australia at that time. The Adelaide Festival had a very big literary section each year in the early '50's, and they published the names of their winners, and also a
'Highly Commended' list. I wrote to everybody on those lists. At this time Australian publishing was at an all time low, particularly fiction, as they could import much cheaper than they could produce...

I was with Constable from 1951 until 1963... [9.]

When Florence James moved to the country after daughter Julie was launched into her career as an actress and subsequently TV documentary maker, and Francis as a professional flautist, (see And Mother Signed The Contract by Julie James) she helped her friend Joan de Fraine edit her father's biography Servant of This House, in which de Fraine recreated her father's life as a career staffer, eventually Principal, of the Bank of England. The writers whom Florence James had nurtured and gained publication for include - Mary Durack, Nene Gare, Nancy Phelan, Elisabeth MacIntyre, Sylvia Ashton-Warner, Maurice Shadbolt, A.J. Lindsay, Wal Watkins, Max Fatchen, Betty Roland, John Brown, Colin Johnson (Mundrooroo Narogin), Carolyn Gye (Dr Ida Mann), Anne Von Bertouch - and others.

When Michael Sadleir died on December 13, 1957, James wrote a tribute for Australian press syndication. She gave him credit for the turning-of-the tide in English publishing of writers from Australia:

There is no doubt that Australian writing is becoming increasingly successful in England; and it is equally certain that Michael Sadleir made a singular contribution to this new popularity by backing his judgement. [10.]

Florence James has lived a very active life in literary, feminist and peace commitment. She joined the Fellowship of Authors in 1948, and was amongst the earliest active in the Author's World Peace Appeal, attending its first conference and official launch in October 1951 where she represented
Australian writers and the Fellowship of Australian Writers (FAW), of which she had been a member since her return to Australia in 1938. Her correspondence with Clem Christesen, and her efforts to back him in mobilising wider participation in world peace issues by the Australian literati, makes interesting reading. She joined the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), and for five years took part in the legendary Aldermaston Marches every Easter, being arrested and gaoled for a month on one occasion. She was also involved with the international feminist network, and was made a life member of the Australian United Association of Women in recognition of her contribution.

She returned to Australia in 1963, and for five years travelled around the Antipodes, rediscovering her roots and uncovering new aspects of the countries of her birth and adoption. In 1968 her consistent quest for a spiritual meaning found its resolution, and she joined the Society of Friends - the Quakers, and through the peace testimony of the Quakers she has been continuously involved in the world peace movement to this day. Her journalistic skills also find their expression in her Quaker writing and editing involvement - another facet of Florence James' life which begs a chapter of its own for the telling. James has continued to travel within Australia and abroad sporadically, usually on Quaker and peace movement business.

Since 1979 'Spinner has re-entered her life as a preoccupying
force, and one with its own volition. In that year her
daughter, Julie James-Bailey, applied for and subsequently
gained a Women's Film Fund Grant to seed the project to film
the decidedly cinematographic story of *Come In Spinner*. I was
involved in the establishment of the market research and
feasibility study over 1979-80, tapping into the developing
techniques for assessing film potential and film/video
communications' strategies. Although the project proved
'Spinner' a more than viable commodity, it took three separate
production negotiations and many, many scenarios and script
versions before Florence James would sign a contract. She and
Dymphna Cusack had rejected offers since the abortive Ealing
Studio proposal in the early '50s, just as, with their
protracted dealings with the *Daily Telegraph*, in their
commitment to preserving the integrity of the original work -
to "tell it as it was" - they had refused to compromise on
cuts which would sensationalise at the expense of the breadth
of social realism, the core of 'Spinner's message.

Meanwhile, Richard Walsh, of Angus & Robertson, had located
the first and second drafts from the National Library
manuscripts collection where Norman Freehill had placed them
at Dymphna's request. Walsh approached Florence James to edit
back in all the censored and excised words from the 1946-51
five-year saga, which she did throughout the year in 1984, at
the Quakers Cottage at Woodford in the Blue Mountains, a
retreat which she had founded whilst living 'up the mountains'
between 1968 and 1975 (initially with Marie Byles and later
with Linda MacIntosh). It took until 1988 for Angus &
Robertson to get the unabridged edition into the bookstores.

It was not until ABC producer Jan Chapman, and Drama Head, Sandra Levy, so impressed James with their understanding of and commitment to the book *Come In Spinner*, that she was persuaded to sign a contract with them, but one which gave her script vetting rights:

Florence was given a role as consultant on the production, and six months were spent drafting the scripts [writers Lissa Benyon and Nick Enright]. All those involved had their favourite parts of the book which they were loath to lose; compromises had to be reached without betraying the original concept. It was impossible to keep all the characters in the book but 86 of them have been retained in the series. Director Robert Marchand then joined the team and proved to be equally dedicated to the book.

Casting was not easy with so many devoted readers all cherishing their own image of the characters. Moreover some male actors found a new challenge in roles where they complemented the story of the women rather than the other way around.

Florence was a frequent visitor to the set and particularly enjoyed watching her granddaughter act in a cameo role in a busy scene in the foyer of the South Pacific Hotel - the hotel Florence James and Dymphna Cusack created over 40 years ago. [11.]

Watching the process of the production and the singularly committed approach to the text itself by all concerned - from cast to camera, wardrobe to set design - was an enthralling experience, as was sitting through the final cut with Florence James herself as she exclaimed:

*I wish Dymphna were here! I can’t believe it’s finally on screen.* [12.]

The story of *Spinner’s* journey from paper to celluloid is as complex and intriguing as the tale of the original manuscript over the five years from creation to publication - 1946-1951.
CHAPTER IV

THE MAKING

OF THE MANUSCRIPT OF

COME IN SPINNER

Its drafts, revisions and excisions from October 1946 to publication in February 1951.
It is appropriate to begin the saga with Dymphna Cusack's words:

On October 30, 1946, the closing day of the Daily Telegraph competition, a bulky manuscript was handed in at the office of Consolidated Press in Sydney. It was under a double nom-de-guerre: Unabated Spring by 'Sydney Wybourne'. (Florence James was born in Gisbourne, N.Z. and I was born in Wyalong, NSW, and the book was about Sydney.) We were so glad to get rid of it that we were pulled up for jay-walking on our way to meet a well-known writer to celebrate the end of two years' work.

The end, did I say? It was only the beginning.

[1.]

Ten months later, in early August 1947, (just prior to the arrival of the delayed summons for Sydney Wybourne to attend at Park Street), Dymphna Cusack was becoming increasingly anxious. She devised a slightly devious stratagem to pry information out of Consolidated Press: as she wrote to Florence James:

I did my phoney Yank accent on the 'phone to the Daily Telegraph the other day - Research Officer of the USA Library of Information wanting details of the competition to take back to the 'States. Got a warm reply from a girl who knows all: 'Yes, the judging is complete. Just waiting for the general manager to announce the results in the next couple of weeks.' If I gave my address they'll post the paper with the results. To date nothing. Editorial costiveness of the moa's egg! [2.]

However, the summons did arrive. It had been posted to the address of a friend whose hospitalisation had delayed her forwarding it to Cusack. She saw Brian Penton on August 18, and departed his office with good reason to believe that the Prize was indeed in the offing [see Chapter 1 p.16-17]. The critical summary she had been given by Penton was both eulogistic and constructively critical in terms of potential publishing. Moreover, as she returned to her mother's at
Coogee on the tram after the epic confrontation, she had the satisfaction of knowing that she had a revised manuscript, which she and Florence James had been combing for the past nine months for obscenity and possible libel. The critic's appraisal was marked 'Copy to MacAlpine'. E.W. MacAlpine had been appointed editor-in-chief of Consolidated Press Publications in May 1945, having been London bureau manager during the War. He is cited by David McNicoll as an 'anti-Pentonite' [3p.129.] The critic's report speaks for itself:

This is the best novel of modern Sydney yet written by anybody. It should certainly cause something of a sensation when published because not only is it a remarkably vivid and real picture of Sydney in wartime but the author pulls no punches. He dissected the city and its people, its types good and bad, with unusual insight and ruthlessly exposes some of the more obnoxious aspects of life during the American occupation. The book also cuttily delineates certain types of Australians - particularly that section of the snobbocracy who batten and fatten on wartime contingencies ... I should say that the book will annoy a lot of people and please a lot more who will recognise in its candid depictions; a genuine, true-to-life picture. [4.]

The critic went on to praise characterisation, and the story-telling device of a week in the lives of the characters devolving around the beauty salon of a grand hotel, and particularly the scope and the realisation of the city of Sydney on its pages. He concluded:

I found the novel completely absorbing, despite its length ... its story real and natural and powerful; its characterisation, dialogue and descriptive passages vital and lively. [ibid]

After her August 18 and 21 meetings with Penton came another long silence from Consolidated Press. She wrote to Florence James in October 1947 that she had repeated her American
accent 'espionage' telephone trick:

I've reached the stage of complete resignation so ...
... I rang the secretary and said in a phoney Yank
accent that I was the girl from the US Information
Library just leaving on the clipper and could she
tell if the result had come out the two months I'd
been in Central Australia. So the secretary swore
me to deepest confidence and said she would let me
in on a deadly secret if I swore etc Swore, and
here's the story: the judges have chosen the prize,
but the probability of announcing the results and
giving publicity etc has been held up because the
script had to be revised because it was far too long
and there are all kinds of questions about
censorship to be settled before they could do
anything. The story, you will be interested to
know, is set in a Sydney hotel and all takes place
in one week! The secretary had read the manuscript
and thought it was super - mind you there are all
kinds of things in it she never knew happened ..
this secretary is the middle aged one, Miss Gilburt.

{David McNicoll notes that Mabel Gilburt was 'No. 2.
secretary' to Frank Packer [3.p.277]}

Dymphna Cusack relates that 'Mabs' Gilburt gave her the entire
plot outline and authorship specifications of 'Spinner' and
promised to send her the announcements and the book to the
USA. Cusack had to give an American address - so she gave the
only one she knew, Lydia Lo Schiavo's! On October 27 she
wrote to Florence James of the third meeting with Brian Penton
in which he did his amazing volte face and promised her the
'infallible critic' as a rewrite guide in order to prepare for
publication (see Chapter 1.p.20).

On November 3, 1947 Dymphna Cusack wrote to Florence James
exhorting her to get on with the 'Dorothy McFarland'
[eventually Helen - see Appendix II:p.xii] sub-plot, which
they had been working on 'par avion' in anticipation of
needing to rectify the lop-sided presentation of the squattocracy. In her November 10, '47 letter to London she had seen the "infallible critic", Stewart Howard, and was to spend the following weekend at his house at Church Point for discussion of revisions. A blow-by-blow account of the weekend follows. She had enjoyed herself and found Howard, and his wife Marie in particular, good company. (Cusack told James that Marie Howard had told her that she believed Brian Penton's treatment of her was 'pure sadism' and 'she asked me point blank if I had ever knocked him back' [ibid]). Stewart Howard had placated Cusack's fears by insisting that they concentrate on revisions and cuts for irrelevancies and obscenities, and all to be done as soon as possible. The squattocracy clan, the McFarland-Worths, were to become simply the McFarlands; Mary Parker's abortion story would virtually go - to be replaced by the Dorothy/Helen sub-plot; Mrs Dalgetty's story to be drastically cut; Monnie also to be cut severely and "the french letter bits must come out" [6.]. A comparison between the originally published text of 1951 and Florence James' edit-back to the unabridged in 1984 - (published finally by Angus & Robertson in 1988: was it ever thus with a 'Spinner manuscript!') - reveals that Howard's way indeed was followed, except that Dymphna Cusack had held out for Monnie's full sad tale. [see Appendix III] It was especially with Deb's story and the delicacies of the older rich man getting a serviceman's young wife, that Howard reshaped the actual elements of the narrative [ibid]. Zelie McLeod, who was close to Con Press's strategic management thinking because of her close association with Penton, but
also in her own role as a senior features' writer, believes that after the *Sydney Morning Herald* "retaliated" with their competition and "scooped the pool" of manuscripts, thus "taking the shine off Penton's initiative", many at the *Daily Telegraph* believed they were not only embarrassed, but beaten [6.]. McLeod also believes that Stewart Howard "seized victory from the jaws of disaster." [ibid] His effect on the manuscript is certainly attested to in Dymphna Cusack's correspondence with Florence James, and this is validated in a cross-textual comparison 1951-1988 [see Appendix III]. However, 'buying time' has proved to be the public relations industry's best tool in issues' management. And Dymphna Cusack still smelled a rat. She wrote to Phyllis Kayberry on November 16, 1947:

*But I still refuse to believe or even hope; with a capricious b_____ like Penton one never knows! One hopeful point is that he has read the first draft twice and the second draft twice and the chief critic has read it three times so it must have something going for it. [7.]*

She vacillated between optimism and despair as she worked furiously in friends' flats in Sydney and in the Blue Mountains, accomplishing on her own the mammoth reshaping according-to-Howard, the third draft (second revision) of *Come In Spinner*. In a letter dated November 23, 1947 to Florence James, she outlines the word cuts day-by-manuscript-day and finally comes to grips with the 'tub thumping' content, that is, the more Leftist commentary on capitalism and the evils of war. Cusack wrote:

*I agree with the judges when I read it over, that it was very naive compared with the general*
sophistication of the book, so I decided to ask Norman Freehill his opinion so that I wasn’t merely being weak-minded. Remember how I had been irritated by similar verbiage in My Career Goes Bung? Norman says it definitely weakens the book. I said ‘why?’ He said for the same reasons that the director (sic) meeting weakened it. It is obvious propaganda, and it is explicit in all the situations. ... He is all for taking out all the obvious tub thumping and making the same point obliquely in a comment or a wise-crack. [8.]

The ‘director meeting’ refers to the co-author’s sub-plot and personal lobby which was pro-community hotels, [see Appendix II, p.v. Allstone,] and against the grog racketeering and oligopolistic schemes to manipulate the post-War liquor trade. [see Appendix II, p.xviii Veale, and Appendix I:12,13,14,15,16 - enclosures, articles from the 1946 Daily Telegraph]. In Florence James' 'unabridged' 1988 Angus & Robertson edition this is all re-placed, and one anti-War tub thump for good measure; Kim Scott gets to deliver his diatribe against the exploitation of war after he and Guinea watch the Eight Hour Day March pass by [see Appendix III. Monday VI.p.xxx).

Exhausted by the completion of the task Dymphna Cusack wrote to Florence James:

As I read through the whole manuscript I found, in spite of us, that the real conflict lies in Deb's story and she is the main character, not Guinea. [9.]

Florence James' Dorothy/Helen McFarland sub-story finally arrived from England on December 29, 1947. A little more 'knitting' and Dymphna Cusack had accomplished the incredible re-drafting task in under two months, ready to table it at Con Press in the New Year, and ready to give Howard and Penton the ultimatum. It was submitted in January 1948, with the following summary covernote to E.W. MacAlpine:
Approximately 40,000 words of the second draft (i.e. that criticised by Mr Howard) have been cut.

Roughly 15,000 words have been added. This new material is made up of:

a) additions to Deb and Jack’s story and new climax, ending story with Deb’s final decision.

b) extension of Dorothy McFarland’s part in the book, giving a glimpse of serious hard-working wealthy group with a sense of social responsibility. This balances D’Arcy-Twyning set and also shows Angus as a departure from his own tradition.

c) brief additions giving a definite conclusion to Claire’s story.

Monnie Malone’s story has been reduced by two thirds. Brothel scenes and references have been omitted except on occasion of Vice Squad raid. I think that now she is reduced to her place, simply as Guinea’s younger sister whose tragedy brings about the solution to her sister’s problems.

Dan D’Arcy-Twyning has been made member on the Hotel SP board; his honesty makes him a good front.

As far as possible the script has been cleansed of all censorable matter... [9.]

Meanwhile Florence James had been in contact with Consolidated Press’s London manager Mr F.F. Hawksworth, and had discovered Shakespeare Head’s embarrassment over the UK trade regulations which prevented Australian-published books being imported into London. Four Winds and A Family had fallen victim to this protectionist Westminster policy. Florence James imparted an interesting and crucial piece of information:

He is trying to get the original manuscript here for English editions. [10.]

James had also discovered that Hawksworth was unaware of the Daily Telegraph novel competition and of the "widespread publishing commitments for the winner." [ibid]. James had meanwhile given the second-draft manuscript to an English friend Joan de Fraigne, for her English view and feedback. She
passed this on, verbatim, to Dymphna Cusack:

"Frankly I just don't know where I am or what I think. These people are all so foreign to me that it is with an effort that I remember they're all Anglo-Saxon too. Of course a lot of it was puzzling because of the colloquialisms. I was baffled a long time, for instance, by 'working back' for overtime, and the Manpower - I took that to be a nick-name ... The speech is almost too close to life in that to my English ears it has the effect, after a time, of a drum beaten too close to me.

... Incidentally I was astounded at the pride the society people showed in any link, however remote, between themselves and Britain. [10.]

Joan de Fraine became another who had a hand in the making.

Florence James observed to Dymphna Cusack, after quoting her the above appraisal:

I think the criticism so far is valuable. We may have easily overdone our medium, as dialects can be overdone until it baffles and maddens the reader instead of giving the true flavour of the speech.

... I think this should be borne in mind when we come to the proofs, if ever. [ibid]

In this process of virtual 'market research' Florence James intended also to forward the manuscript to Christina Stead and her American husband, to vet or validate the Americanisms in the text:

Christina and Bill are back at Montreaux in Switzerland and will be over in London in the late spring, which is very exciting, and they want to read 'Spinner, and so I'm sending it over with requests for the most brutal comments they care to make as soon as I get it back from Joan. [ibid]

On March 8, 1948 Dymphna Cusack wrote to Florence James that she had delivered her ultimatum to Brian Penton, but obliquely, via Stewart Howard. She added:

Feel this will go back to BP and was the best plan. ..I'd heard the directors were overriding BP's judgement and he was having a hell of a time. [11.]
Presumably this intelligence had come from Marie Howard who continued to talk somewhat in confidence with Dymphna Cusack.

By mid April 1948, with the 'Spinner' manuscript inside the Con Press limbo, Dymphna Cusack was into her research for Say No To Death. On May 5, in London, Florence James received a telegram from Kay and Barry Keen, the tragic couple whose story inspired Say No To Death: "SPINNER IS A WINNER." On May 16 Dymphna Cusack wrote to James the usual lengthy narrative of the past weeks' events:

Appointment for 5.00 p.m. Tuesday 4th May with BP... on principle I arrived at 10 past 5 as he always keeps me waiting 10 minutes, so he saw me at 5.20 p.m. Most affable! "You know of course you have won the prize" he said. Wasn't going to give Stewart Howard away so I just raised my eyebrows. "Splendid piece of work" he looked at the 'trouser press' version [The original draft first submitted in 10/46] He looked at it lovingly. I looked at it cautiously and inquired whether I could proceed to rejoice or whether there was a catch in it somewhere. He looked most pained and said "Certainly not." then handed me a list of suggested cuts and said would I get onto it at once so they could start 'setting' because they wanted to send the galleys to London and the US as soon as they were run off. "I'm sure we will get a film contract," he effused. "Who will get a film contract?" I asked. "Oh I mean you," he assured me. "Only I have been over the damn thing so often that I feel it's mine." We parted amiably, me with the MS and he handed me a couple of sheets of a typed report from the last reader. [12.]

That evening she shared the celebration with Kay and Barry Keen, aware of the imminence of Kay's death. She related how for the next three days she had to read Kay the reader's report day and night until, after one last flare of life, Kay's pulse failed. She died on May 8. Only her feverish concentration on the revisions kept Dymphna Cusack going through this grief.
Florence James' divorce was proceeding in London; meanwhile in Sydney the *Daily Telegraph* judges' decision was proceeding to contract stage—with Marie Byles advising Dymphna Cusack. On June 30, 1948 [13.] Cusack wrote to James requesting that she send a letter to the Managing Director of Con Press giving Cusack authority to conclude all contracts and receive all monies in her name. The first offer was for 10% of the first 5,000 and 12.5% thereafter—and 60% of film rights. Florence James wrote to Dymphna Cusack on July 14 [14.] that she had requested help from the Society of Authors which they promptly agreed to give, even before her application for membership was passed. The Society requested that she send them all correspondence with the *Daily Telegraph*, in particular any letters sent with the submission of the manuscript. Florence James sent them the Con Press leaflet which she still had, with the advice that all subsequent communication had been verbal. (However, James did state to Cusack that she remembered a note they had appended to the 'trouser press' first draft which they had submitted, indicating their willingness to edit for obscenities etc. [ibid]). The Society prepared Florence James' authority for Cusack and late in August that year Dymphna Cusack wrote:

> The letter from the Society of Authors was a great weapon, though they only confirmed what cousins here told me. Marie (Byles) has been magnificent. Congratulate her on her splendid handling of the business. She hasn't missed a point in the *Daily Telegraph* and still all is well. The copies of the manuscripts left for England [Third Draft (2nd Revision) plus the May cuts] and the USA on August 20. In the USA Paul Reynolds is the agent with whom the *Daily Telegraph* are dealing. The intention was to publish in London and import here ... Posted over a copy of the *Sydney Morning Herald* story of the Prizewinners: Dal Stivens and Dora Birtles were
runners up in the Daily Telegraph but they took theirs out and entered the SMH. [15.]

On August 20, 1948 Dymphna Cusack signed the contract on behalf of Florence James and herself. The final deal was 10% of the first 5,000 and 12.5% thereafter, applying only to sales within the British Empire, 75% of the nett proceeds to other countries, and 75% of nett proceeds of any licence for magazine or newspaper serialisation, or for film, television, radio broadcasting etc [16.].

Florence James wrote on September 2, 1948 of another encounter with Hawksworth:

*He has read the manuscript with great care. I could see from the details we discussed as well as his assurances. He has had a man and a woman reader deal with it with the same care and a third reader who still has the job to do... Consolidated are doing their business in their well-known cheerful, unbusiness-like fashion, i.e. they send in the manuscripts without accompanying instructions. He doesn't know about the size of the edition, whether the idea is that he should print it here or what. Hence his urgent request that everything between us should be considered off the record. [17.]*

She then detailed Hawksworth's readers' suggested changes - trimming off flashbacks (Deb, Val), Elvira ("much of her witty sayings not in good taste") and (irony of ironies) Dorothy's sub-plot, shortening the two-up game, the need to know the fate of Grace Smedley, and the questioning of a male-sounding name for the author when it was obviously written by a woman. However, it was the marketing appraisal which was the clincher:

*Finally, the most important point is will it sell? Despite the fact of its local background I think one could say that the whole story was cosmopolitan and you could transplant the Hotel Pacific (sic) to*
Florence James wrote optimistically, and noted that it only meant 10,000 words cutting, and agreed that even Elvira's "blue remarks are far too dangerous when we're on the trail of the book-of-the-month target." [ibid].

In October 1948 Dymphna Cusack wrote that she'd been asked to write a piece for the University of Minnesota [C. Hartley Grattan?] on "The Yanks Came" - an Australian view of the American invasion as it affected the change in Australia's attitudes to the US, and the residual strands of influence. (She confided that her flat-mate expected an atomic bomb in the mail any day as a consequence). Dymphna Cusack then recreated, with typical satirical commentary, her most recent visit to Con Press:

The perennial brawl with the Daily Telegraph. Do hope you've kept all my letters on it, it will make another book one day. Note from Mr Inglis, so I go in at the appointed time, go in the Castlereagh Street lift and meet the liftman. An old buddy from the days when I frequented the Daily Telegraph's political room. Have a little chat and tell him I'm seeing Inglis. [Tony Inglis, Con Press executive and confidante of David McNicoll.] No Inglis. Secretary very apologetic. Me waiting on bench in ante-room fuming. This man beckons me from a door. I sneak out. "Inglis is on the third floor with Packer and Colonel Travers talking about you." [Colonel Jack Travers had been a trusted associate of FP's father, and he continued in a managerial capacity with the son. "He was a ... competent industrial negotiator." [3.p.284.] I sneak back, secretary emerges. Awfully sorry I can't find Mr Inglis anywhere but Mr Martin who has recently been
to London thinks he can fix me up. I go into Mr Martin who is round of face and eye. Regrets Mr Inglis, whereupon I say "Oh if you want him he's on the third floor with Mr Packer and Colonel Travers." Swoon of secretary, blanching of Martin, am I a clairvoyant? Girl rushes out and says she'll try to get him, whereupon Martin plunges in and tells me reports of New York agents. Has a publisher nibbling but thinks manuscript should be cut by 50,000. As I know this is Daily Telegraph scheme all along I say nothing. Martin launches in confidently and says: "You see, here are prospective prices for publishing as it stands. 193,000 words would be very expensive; if you cut we could produce a book much more cheaply and you would make more out of it." "And you," says I. Martin looks pained. Enter Inglis at the double, full of apologies. I realise he's being sent by the heads to persuade me to cut. [18.]

So the man whose skill in handling the PKIU and the AJA and other major areas of industrial dispute had been brought in by - Penton? Packer? Col. Travers? ... on Howard's advice? - to deal with the five-foot nothing of Dymphna Cusack. She was given the US agent's praise and his advice on the cut, to which she fed Tony Inglis back Martin's intelligence, and Inglis replied:

"Ellen you are a shrewd business woman." To which I replied that I regarded that as defamatory. And they started to pressure. We will all make more on a smaller book. [ibid]

The debate lasted an hour and she maintained her stand. Inglis 'hissed' "You're a hard woman!" at her departing form. Penton then followed up the pressure a day or two later, stating he'd been sent 'from up top' to do the cuts with her. She wouldn't move. Penton stated: "You're the toughest woman I've ever met." [ibid]. Number two secretary Mabs Gilburt told her, confidentially, that the hierarchy at Con Press were furious at being stonewalled by "just a couple of dames." Dymphna Cusack was obviously revelling in the melodramatics of
A heroine in one of her own pro-feminist anti-capitalist plots. Later in this epic epistle Dymphna Cusack alluded to Hawksworth's reader's report, and exposed her games as she used the intelligence this gave her about their intended publishing strategies. "I think they're so set on a cheaper book they will stop at nothing," she railed. "However with the English opinion to back us up I shall simply refuse to do any cutting except that suggested by Hawksworth." [ibid]. They were treading on thin ice in their playing off of Hawksworth versus head office; the economics of publishing in Australia post-War were prohibitive - a small local market and with trade restrictions preventing any export to the limited congenial markets, that is the English-speaking Empire. Penton and Packer's perforated tear-outs had been a realistic stop-gap solution, and had sold papers. The strategy of publishing in the UK and importing into Australia had economic and paper supply logistics. (Australian Newsprint Mills had not come into production until 1941 [19.p.159] and local production did not catch up with the international wartime scarcity for decades.) But Dymphna Cusack had no sympathy for the economic imperatives of supply and demand. She decided, however, to have the proposed new-cutting conversation with Penton -

*to see whether it is only my basely suspicious mind that thinks that Packer and Co want to cut all the SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE out.* [18.]

The result must have confirmed her worst fears, for on October 30, 1948 she actually cabled Florence James in London:

*Rejected further 50,000 cut. Carefully sound Hawksworth London. Reactions immediately ... Nell.* [20.]
On November 1, 1948 an untypically tipsy Dymphna Cusack wrote
to Florence James:

Today has been highlighted by one - an eclipse of
the sun, two - a bottle of beer for dinner, and
three - a letter from Mr Inglis enclosing a letter
from Hawksworth stating that his views coincide with
the views of the American agent and we agree
entirely!
I rang him and said that I was most impressed with
the literary perspicacity of the London literary
agent who is of a very different intellectual
calibre from the New York man, who merely makes a
blanket request for a 50,000 cut; he gives no
suggestions. While I wouldn't cut a line for the
New York reasons, I am quite willing to co-operate
with the London man (incoherence of this is due to
two above.). I graciously agreed that we should co­
operate with him but said there was no need to put
the manuscript in the hands of a "competent London
writer" as you were there and could do the cutting
in consultation with the London agent. I would
write to you immediately and tell you to get in
touch with the London agent if he would give me the
address. So we go through the farce of taking down
the address of Hawksworth and saying I'll write
immediately and he said he'll write to Hawksworth to
expect you to contact him in the next week. So now
it's on. The manuscript is to be published in
London and exported here; simultaneously in New
York. I shall leave decision on cuts and
alterations to you and Hawksworth. [21.]

Just who was manipulating whom by now is amusing conjecture.
Surely the media barons could not have had such poor inter­
office communication that Sydney had not caught up on the fact
that Florence James had been seeing their London man,
Hawksworth, since February - and it was now November. Or had
Hawksworth kept his "oyster" vows with James in the face of
his employer? Or were the Con Press executives playing Cusack
against James? Cusack was stonewalling, James seemed
tractable to Hawksworth ... better to get the cuts done with
her.

Dymphna Cusack had lost an aunt and uncle, a best friend and
her mother in a few short months, and the November 1 epistle
rings slightly hysterical as she puts the manuscript over into
the Hawksworth-James court:

Don't be bullied into cutting Deb to the bone. But
after all I suppose that they can see more clearly
than we and Hawksworth seems such a sensible bloke.
Elvira: censorship here growing. We don't want to
be cut on important things. I'll finish up for now
... Gladys just finished calling me a drunken
screwball. Go ahead and get the damn thing out.
Don't forget you must find a place for the crack in
the bar scene between Blue and Lofty. "If ever the
South Pacific comes up against the law, the law will
move over to make room for it." [see CIS/U.p.491]
Keep cuts to 10,000 words if you can. My blessing
on you both and tell Hawksworth I was so discreet
that Inglis had to spell his name to me. Love from
Gladys who is also alcohol affected. Nell. [ibid]

Later in November '48 Florence James wrote that she saw the
sense in Hawksworth's suggestions, and was ready to wield a
delicate scalpel. She was preparing to work with his,
Cusack's and her own notes beside her, but she needed the
manuscript - (which is the post-Stewart Howard third draft.).
Only the second draft was in James' possession at that time.
She expressed her confidence in Hawksworth, as he'd been a
technical man in the book trade before rising to publishing
eminence, so the realities of type and paper were within his
ken. Her trust appears to have been complete:

    I think the extreme care in getting readers and
    their opinions is due to his anxiety to use a
    promising manuscript up to the very hilt for his own
    sake as well as ours. [22.]

On December 2, Florence James received from Hawksworth the
points he had brought up with MacAlpine. [23.] - and they
were exactly as he had outlined to her from the reader reports
nearly three months past in September. On December 13
confusion again reigned supreme, as Hawksworth rang James
saying he'd received a cable from Sydney asking if James had completed the 'Spinner' alterations. On December 15 he rang to inform her that he had never received the letter which Inglis told Dymphna Cusack he would write on November 1, and when it was later retrieved from the Fleet Street filing system it demanded 40,000 words cut [24.]. It was back to square one! Florence James wrote to Dymphna Cusack on December 15, and complained:

I warned Hawksworth about this a month ago ... I told him he could cable that I'd been holding myself available to do the work for the last month, ever since your letter came after his report had been received. I'd rung him up and reminded him that he'd not let me have the manuscript to read through till last week, in spite of me telling him that the children broke up on the 17th and we should all be out of London till after the New Year. He's so subservient to Sydney, Nell, that I don't trust him if at any time our interests conflict with his.[25.]

She recounted how she then pressed him for indications of imprint, time-lines for galleys and the like and concluded:

My opinion is that he is going to get it to galley stage and hawk it around. [ibid]

She at least now had the third draft. Her comments are interesting:

I miss a lot of favourite passages from the current version. I was surprised how detailed my memory was with the bits left out. You have really done a damn good job on it. I'm conscious now of reading with the detached eye of eighteen months' absence. I feel the new end is absolutely right. Mr Hawksworth's wife left him in much the same circumstances as Deb left Jack, he confided, and he congratulated us on our courage to give a real book a real ending instead of a happy ending. [25.]

Perhaps 'Spinner' has always been its own worst enemy because of its cinematographic sweep across all levels of society and male-female emotional combinations: there's something in
there for everyone to identify with. Long before television ‘soaps’ were invented 'Spinner', and other books of the social-realist genre had given readers vicarious expression of their own fears, foibles and fantasies. Hawksworth has been revealed as yet another who had found an emotional peg of his own, in the text, on which to hang his involvement - and, peculiarly, most of the power brokers in 'Spinner' s pre-publication saga were men, and most took up very emotional stands for or against its publication. At the end of 1948 the making of 'Spinner' was taking yet another turn.

Early in 1949 Dymphna Cusack wrote to Florence James regarding her perceptions of the Con Press agenda, and the ethics of the players:

Hawksworth is lying to MacAlpine. MacAlpine is lying to Hawksworth - so everybody is! [26.]

She confided that:

In a private session with Stewart Howard ... he reveals that they are trying to emasculate it to leave only the sensational and remove the social criticism. That we will not do! [ibid]

Florence James meanwhile was engaged in a four-week stint of ten hours a day cut-and-pasting, editing, unifying style. On January 21, 1949 she informed Dymphna Cusack:-

Hawksworth has considerable faith in me since I agreed enthusiastically to breaking up Deb's flashbacks. Flashbacks that length are really impossible once the action has begun to get exciting. [27.]

She continued to prod Hawksworth on publishing specifics and related:

I showed him the printed notice of the competition with 100,000 guaranteed minimum sale and he was horrified. Immediately he said - 'That's Giles'
handywork, I’ll swear. Just the sort of figures he used to quote in his letters - but whoever let it appear in print?" Me (firm but sweet): 'The Society of Authors found the silly slip quite interesting.'

... Questioned about publishers' imprint. It seems it's going to be John Langdon here and Shakespeare Head in Australia. Look of horror from me. [ibid]

James outlined an idea of Joan de Fraine's to incorporate an 'amusing and yet sufficiently informative' map of Sydney in the end papers, to help non-Australian readers [an idea which is still being mooted]. A 'foreword' was suggested by Hawksworth, and a dedication to Miles Franklin. The 'nom de plume' was also concerning Hawksworth - who opted for "James Cusack" - rather than two female names. Dymphna Cusack wrote back in February, not keen on the idea of a 'letter of dedication', and agreed to them sticking to both names appearing in co-authorship acknowledgment - "it would be different if we intended to go on with a writing combination" [28.]. Dymphna Cusack had been researching the appropriate penalty to 'round off' Grace Smedley following Hawksworth's suggestion. She includes in this letter her suggested treatment, which indeed became the final text: [see CIS/U.p.701]

Grace is re-introduced by Kim saying: "Hold on, take a dekko at this! 'Keeper of disorderly house gets six months. Grace Louisa Smedley 42, was given the maximum sentence of 6 months hard labour at the women's penitentiary, Long Bay at Central Police Court today for keeping a disorderly house. The prosecuting sergeant pointed out that it was Smedley's first offence. The magistrate said there were certain features of the case which impelled him to give the maximum sentence.' Guinea looked up in disgust. "Wouldn't it!" [ibid]

Florence James had returned the manuscript, [4th Draft, 3rd Revision], edited and cut according to Hawksworth's
suggestions, on February 15, 1949. She detailed the changes to Dymphna Cusack on February 25, stating:

This revision has taken me just over four weeks solid work, sometimes 10 and 12 hours a day. I would never have believed what was involved in advance. But once I started I got completely carried away and couldn't even be pried loose on the weekends. The children were completely disgusted... And I like the result! [29.]

Another Hawksworth initiative crept into the evolving final text at this stage:

Hawksworth raised the question of the chapter headings. He thinks they are very uneven in quality - agreed... The idea is simply to have major sections under the heading of their appropriate day, an these to be split up into sections and sub­sections as we have done in the MS. [ibid]

She notes the Christmas '48 Meanjin reference to the Daily Telegraph prize and Clem Christesen's veiled threat - "a sinister par":

Unless a prior announcement is made, Meanjin will have to consider publishing the names of the prizewinners and the title of their novel in the Autumn issue. [ibid]

James exhorts Dymphna Cusack to get it quelled; apart from her divorce settlement concerns, she believed that the publicity had been "so badly bungled up to date the less said about it the better." [ibid]

Florence James kept the pressure on. On March 3 she rang Hawksworth and "inquired whether I had missed his funeral notice in the papers (in my most honeyed voice)" [30.] to be told, pleasantly, but 'dignified', that he had been assiduously reading the revised draft setting aside a daily amount of time. In early May she wrote, in explosive irritation, that Hawksworth had in fact undertaken a complete
... it's a bloody nuisance. He has gone through the MS changing "he'd" into "he would", "bloke" into "chap"; I see as I turn the pages - "Guinea awoke" becomes "Guinea awakened". Blast him! "They went up the steep pinch into Macquarie Street ..." becomes "up the steep incline" - it's all going back as it was and no nonsense! He's got no idea of literary style and no feeling for words except that they are unfamiliar and this is going to be published in England! Oh hell! I don't mind altering a few idioms like "put your frame down beside me," which completely boxed and worried him. That can easily be "come on lie down here beside me" [see CIS/U.p.706] But when he starts taking out 'ands' because there are more than one in a sentence and puts in commas so that it reads like an inventory!!

... It will take a week or so to fix up the MS finally and its going to be final, as I put it in - and no nonsense! [31.]

It took James till May 13 to undo the damage and restore the tone and atmosphere to the text which Hawksworth had mutilated in the most painstakingly systematized alteration of minutiae. She returned the manuscript [4th Revision] to Hawksworth with the comment:

A number of alterations made to the manuscript have falsified the idiom making it either stilted or partly British and therefore unaccountable, in literary terms, as Australian dialogue. I've altered a few Australian idioms which you found obscure ... otherwise I have been obliged, with regret for the waste of time involved on both your and my account, to restore the original idiom. [32.]

In the same hasty letter to Dymphna Cusack she advised that:

Chris [Christina Stead] has been a brick about the Yank's dialogue which was all to glory! It was larded with Australian expressions which they don't use and had an Australian turn of thought and phrase quite alien. The dialogue now stands expressing the things we intended it to... [ibid]

However - meanwhile back in Park Street the Consolidated Press
'Gang' were relentless in their cut-or-else-not-publish pressure on Dymphna Cusack. On May 5, 1945 had come her final dust-up with MacAlpine. On the way up to his office she had called in on Penton, to be threatened with "You'll have to cut this book" [33.]. She had told him what they could do with their threats. She wrote to Florence James that the scene with MacAlpine was "A hell of a row", and that she'd taunted - "What do you really want, a novelette?" [ibid]

I banged the desk in best Daily Telegraph executive manner. Not another word [cut] and when I see what extra Hawksworth has cut I shall probably put it back. Then, says MacAlpine, "We can't publish". Then, says I "Will you release it from our contract. If it is such a pain in the neck to you let us have the trouble and you can have the prestige, but let me get out of it."

... we reached the point that I would confer with Hawksworth and, if we couldn't agree on major cuts, they would release it.

Rightly or wrongly, Norman and several others think they don't want to publish at all for political reasons and are just stringing us along...

... I think we shall have to find a publisher ourselves. You must get the MS as soon as I arrive and have copies made. Have you a copy of the original second draft... I leave on the 19th. [33.]

Cusack finally set sail for London on the Georgic on May 19, 1949 - her luggage heavier by 4 manuscripts. Florence James was attempting to extricate the now un-mutilated 'Spinner' manuscript from Hawksworth over the period of Dymphna Cusack's voyage; she was due to arrive in the UK on June 24, 1949. Significantly, Hawksworth had now begun exerting the pressure on Florence James for cutting in order to serialise. She held a stalling operation, politely requesting details on paper.

I realise that there must be rather more detail than the bare request for permission to cut to 100,000 words for publication in two 50,000 word sections, and I should be glad if you would drop me a note
with the full terms of their proposal. [34.]

She continued to memo Hawksworth, but with no manuscript forthcoming. He maintained it was with another reader for evaluation, one who had been held back by illness. Finally, on July 12, 1949, Hawksworth communicated:

Regarding the MS of *Come In Spinner*, I have a report which frankly, is not very impressive, and I am now waiting for the MS to be returned. I have already sent out an urgent SOS for this and hope to have it back in a day or so. I am sorry about this delay but I can assure you that it is not of my making, as I know that our Mr MacAlpine is only too anxious to get the matter cleared up. [35.]

Fuses were shortening in Highgate West Hill. Dymphna Cusack had been in London nearly a month when Hawksworth finally forwarded this new reader's report on July 20, 1949, with an addition of what was, after all, always the bottom line from the Consolidated Press 'Gang':

*I should like to mention that, as the MS stands at the moment excluding the readers' whims regarding sex, animalism etc, the consensus of opinion is that it is far too long, and must be cut to at least 100,000 words.*

*I will not enlarge upon this point until we meet in the near future.* [36.]

On July 22 he advised that the manuscript had been posted, it arrived the next day. A week later James and Cusack met with Hawksworth (July 28th) to discover that he had been authorised by head office in Sydney to produce an edition of 5,000 only. They went straight to the Society of Authors. The following extract is from their brief to the British Society of Authors and their own solicitor, Marie Byles, detailing the meeting on July 28, 1949:

*Mr Hawksworth said that he thought it important that the book should not be priced higher than 10/6d, and that he could not bring it out at this price unless the manuscript was cut to 100,000 words. He agreed*
it couldn't be cut by 50,000 words and remain the same book, but said he had no means of solving the dilemma as he had to take his instructions from Sydney. We said we were not prepared to mutilate the book so that Consolidated Press could play safe with a small edition, and referred him to the leaflet guaranteeing a minimum sale of 100,000 copies. It was obvious he had no authority to do anything but try to get us to cut, so we asked to be released from our contract and Mr Hawksworth suggested that we write a letter confirming the interview and making this request which he would pass on to Sydney.

Before Miss Cusack left Sydney last May she had had an interview with the managing editor of ACP (MacAlpine) and the manager of Shakespeare Head Press, both of whom tried to make her agree to cut to 100,000 for economic reasons and without regard to literary quality. She refused, and suggested that they release us to find our own publishers, citing the case of the Harp In The South and other prizewinners in the SMH novel competition, which also closed in October 1946 and which had been placed with independent publishers. They refused, on the grounds that they were not prepared to forego the profits - which is, in view of the history of our children's book and this manuscript to date, almost funny.

It's Miss Cusack's and my opinion that Shakespeare Head is not a serious publishing house but a poor sister of the three big papers owned by Consolidated Press in Sydney, which is kept for prestige purposes. Other authors have had the same unsatisfactory experience with them as we have with our children's book i.e. poor book production, bad distribution and broken contracts. In fact our solicitor wrote to me privately when the contract for Come In Spinner was signed and said "to judge from the unsatisfactory accounts from Four Winds, I think, you had better take the prize and not bank too much of the rest."

This year's experience would seem to bear this out and we are now anxious to place the manuscript ourselves. [37.]

The Society of Authors advised them on August 16 that their contract allowed the publishers two years within which to publish - and that would expire on August 20, 1950 - one year hence. Florence James did all that she could do in the circumstances, and wrote to Hawksworth requesting their voluntary release of the manuscript [38.]. His reply was
swift (next day), polite and businesslike:

*Perhaps you would let me know when you could call and see me, and in the mean time I will arrange a draft Deed of Release for your perusal. We can run through it together and then copies can be drawn up for execution.* [39.]

One can almost hear the sighs of relief from the executives of the Consolidated Press 'Gang'! Florence James wrote in jubilation to the British Society of Authors on September 7, 1949:

*Quite unexpectedly ACP and Shakespeare Head Press have acceded to our request for a release for us to sign. Would you kindly read it and advise me as to whether it is in order. Dymphna would like to join the Society.* [40.]

The Society were prompt. On September 8 they advised:

*We have examined the Deed of Release and there is no reason why you and Miss Cusack should not put your signatures to it.* [41.]

On October 20, 1949 James returned the signed Deed to Hawksworth (officially signed on October 18, 1949) with the advice that the British Society of Authors commented that:

*The absence of a stamp on a document of this sort would involve the payment of a fine if it had at any time to be produced in court.* [42.]

Hawksworth returned the Deed correctly stamped on October 27, and advised that Paul Reynolds Literary Agency in the USA had returned the (2nd Revision) manuscript from the United States [43.].

Dymphna Cusack and Florence James, the manuscript now in their control found that whilst Con Press's "costiveness" had been unable to hatch the "moa's egg", a nest was not hard to find. Following a rejection on November 22 or thereabouts from Pearn, Bollinger & Higham Ltd (via an introduction from
William Blake, Christine Stead's husband) on the grounds that David Higham "didn't think there was sufficient English market potential at this date for a Sydney wartime novel" [44.], Dymphna Cusack decided to follow up on Meanjin editor Clem Christesen's suggestion that they try William Heinemann, for whom he was the Australian agent. She wrote and advised him of her move, stating that the manuscript was now "about 165,000 words" [45.]. Arnold Gyde, of Heinemann's, reacted immediately, and wrote to Clem Christesen on December 14, 1949:

> Can you please confirm as quickly as possible whether this novel gained the Sydney Telegraph (sic) One Thousand Pound Prize. We take it that the story was never published in Australia. Is this true? Frere has a feeling that they dared not publish it for fear of police action. Please give us a full, immediate picture. [46.]

Clem replied to Gyde on December 28, 1949, confirming the prize details and his own small role in trying to assist the 'editorial costiveness' of Consolidated Press with his gadfly pars in Meanjin. He gave a character reference, in effect, for Dymphna Cusack and a brief outline of the post-War newspaper circulation battles with the Daily Telegraph and the Sydney Morning Herald "scrambling on the culture wagon" [47.] - and concluded that - "The Daily Telegraph finally got shoved off the wagon, and its face must still be very red" [ibid]. He signed off - "I might add that I have a high regard for Dymphna as a writer and as a person." [ibid].

[Clem Christesen and Meanjin were indeed to suffer later from the same censorial mentality in Australia, but a little later, in the early to mid fifties as the Menzies era, and the Die
Committee for Un-American Activities influence stoked further the "Reds under the beds" anti-leftist sentiment in the population, especially in the Arts funding bodies, such as the Commonwealth Literary Fund.

On December 29, before he could have received his reply, Gyde again wrote to Clem Christesen:

_We have accepted *Come In Spinner* by Dymphna Cusack and Florence James. We had first rate reader's reports on this novel._

... *I had to clear the situation with the Daily Telegraph and I find that it had indeed won the prize, but that, owing to its length and many dubious passages they did not at the time have the financial or moral courage to publish it._

... *If I have not made a news story via Fleet Street's Australian offices, by all means issue this story yourself. I mean, of course -*

"Australian authors' London success: first novel accepted by famous London publisher."

[48.]

The interesting fact to emerge here is that Heinemann's acted very quickly on sighting the manuscript. The *Daily Telegraph* simply confirmed facts - to which Gyde added the observation that they - "did not have ... the moral courage" to publish - and he proceeded expeditiously to secure imprint. Gyde must really have been impressed with the marketability of the product, as well as its literary integrity. In order to resolve the continuing niggle of "libel threats", Dymphna Cusack wrote a solid account of the two-year fray with the Con Press lawyers *et al*, and offered Gyde a creative "defence strategy":

_Much of the action is laid in a hotel. But everything has been done to avoid identification with any hotel. The site is a vacant block of land in Macquarie Street. Three other of Sydney's_
leading hotels - Wentworth, Metropole and Sydney - have foyers. ALL had sections taken over by the Americans. All these and other big hotels like The Carlton were notorious pick-up places.

We suggest two things:

1) That specific mention be made of The Australia Hotel in favourable terms in contrast with the South Pacific e.g. Angus wishes he had booked in the family at The Australia for personal reasons, as well as the fact that it was so much better conducted. Also, when Angus decides to leave the South Pacific, he will stay at The Club only if he cannot get in at The Australia.

2) If submission is considered necessary, it should be to leading Australian counsel of your choice, rather than to the directors of The Australia, who, like the directors of practically all the leading hotels, knowing what happened in each and every one with their cognisance during the American Occupation, might, in their guilty conscience, wrongfully read admitted libel in the mere fact of submission.

In conclusion, it will be evident that we had to view the question of libel much more closely for Australian publication than English or American publication.

We trust that these points may be useful in considering this matter. [49.]

By February 28, 1950 Dymphna Cusack wrote to Clem Christesen that in anticipation of a Book Club choice, Gyde and Frere were hoping for proofs within weeks. (However, some English publishing "costiveness" would inevitably be 'Spinners lot. The final proofs were read by Florence James and Norman Freehill in October, 1950.) Cusack also advised Christesen that -

Mr Thayer Hobson, President of William Morrow, New York, has taken the American rights. He signed up a contract before he'd finished the manuscript lest someone else should get in before him. Both he and Heinemann's seem to think they have a best seller on their hands; let's hope they are right. [50.]
She provided Christesen with a blow-by-blow account of her dealings with the Consolidated Press 'Gang', but made one proviso -

The only member of the Daily Telegraph organisation who behaved well to us was Brian Penton, who was most helpful, and enthusiastic about the book and sympathetic about the delays. [ibid]

It is interesting that long out of the fray, and with perhaps some perspective on the various executive combatants from the Con Press 'Gang' that she singled out Brian Penton for faint praise. Perhaps she concluded, as I do, that Penton also fell victim to the Con Press 'Gang' power-plays in the late 'forties, and that, in boardroom clashes, he probably 'wore' 'Spinner as a stigmata in the face of the Colonel Travers, David McNicoll, E.W. MacAlpine coalition.

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Whilst the "moa's egg" was "in the nest" by early 1950, it was not on-sale until February 21, 1951, with a first edition of 24,000 [51.]. Florence James remembers their excitement as the Heinemann trucks delivered stock to the booksellers of London, the banners proclaiming Come In Spinner and the two authors' names. Pre-sale publicity was well orchestrated in both the UK, and in Australia - the latter by Clem Christesen himself as the Heinemann agent. Dymphna Cusack wrote to Christesen on February 14, 1951:

*Come In Spinner is well launched here and is getting amazingly good reviews - all in the first fortnight which is considered remarkable, as only the really well-known writers manage to be reviewed under 3 to 6 months... we got a brief but enthusiastic notice from Margarita Laski in The Observer before publication. "Tempestuous story of war-time Sydney, quite astonishingly readable." Then Michael Sadleir
regarded as one of the critics, gave us two thirds of his space in the Sunday Times, not only enthusiastic, but showing that he had captured the mood of the book. This week Heinemann's advertisement in The Times Literary Supplement quotes him: "To lose oneself in Come In Spinner is a sterling and moving experience, something of a Manhattan Transfer, something of Alexander Platz—something of suave, raffish luxury of a Grand Hotel—and something plus." Evening Gazette gave us a 24 point heavy italic heading: "One Thousand Pound Prize Novel is an All 'Round Winner." Edward Shanks of The Daily Graphic ends up a good review with "It deserves high marks". Even Lady gave us 6 inches of modified rapture. Altogether we got over a dozen reviews in the first ten days! Now we are to do a discussion with Michael Sadleir for the 'Calling Australia' program over the BBC. It will be broadcast in Australian on March 3, over the National network 1.15 p.m. estimated... we would be grateful if you could give it some publicity. We do want as many of our friends to hear it as possible. Could you ring Vance Palmer—he might mention it in Book News. [52.]

By March 1951 the distributors, Oxford University Press, had run out of stock. The second printing was under way by April 1951. By November the first foreign-language translations had commenced.

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In January 1991 literary agent Tim Curnow, of Curtis-Brown (who handles both Dymphna Cusack's literary estate and Florence James' interests), estimated that one million copies of Come In Spinner have been sold since 1951— and re-affirmed that it has never been out of print in English. In 1990, Angus & Robertson published the unabridged edition in the Classic Imprint Series, and the ABC made a highly successful
TV mini-series, (in terms both of ratings and production values) with Florence James as script consultant.
1. Dymphna Cusack
"Mystery of a Novel Contest." pp. 56-64.
Melbourne University Press.

2. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James
Bream St, Coogee.

3. David McNicholl
Luck's A Fortune.
An Autobiography.

4. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.
Enclosure with letter. Dymphna Cusack to Florence James.
August, 1947.

5. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.

6. INTERVIEW / Zelie McLeod by Marilla North

7. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.

8. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.
"Ann's Flat."

9. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.
Letter accompanying the third Draft of the manuscript.
Dymphna Cusack to E.W. MacAlpine January, 1948.

10. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.
Florence James to Dymphna Cusack. February 3, 1948.

11. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James

12. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James

13. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.
Dymphna Cusack to Florence James. June 30, 1948

14. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.

15. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.
Dymphna Cusack to Florence James. Late August, 1948.

16. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James
Carbon copy of the original Contract made on August 20,
1948 between Ellen Dymphna Cusack and Florence Gertrude
James c/- M.B. Byles and Shakespeare Head Press.

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22. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James. Florence James to Dymphna Cusack. November 1948


49 McDougall St, Kirribilli


35. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.

36. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.

37. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James
Florence James to the British Society of Authors
August 12, 1949.

38. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.
Florence James to F.F. Hawksworth/ACP.
August 21, 1949.

39. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.

40. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.
Florence James to British Society of Authors (BSA).
September 7, 1949.

41. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.
British Society of Authors to Florence James.
September 8, 1949.

42. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.

43. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.

44. CORRESPONDENCE / Florence James.
David Higham / Pearn, Bollinger & Higham.
November 22, 1949.

45. CORRESPONDENCE / Meanjin Archives: Bailleau Library,
Melbourne University.
[Tape transcribed: December 12, 1989].

46. CORRESPONDENCE / Meanjin Archives.
[Tape transcribed: December 12, 1989].

47. CORRESPONDENCE / Meanjin Archives.
[Tape transcribed: December 12, 1949]

48. CORRESPONDENCE / Meanjin Archives.
[Tape transcribed: December 12, 1989].

49. CORRESPONDENCE / Meanjin Archives.
Dymphna Cusack to A Gyde. February 27, 1950.
[Tape transcribed: December 12, 1989].
50. CORRESPONDENCE / Meanjin Archives
[Tape transcribed: December 12, 1989].

51. CORRESPONDENCE / Meanjin Archives.
[Tape transcribed: December 12, 1989].

52. CORRESPONDENCE / Meanjin Archives.
Dymphna Cusack to Clem Christesen. February 14, 1951.
[Tape transcribed: December 12, 1989].
CHAPTER V

THE CRITICAL CONTEXT

The Literary and Social context of Come In Spinner: a social
and cultural perspective on the late 1940s Australian
intellectual environment.
Come In Spinner was Dymphna Cusack and Florence James' post-War project to tell it how it was - in the only palatable form, fiction. The point is made many times in their correspondence and in interviews and reviews. They set out with a gut reaction to what they had respectively witnessed and documented during the Second World War in Sydney and other cities in eastern New South Wales. They had seen corruption, greed, vanity, tragedy, exploitation - and yet beneath that, a strong and compassionate decency in ordinary Australian men and women. Power, capital and class were the factors which separated out the good from the bad, with some middle-ground for those who were indecisive or caught-up in events beyond their control. Cusack and James were chroniclers of the social realities which they had experienced. Their achievement is attested to in sales, in the number of people who chose to read the book, - over a million copies in ten languages - and in the enduring calibre of the story - never out of print in English. In 1990 the ABC won the ratings when they broadcast the four-hour TV mini-series and gained critical acclaim for the production values and script integrity. The Grace Knight-Vince Jones sound track has received its Platinum Record, and, of course, is working to take the video, and hopefully the text, to the next generation of Australia cultural consumers. The newly published Chronicle of the 20th Century [1.] gives 'Spinner a headline on its December, 1951 page: "ARTS: Come In Spinner tells a gritty tale." The copy adjacent to the classic photograph of Dymphna Cusack and Florence James proofing over a dictaphone (the 1951 publicity shot), reads:
Novelist Dymphna Cusack and her collaborator Florence James have set Sydney talking with their lusty novel of the city in wartime, Come In Spinner. The title is from the argot of the two-up schools which flourished amid the bars, brothels and back room clubs of a city dominated by the glamorous presence of American servicemen. The rising and falling fortunes of a group of beauty parlour girls provide a lively story, and the vivid language matches the dangerous atmosphere. [1.p.727]

John Docker places Dymphna Cusack with those writers he terms the 'social realists' [2.p.95], and argues that their works have suffered, as a genre, with the "metaphysical ascendancy" as Leavisite English academics filled positions in Australian Universities, and promulgated their trinity of G.M. Hopkins, Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, belting the bible of The Great Tradition. Brian Matthews looks closer at the genre itself in his article "'A kind of Semi-Sociological Literary Criticism': George Orwell, Kylie Tennant and others" [3.] and he appraises Orwell's review of Kylie Tennant's The Battlers, as

... a kind of semi-sociological criticism. Orwell is easily able to speak well of the book despite its shortcomings, to appreciate its achievements, because he recognises instantly, and approves, the grounds on which the novel must be met: it is documentary, tending towards social realism, contains social criticism, but Tennant mitigates the potential rigidity of all this by casting it in fictional form and submitting it to the methods of fiction: there is not statement and argument but narrative and dialogue; personal emotion and motivation are more closely evoked than would be necessary or possible as a strictly documentary account ... and so on. [3.p.66]

He argues that The Battlers is part of a particular genre which flourished popularly, but was damned critically and academically, in Australia in the 1930's and 1940's. This genre he defines by its creative method -
a documentary base that profoundly shapes and
dictates the nature and direction of the work while
partaking to a greater or lesser degree (depending
on the book) of fictional form and convention. In
each case the author writes very close to the
lineaments of the original experience: in most
cases he or she has deliberately sought to live the
conditions that later became, often with only
minimal imaginative transformation, the stuff of the
book. [3.p.68]

As Dymphna Cusack and Florence James had received the benefit
of the behavioural science methodology taught by Professor
Tasman Lovell at Sydney University in the early '20's, they
would probably add a research technique or two - such as
'participant observation', but certainly Matthews defines
substantially what Cusack would state boldly - 'telling it how
it was, in the only palatable form, fiction.' Matthews seeks
the origins of the Establishment resistance to this genre in
Australia, and finds clues in the Anglophile stance of
colonial romance, and an underlying urge to "suppress or
ignore" this other popular, central tradition, by reviewers,
academics and critics, as part of the 'cultural cringe', which
could see -

... only second class quality in work deeply based
in local conditions and types. They failed to
recognise that this most flourishing form of
Australian writing was a genre in itself, the
provenance of which was beyond Australia's bounds
and beyond the limits of the "Lawson tradition" ...
[3.p.71]

Matthews argues that England was both model and competitive
target [ibid], and that power lay in the hands of those
"seeking to maintain the traditions of English literature"
[ibid], those who gave short shrift to the social realist
popular mainstream. Adrian Mitchell's patronising appraisal
of Miles Franklin in the Leonie Kramer - edited Oxford History
of Australian Literature [4.] is an apposite example, with ironic revelation of its own bias perfectly self-evident:

For... fifty years her novels preached, and sometimes ranted, the same unrelieved passionate nationalism. Like so many of the nationalist school, she was muddled in her thinking but fierce in her loyalties, ardently committed to the distinctively Australian (which meant rural landscape in both its aspects, the idyllic and the defeated: the simple decencies of the bushmen, who also supplied her with examples of absurd and occasionally offensive behaviour) and vituperative about anything servile, anything less than manly, anything that revealed the 'cultural cringe'.

Dymphna Cusack, let alone Come In Spinner, does not warrant an entry in this enshrinement of the [a] canon of Australian literature. Matthews concludes his analysis of the "denied" genre, stating:

We should be taking pleasure in the diversity of our literature rather than being constantly obsessed with the need to establish canons and bestow accolades. [3.p.72]

In his rational plea for "neither superior nor inferior. Just different." [ibid] Matthews doesn't make allowances for the rapid development of censorship and information-control which came to a head in the mid to late 1940's in Australia. Battles like that fought by Dymphna Cusack and Florence James for the integrity of their text, in "telling it how it was", were too hard for many writers of less mission-driven social-reform idealism. The making of history is also the writing of it, and certainly the common consensus as to what constitutes history is very much controlled by the printing of it. I believe that the development of public relations as an 'issues management' and political agenda-setting tool occurred very
rapidly in Australia, and at this time, and with very few initial players, which thus enabled a small consortium of mutually supportive political, business and communications partners and "mates" to effectively manipulate publishing and public opinion in Australian in the 1940’s and 1950’s. Chapter One of this thesis carefully traces the chain of people and events which helped create the mental climate of that era.

Mary Wilson in her 1972 M.A. thesis The Perceptions of the novelist into Australia and Australian Society: 1920 - 1939 [5.] states that:

It is characteristic of novels making direct social comment on the Australian scene that they have lagged somewhat behind the event. [5.p.42]

Her study is a scholarly foray across disciplines, seeking to establish that 'literary evidence is essentially valuable to the social historian' [5.Summary Page]. She is trying to narrow the gap which Docker maintains the Leavisite generations had widened. The work of an American sociologist, Louise Rorabacher is cited by Wilson as useful to her cause-effect examinations. She states that Rorabacher, looking at the conflicts between black Australians and the usurping whites, was convinced that "good fiction is a truer record of human experience than is fact." [5.p.25] Wilson pragmatically examined which novels sold well in her period of study - paying attention to "that reaction of society expressed in the buying and presumably the reading of the novels." [5.p.31] The lag between occurrence, writing and publishing which she rightly perceives in the many social realist, or 'fictional
documentary' texts which she discusses - by authors including Eleanor Dark, Barnard Eldershaw, Miles Franklin, Ion L Idriess, Xavier Herbert, Vance Palmer, and Kylie Tennant - is also partly the result of self-censorship in anticipation (by publishers, readers and reviewers) of what might offend the 'public taste', or outrage the 'public virtue' - the latter being more realistically re-defined as that which may trigger the paranoia of those with double-standards who make publishing decisions or recommendations.

The five-year battle to publish *Come In Spinner* was very much because of this perceived fear of libel and obscenity, and probably very influenced by the known guilts or susceptibilities of the great/rich/powerful. The psychological climate of guilt, denial, repression and persecution reached full flowering in the 1950s, with the witch-hunts for communists and so-called sexual 'deviants'. Manning Clark traces this vein in the Australian character back to the 'planter' mentality of the squatters, and the fears of threatened economic insecurity which were ground into a brutalised working class, grown from convict origins - turning fear into phobia: the fear of the 'coloured' usurper (or the female for that matter) for scarce work, coupled with the anger against the British ruling classes, for dispossession and exile which the convicts were powerless to resist. Those who like Brian Penton's Derek Cabell, subdued humanity to the 'will to power' and conquered landscape, climate and other men, founded family fortunes "and became territorial magnates and lords of the soil" [6.p.18].
class system thus developed in Australia which had quite a
different base from that which existed in Europe, but which,
in many ways, perpetrated greater inequalities of power and
capital and required greater inhumanities in order to ensure
its own continuation.

For women of sensibility writing in this climate, the
alignment of their effort and social conscience was pulled
several ways. Carole Ferrier in her book Gender, Politics and
Fiction: Twentieth Century Australian Women's Novels [7.]
observed that many of the women writers discussed by the
contributors to this collection -

... 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
deply 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, Katherine Susannah
Prichard . . . Kylie Tennant, Dymphna Cusack, and
others. [7.p.7]

There is no doubt that there is a tension in the text of
'Spinner' between the underlying stratum of the authors'
feminism and the populist requirements of romance in the plot.
Kim Scott represents the national 'Ocker' stereotype of a
'good bloke' - "hard fighting males with hearts of gold"
[8.p.47], and Guinea Malone is the perfect foil in her
embodiment of the national image of the wholesome decency of
its young womanhood. The tragedy of Mary Parker's death (the
anti-romance reality of abortion), points to the realist
stance of the writers. It is almost as if they had sugar-
coated the pill with the Guinea-Kim fairytale-romantic ending,
and, with Mary's death as the tragic victim of the inequality of the sexes, they told it with the stark grimness of sordid reality. (Deb and Claire's stories are equally realist and anti-romance in their resolutions). The ambivalence - or is it simply an acceptance of the contradictory nature of human foible in dealing with contemporary social problems? - is also apparent in the way gambling is dealt with in the text. It is almost a double standard: two-up is all right for the working-class but blackjack in casinos for the rich is bad. There is no doubt that the 'get rich quick' gambling predeliction is part of the Australian national self-image: but the authors' line is very much along the class, capital, power axis - and the honest poor just can't afford the casino gambling lifestyle which the 'brutal rich' can.

Miles Franklin, aware of these contradictions and ambivalencies, in her review of Come In Spinner for Meanjin, points to the text's handling of pretentiousness and classism, and to its use of satire as a deflating tool:

> These are the city's brilliant socialites, in newspaper columns and in their own estimation, though not in the estimation of the authors. This irreverence, maintained at high pressure throughout, aerates the book.  [9.p.81]

Class, capital and the abuse of power were both sides of the one coin to Dymphna Cusack and Florence James. Humour, as they wrote 'Spinner, pervaded their "Pinegrove" menage. It was humour as therapy, as catharsis for the smaller and larger persecutions which they had both endured as high-profile women in the workforce as the war neared its end, and the employment machine was thrown into reverse gear. Barb-edged at times,
humour is still a fundamental characteristic of *Come In Spinner*. The book is indeed of the genre which Brian Matthews defines [3.p.68] as shaped by a documentary base ('social realism'), and yet it is a hybrid, a romance and also a 'comedy of manners', holding up a Luna Park distorting mirror to satirise society. It does not quite become grotesque, but at times *Spinner* parodies to the point of stereotyping the extremes of class and character (with such characters as the D'Arcy-Twynings), slipping into burlesque (with the Pick Pockettes). It certainly has its extreme moments, and these invite a Dorothy Parker-style riposte: 'Come In Spinner is what you get when you cross-pollinate a socialist-feminist playwright with a public-interest journalist.'

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*Come In Spinner* is undeniably a book 'of its own time.' Jean-Paul Sartre talks about the 'placement' of a text:

A book has its absolute truth in its own time. It is lived like a riot or a famine, with much less intensity of course, and by fewer people, but in the same way. It is an emanation of inter-subjectivity, a living bond of rage, hatred or love between those who have produced it and those who have received it. If it gains ground, thousands of people reject it and deny it; we all know very well that to read a book is to rewrite it. At the time it is first a panic, an escape, or a courageous affirmation; at the same time it is a good or bad action. Later, when the time has died, it will become relative; it will become a message. [10.p.225]

This gives an insight into the drama of *Spinner*, the book itself, into the socio-historical dynamics which generated the 'life of its own', attracting or upsetting those who had a
hand in 'Spinners' making. And forty five years later, it has become 'a message', - one directed as much at our own time as to the period of its inception.

Florence James wrote to Clem Christesen late in 1952, seeking again an Australian input to the international peace coalition of the Authors' World Peace Appeal. In the 1950's she sought to spread global awareness about the complex process which builds the kind of 'reality' which generates peace - or war. The Conference topic she wished to be disseminated was "The climate in which we write". She elaborated:

The mental climate influences the mood not only of writers but of their publishers, their producers and their critics. It produces fashions in writing, seeing and listening, influencing booksellers, librarians and exhibitors. And it is the mental climate in which we read.
To what degree is it the result of deliberate action? To what degree is fashion deliberately moulded? And how can it be changed?
What do we mean by peace? Is there any relation between moral goodness and literary excellence? Is the cult of violence and despair a part of the psychological preparation for war? How much is cause and how much effect? Is the chasm between intellectuals and others deliberately created and how can it be bridged? [11.]

This dissertation has attempted to describe the climate in which Come In Spinner was 'written' and to analyse the complex process of textual production outlined by James above in which a best seller could become an 'issue', and a formative influence on the minds of successive generations of readers. The authors, their own formative pasts, the mass-media midwives and the chain of publishers and critical readers' input - all have converged, and I hope have been shown to be active participants in the creative process which gave
Australian literature the final text of *Come In Spinner* - a process of similar literary historical interest to the issues in the text itself.

* * * * * *
1. Chronicle of the 20th Century
   Edited by John Ross

2. John Docker
   In A Critical Condition
   Struggles for control of Australian Literature - there and now.

3. Brian Matthews
   "'A kind of Semi-Sociological Literary Criticism':
   George Orwell, Kylie Tennant and others"

4. Leonie Kramer
   Editor
   The Oxford History of Australian Literature

5. Mary Wilson
   The Perceptions of the Novelists into Australia and
   M.A. Thesis.
   La Trobe University. Victoria. 1972.

6. Manning Clark
   "Tradition in the Australian Novel" pp. 16 - 22

7. Carole Ferrier
   Editor
   Gender, Politics and Fiction:
   Twentieth Century Australian Women's Novels
   University of Queensland Press. St Lucia. 1985

8. McKernan, Susan.
   A Question of Commitment.
   Australian Literature in the Twenty Years After the War.

9. Miles Franklin
   Review of
   Come In Spinner by Dymphna Cusack & Florence James
   ... Heinemann Ltd. 1955. pp. 416. 11s. 6d.

10. Jean-Paul Sartre
    "We Write for our Own Time"

11. CORRESPONDENCE / Meanjin Archives
    Florence James to Clem Christesen.
    October 23, 1952.
APPENDIX I
1. Censorship Protest: Cultural Bodies want Tribunal. Thursday May 9, 1945

2. Judge will read We Were the Rats p.31. Wednesday June 5, 1945.


4. Love Me Sailor "Obscene, Brutal" (Date not microfilmed)

5. Radio Station Cancels Love Me Sailor Play (Date not microfilmed)


15. After the party - the hangover. by David McNicoll. p.15. August 24, 1946.
16. Large Beer Supplies diverted to unlicensed night clubs. by Don Whitington.  
(February 1946 - date not microfilmed)

17. This is why we said it -.  

18. This is why we said it -.  
p.11. August 24, 1946.

19. Women - as Sydney "beauticians" see them. They tell their secrets, shed their worries. 

20. The War Taught The Girls to Drink.  

21. Our Girls are Not all Mad with Sex.  
May 2, 1946.

22. War Has Made Some Men More Wolfish.  
May 9, 1946.

23. Now they Dress Like Battleships.  
May 9, 1946.

24. Women Can be Free and Gay Too.  
August 8, 1946.

25. £1000 Prize for Novel Commended.  
October 6, 1945.  
(Page number not photocopied.)

Page 1. Thursday October 18, 1945.

27. A Blood Transfusion for Our Literature.  
p.11. October 20, 1945.

28. £1000 Prize  
One Month to finish your Australian Novel.  
Monday September 30, 1946.  
(Page number not photocopied)

PHOTOGRAPHS: C. LATE 1930s:

opposite - 223 Macquarie St.

2. Looking down Macquarie St. towards Parliament House precinct and the location opposite the fictional Hotel South Pacific.

3. The Conservatorium of Music  
Macquarie St, Sydney.
APPENDIX II

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The characters of

COME IN SPINNER

An alphabetical listing with
brief character/role summary
ALEC Campbell
Sergeant in the Australian Army, a severely wounded hospital patient. Former jackeroo, although briefly, he is keen to go back on The Land.
Trained as an accountant; has lived most of his life at Grafton.

ALFALFA (Major Lew Alfrickson)
American admirer of Guinea Malone who invites her to the OBNO's Ball at WHO'S WHO, causing consternation after the Sunday papers' social pages appear.

ALICE Parker
Hairdresser at the Marie Antoinette Salon in the Hotel South Pacific. Elder sister of Mary Parker, AWAS Corporal on leave in Sydney.

ALLSTONE
Mr Allstone is a Director of the South Pacific Hotel. Out of step with his colleagues, he has community ideals, even worker co-operative notions of developing the Hotel SP along the lines of a German Beergarden or a Paris Cafe.

Aunt ANNIE (Miss Annie Scott)
Close friend of the Malone family, has kept house for Kim Scott and his father as long as Kim can remember.
She is devoted to Monnie Malone, and offers a solution to the Children's Court dilemma.
ANGUS McFarland
Aged 47; educated at Cambridge University. Absentee landlord of BURRAMARONGA, a property 40 miles west of Bathurst, NSW, breeding Corriedale sheep.
Brother of Ian who is married to Olive: uncle of their children, Helen and young Angus, who is a Prisoner of War (POW) in Malaya.
He keeps a suite at the South Pacific Hotel, enjoying the city lifestyle of an English gentleman. He keeps in top physical condition.
A captain in WWI, commanding the loyalty of his men; he still visits his Batman.
However, he is not averse to blackmarket buying to maintain his lifestyle.
Has fallen in love with Deb Forrest, and intends to marry her. He can only achieve this if she will agree to divorce Jack, her husband, absent on service in New Guinea.

BARBARA
Wife of FRANK, the serviceman responsible for Mary Parker’s pregnancy.

BESSIE Napier
Powder room attendant at the Hotel South Pacific.
Goodhearted to a fault, she cares for Mary Parker after her illegal abortion: a brave act.
**BILLO Bennett**

Taxi driver: mate of Blue's from his old unit; a fellow "retread."

**BLUE** (Albert Johnson)

Liftman at the Hotel South Pacific: married to Doss, barmaid at the SP. They yearn to buy a country pub: however his weakness is gambling, although a modest punter.

A "retread": having service in WWI and WWII, he's now invalided out of the army. His "swy" (two-up) game in the first chapter holds the key to the novel's title.

**Mrs. BONDFIELD**

Avaricious landlady of Bessie Napier.

**BOUNCING BELLE**

The gilt statue which stands in the middle of the fishpond in the foyer of the Hotel South Pacific. She was originally a figurehead on a sailing ship used for "blackbirding" of that name, owned by the man who built the original Hotel South Pacific at The Rocks area of Sydney harbourside.

**BYRON** (Colonel Maddocks)

US army friend of Alfalfa, they come from the same hometown; he accompanies Guinea and Major Alfrickson to the OBNO's Ball. Courts Guinea.
CALVIN
US Lieutenant at the Coconut Grove party; he is married with children about the age of Monnie Malone, whose drink he laces. Having "slipped her a Mickey Finn" he rapes her.

THE CAPTAIN
Foreign seaman who is cleaned out at JOE's gambling club.

Mrs CYNTHIA CAVENDISH
Genteel tout for a high-class illegal gambling club.

CLAIRE Jeffries
Manager of the Marie Antoinette Salon in the Hotel South Pacific. Although on the hotel staff, she owns the range of products sold under the Marie Antoinette brand. She is stylish, speaks well, and is warm-hearted towards the salon staff. Frequentier of the high class illegal gambling clubs, her "fatality" is the shallow, polished Nigel Carstairs, son of a 'remittance man'.

COLONEL GISBORNE
English doctor who was at Dunkirk; forerunner of the medical arm of the British Naval forces due shortly in Australia. Friend of Doctor Dallas MacIntyre.

CURLY
Gambling club Joe's bodyguard; knuckleman and thug.
MRS DALGETY

Country client of the Marie Antoinette Salon.
She uses their services in an attempt to defeat the ravages of
time and alcohol. Her much younger lover, Alistair,
"graduated from jackeroo to gigolo in one season", fifteen
years before the October Six Hour Day long weekend and
subsequent week in 1944 in which the novel is set.

DALLAS (Dr Dallas MacIntyre)

Former science teacher of Deb Forrest and subsequent close
family friend. In her mid forties, she is an independent
career woman; emancipated and cultured, and very attractive.
She is the first woman Honorary at the Harbour Hospital.
She has taken into partnership Dr Karl Rosenberg, a Jewish
refugee and one of Vienna’s leading specialists.
A touchstone character as Deb faces her dilemma.

MRS D'ARCY-TWYNING

Wife of the South Pacific director Daniel D'arcy-Twyning,
former owner of the Kookaburra Cash n' Carry Grocery Stores,
whose wife plays down his Jewish origins.
Wife and daughter Denise are both indulged, aspiring
socialites.

DEB (Deborah Forrest nee Penfold)

Masseuse at the Marie Antoinette Salon: wife of Jack Forrest,
an Australian serviceman serving in New Guinea; mother of 10
year old Luen. Her father, Jim Penfold, a builder and local
alderman, of comfortable means he was ruined by The Depression
which also curtailed Deb’s education, preventing tertiary study.

Her former science teacher, Dr Dallas MacIntyre, became a close family friend.

Luen lives with Deb’s sister Nolly and her husband Tom, in a rural outer suburb of north-western Sydney.

Deb has become the social companion of Angus McFarland.

She is elegant, aloof; hers is a crucial dilemma.

**DEREK** (Commander Derek Ermington, RN)

Younger son of the English Lord Weffolk, he is the latest fiancee of Denise D’Arcy-Twyning.

**DOC** (Doctor Mark Smethers)

The former owner of The Bandwagon Nightclub, he is currently on a losing punter’s streak at baccarat, but picks up his losses in the lucrative, illegal abortion racket. He performs Mary Parker’s abortion.

**DENISE** (Miss D’Arcy-Twyning)

Alias DDT to the South Pacific Hotel staff; aspires to be at the height of fashion. The leader of a band of 13 young socialities who raise money for charity as the Pick-Pockettes. They are nouveau riche. She is shallow and vain, husband-hunting in the higher ranks of both the American and British forces visiting Sydney.
DOSS (Mrs 'Blue' Johnson)
Barmaid at the Hotel South Pacific; wife of Blue, the gambling liftman.

ELVIRA (Mrs Beauchamp)
Nicknamed 'The Virus'; the ancient room-maid from the 6th Floor of the Hotel South Pacific. She is a Starting Price (SP) bookmaker on the side, as well as a pedlar of black market luxuries. Her speech is full of racy Australian idiom of the time.
She is quite amoral, and brings the flavour of the streets to the Salon.

Mrs GARTRED
A brewing heiress and compulsive gambler, not averse to throwing in her earings or her furs if she's cleaned out of cash.

GUINEA (Malone - Margaret/Peg)
Hairdresser at the Hotel South Pacific's Marie Antoinette Salon; a gorgeous, red-haired, stunning beauty, she is courted by both Australian and American servicemen.
Member of a large Irish-Catholic family, her mother is working under "Manpower" i.e. directed where to work in a factory occupation to ease the labour problem caused by shortage of males. Her father is a TPI from WWI. Her two elder brothers are missing at War.
She has a room in Forbes Street, Darlinghurst.
HELEN McFarland

Twenty-three year old niece of Angus McFarland, she is part-manager of BURRAMARONGA, her uncle's inherited property in the western districts of NSW, largely due to her brothers' absence at War.

A country woman of practical ability, she is much liked by the staff of the Marie Antoinette.

HOMER P. Alcorn

Wealthy young American serviceman who is cleaned out by Blue in the "swy" (two-up) game in the lift, even down to his lottery ticket.

IAN McFarland

Elder brother of Angus, he disapproves of his brother's lifestyle, especially his not working the property. He also resents the prospect of Angus marrying Deb, a woman of an age who could give him an heir, thereby diminishing the inheritance of his own son, young Angus.

JACK Forrest

Husband of Deb; absent at War in Papua New Guinea.

He is a high-spirited, impulsive, overbearing man, insensitive to Deb's preferences, making Post-War plans for the family without consulting her, assuming her compliance.
JOE
Owner of JOE's Gambling Club.
An underworld figure of power.

KIM Scott
Nephew of Mrs Malone's great friend, Annie Scott, he is the first boyfriend and childhood sweetheart of Guinea Malone.
A Flight Lieutenant, he is a rear-gunner in the RAAF (Royal Australian Air Force).

LOFTY
Another "retread" mate of Blue Johnson. Memories of Paris in 1917 forms their common bond. His physical stature gives his nick-name. He is loyal, and helps a mate, whatever the problem. A "digger": "true-blue".

LUEN Forrest
Ten year old daughter of Deb and Jack Forrest, she lives with Deb's sister Nolly and husband Tom, and her four younger cousins, in a rural suburb on Sydney's North Shore.

MACARTNEY
Cunning legal adviser to Horatio Veale.

MACK
The prostitute Fay's boyfriend; he is in gaol taking the rap for Sport's black-market liquor sales.
MALONE Family

Irish-Catholic, tightly knit clan from which Guinea and her values come. Mrs Malone works in munitions, thanks to "The Manpower"; Mr Malone has an invalid pension from WWI. Two older brothers, Michael (Mick) and Jim are lost at war; the former is missing at Parit Sulong; the latter drowned with THE SYDNEY.

Bridie is the eldest sister, then comes Guinea, Monnie, Maura and Kevin.

MONNIE Malone

Sixteen year old sister of Guinea, she runs away from her strict Catholic mother. Schoolfriend Shirley leads her into the company of Fay and Betty, teenage prostitutes. Monnie becomes victim of a "Mickey Finn" seduction.

MORGAN Twins

Millionaires of the worst kind; rich, ugly-Americans; spoiled and overindulged, they behave crassly and anti-socially.

NOLLY

Wife of Tom, and sister to Deb Forrest, she is the mother of sons Durras, Jack and Andrew, and baby girl Debby. Another child is expected. She is also caring for Deb's daughter Luen, and is a close friend of Dr Dallas MacIntyre. there is much of the Earth-mother in Nolly.
OLD MOLE (see Thelma Molesworth)

OSCAR

A male masseur at the continental Gym, he is into deals with Sport in black-market liquor, and is lining up a potential mass-market brothel at The Gem in George Street.

The PICK-POCKETTES

A group of thirteen young socialites convened by Denise D'Arcy-Twyning to fundraise for charity; she also intends them as her bridesmaids. We meet Melva, Cheryl and Audette in Denise's suite at the Hotel South Pacific. They are essentially nouveau-riche party girls.

PROSTITUTES

Fay, Betty and Shirley work for Grace Smedley and Sport. Shirley is an old friend of Monnie's, and has been sharing a flat for six months with Fay and Betty, in Kings Cross, the red-light district of Sydney.

Dr Karl ROSENBERG

Dr Dallas MacIntyre's Jewish partner. Formerly a specialist in Vienna, he became a refugee in 1939. Australia during WWII shows strong anti-Semitic attitudes.
SHARI (L.F.: Lancelot Francis: "Ladies First")
Hotel Manager of the South Pacific. Capable; assiduously attentive; he kow-tows to the right people.
A long-time associate of South Pacific hostess Thelma Molesworth.

SHERWOOD
Tall and handsome American GI, he's on his last night of leave, and believes he's in love with Guinea Malone.

SMILER
Fagin-like, he is Sport's off-sider. A police record has kept him out of War service. He is developing and training school-kids to work in the sly-grog (illegal liquor) trade.

SPORT (Mr Cyril Walters)
Former bouncer for Doc Smether's Bandwagon Gaming Club, he is now owner of a brothel run by Grace Smedley, and has social ambitions to joint the squattocracy through buying racehorses and property.
Has "come a long way in a short time."
He threatens Monnie with the police if she tries to escape his pimps; he is a black-market liquor trader, part-owner of Mrs Cavendish's illegal gambling circuit, and, to his ultimate social benefit, owner of the champion racehorse, STORMCLOUD.
Quote: "If you own a racehorse you can get anywhere in this country."
**THELMA Molesworth** (Old Mole)

Hostess at the Hotel South Pacific, she has responsibility for the Marie Antoinette Salon and staff, including the Manager. She is the long-term (25 years) girl-friend and business associate of the Hotel South Pacific's manager, L.F. Sharlton. A well-corsetted figure of authority, she is well-groomed and immaculate with a dyed coiffure.

**TOM**

Husband of Nolly, Deb Forrest's sister.

A part-time orchardist and a motor-mechanic.

He is scornful of the Hotel South Pacific's rich patrons, and of the exploitative values which they stand for.

A solid, family man.

**The TOWN CRIER**

A newspaper columnist who has been refused service at the South Pacific on dress rules.

He spreads the "swy" (two-up) in the lift story, which could damage the Hotel South Pacific's reputation.

(1988 Angus & Robertson Edition:
Page Refs: 100,101,103,253,254,255)

**TRAVERS** (Captain Alwyn)

American serviceman who attends the Morgan twins' barbecue in their suite at the Hotel South Pacific. He takes up Pick-Pockettette Melva's late night, dubious invitation.
UNCLE SAM

The duck Kim Scott wins on a chocolate-wheel in Martin Place. He's so named by Kim as he pinches blondes and orchids - a 'rib' at American GI's in Wartime Sydney.

URSULA Cronin

The Marie Antoinette receptionist. She is the unofficial "private-eye" for the South Pacific's hostess Thelma Molesworth, and believes that she is morally a 'cut above' the rest of the Salon's staff.

VAL Blaski

Wife of Ven Blaski, missing American serviceman; manicurist at the Marie Antoinette Salon.

VEALE (Mr Horatio)

Chairman of Directors of the Hotel South Pacific. He is a large shareholder in breweries and plans to manipulate the Post War liquor trade through the Returned Serviceman's League (RSL) movement. To facilitate this he plans to enter Federal politics.
APPENDIX III

AN ANALYTIC SYNOPSIS OF

THE MAKING OF THE NOVEL

COME IN SPINNER

from the Unabridged 1988

Angus & Robertson Edition

Note: The originally deleted/censored material (as published in the 1951 Heinemann edition) has been placed in italics for ease of reference.
COME IN SPINNER

An Addendum

FLORENCE JAMES AND MARILLA NORTH

Come in Spinner, by Dymphna Cusack and Florence James, has never been out of print since it was first published in 1951, and has sold over a million copies in nine languages. Winner of the Sydney Daily Telegraph's prize for best Australian novel in 1946, the manuscript became a contentious issue for five years. It was eventually published by William Heinemann, London, in 1951, with the assistance of Clem Christesen, the founding editor of Meanjin. The published version, however, was heavily cut at the insistence of the Telegraph; its original 270,000 words were reduced to 165,000.

In 1984, Florence James edited the cut sections back in, and revised and consolidated the manuscript to produce a complete and unabridged edition. Florence James has also assisted the ABC in producing a mini-series based on the novel. The following synopsis is offered as a guide to Come in Spinner in both its abridged and complete versions. The sections that were cut in the original edition have been italicized to indicate the differences between the two versions.
Friday I
Late afternoon
i) Entrance to Hotel South Pacific: soliloquy by Angus McFarland, a Cambridge-educated grazier who maintains the lifestyle of an English gentleman in his suite at the hotel.

ii) Lift in the Hotel South Pacific, stuck between floors; Blue, the liftman, teaches American Sergeant Homer P. Alcorn to play two-up, and cleans him out, even down to his lottery ticket. (Expanded)

iii) Foyer of Hotel South Pacific: Angus McFarland, the socialite Mrs D'Arcy-Twyning and her daughter Denise protest at the two-up game in the lift.

Friday II
Late afternoon
i) Marie Antoinette Beauty Salon in Hotel South Pacific. The staff of the salon - Clair (the manager), Guinea (the hairdresser) and Deb (the masseuse) attend Mrs Dalgety, a country client who uses the salon to help overcome the ravages of time and alcohol.

ii) Foyer of Hotel South Pacific: Guinea meets Blue, the genteel Mrs Cavendish, Elvira (the ancient room-maid), and the handsome American GI, Sherwood, who is on his last night of leave. Reference to statue of Bouncing Belle in Foyer. (Expanded)
Friday III
Late afternoon
i) Corridor and powder room, Hotel South Pacific: Guinea meets briefly with Bessie (the powder-room attendant), Val (the manicurist at the salon) and Doss (Blue's wife, who is a barmaid at the hotel).

ii) Macquarie Street and St Mary's Cathedral: Val's soliloquy. (Expanded)

Friday IV
Early evening
Marie Antoinette Salon: Guinea, Elvira and Claire discuss Denise D'Arcy-Twyning (alias DDT to the staff), a shallow, vain woman who is husband-hunting in the higher ranks of the visiting American and British armed forces. Blue places a bet on Stormcloud: the women finish Mrs Dalgety's beauty treatment.

Friday V
Evening
Deb's rooms in the Hotel South Pacific: Deb takes Claire to rest; Deb finds a parcel from Angus McFarland, who has fallen in love with her, and a letter from her husband, Jack, who is serving in New Guinea, saying he will be home the next week; Clair's soliloquy.
Friday VI

Late evening

Central Station Ladies' Waiting Room: Monnie, Guinea's sixteen-year-old sister, is scared to go home to face her strict Catholic mother; she meets her schoolmate Shirley and her friends Betty and Fay, who are teenage prostitutes.

Friday VII

Late evening

Prince's Restaurant: Angus entertains Deb at the dinner-dance, and proposes marriage. *Angus's flashback and expanded characterization.*

Saturday I

Morning

i) Marie Antoinette Salon, 9 a.m.; Clair, Guinea, Deb and Alice Parker begin a day in the salon. *Claire, Guinea and Deb* read *Town Crier's Diary on Hotel South Pacific gossip; the story of Bouncing Belle, a gilt statue that was originally a figurehead on a sailing ship of that name, but now stands in the middle of the fishpond in the foyer of the hotel.* Deb and Guinea clash.

ii) In the D'Arcy-Twynings' suite in Hotel South Pacific, 9 a.m.; Val manicures Denise D'Arcy-Twyning. Dialogue between Denise and her mother on Denise's wedding plans and mother's OBNO's Charity Ball.
Saturday II

Mid-morning

Marie Antoinette Salon: *Mrs D’Arcy-Twyning’s soliloquy on forthcoming OBNO’s Ball.* Major Lew Alfrikson (alias Alfalfa), Guinea’s American admirer, invites her to OBNO’s Ball. Val provides the ball dress.

Claire gives Angus McFarland’s niece, Helen, a new hairstyle. Helen’s soliloquy. Elvira tells Claire she has overhead Angus McFarland phoning his brother Ian to tell of his forthcoming marriage. Could it be to Deb?

Saturday III

Early morning

Shirley’s flat: Shirley, Fay and Betty are asleep. Monnie goes out and tries to telephone Guinea, without success. She returns. Grace Smedley, the madam, visits the girls and befriends Monnie.

Saturday IV

Midday

i) Deb’s room at Hotel South Pacific: Deb sleeps till 2.00p.m.; wakes and rushes to leave.

ii) The afternoon train to Pymble; Deb’s soliloquy.

iii) In the orchard owned by Tom, Deb’s brother, and his wife Nolly, who are caring for Deb’s daughter; Tom expresses his contempt for the Hotel South Pacific’s snobs; Tom goes to fight a bushfire.
Saturday V

Late afternoon

i) Nolly's cottage; with the bushfire menacing, Deb hoses the cottage until the wind drops. *Deb and Nolly reminisce about the bushfire ten years before when Jack and Tom were in danger*. The children demand the story of the Christmas Tree.

Saturday VI

Evening

OBNO's Ball, Hotel South Pacific; Guinea, Major Alfrikson and Colonel Maddocks make a spectacular appearance, to the chagrin of Denise D'Arcy-Twyning, her mother, the hotel manager and the hostess.

Saturday VII

Evening

i) Shirley's flat; Grace Smedley and girls prevent Monnie from contacting Guinea and dress her up for a party.

ii) Coconut Grove Dance Hall: Monnie and the girls meet American Servicemen. One Lieutenant Calvin, unknown to Monnie, laces her lemonade and takes her to his hotel 'to recover'.

Sunday I

Morning

i) Guinea wakes in her rooms; soliloquy

ii) Guinea goes home to the family cottage at West Hills for her father's birthday; she is welcomed by Mum, Dad, Kevin and Maura but no Monnie. Kim Scott, Guinea's childhood
sweetheart, visits and brings a newspaper photograph of Guinea at OBNO's Ball.

Sunday II
Early morning
i) Calvin's bedroom; Monnie wakes, horrified, dresses and leaves with Calvin.
ii) Shirley's flat; Monnie arrives distraught, discovers the girls are prostitutes and tries to escape. Grace drugs her.

Sunday III
Morning
i) Nolly's cottage; Deb weighs up future options; she disappoints the children about a picnic and leaves.
ii) The train back to Sydney; Deb's soliloquy on her future.

Sunday IV
Mid morning
i) Deb's room at Hotel South Pacific; Deb's soliloquy.
ii) 11.30 a.m.; Hostess's Suite, Hotel South Pacific; Thelma Molesworth, the hostess at the hotel, and L.F. Sharlton, the manager, take coffee with Deb; at 12.30 p.m. Deb is collected by Angus in his car. (Was Sunday III, ii)

Sunday V
Early afternoon
Hostess's suite at the hotel; Mrs Molesworth and L.F. Sharlton lunch. He departs for his routine nap. Thelma's soliloquy.
Sunday VI

After lunch

i) The car trip from Pymble to Palm Beach through French's Forest; Angus's soliloquy. Angus and Deb almost have an accident (Was Sunday III, ii)

ii) Angus McFarland's Palm Beach house; family retainer Jean and her son Bert receive Deb and Angus.

iii) Late afternoon; Deb and Angus swim. Horatio Veale, the chairman of directors of the hotel, waves to them from his nearby veranda as they return to the house.

iv) Deb and Angus take afternoon tea in the loungeroom at sunset.

v) Early evening; Deb and Angus drive back to Sydney. (Was Sunday III, ii)

Sunday VII

Early afternoon

i) Forbes Street, Darlinghurst; Guinea's rooming house; Colonel Byron Maddocks cruises outside while Major Lew Alfrikson waits inside.

ii) Entrance to Guinea's room; Colonel Maddocks and Major Alfrikson have a confrontation.

iii) At the Hotel South Pacific, in the room of the Morgan twins, who are American millionaires of the worst kind; a late-afternoon barbecue in their suite causes problems.
Sunday VIII

Late afternoon

Hostess's suite in Hotel South Pacific; Thelma Molesworth's soliloquy. L.F. Sharlton enters a little before his routine 3.30 p.m. They discuss their business futures. They are interrupted by the fire alarm from the Morgan twin's suite.

Sunday IX

Early evening

i) The Eddy Avenue exit of Central Railway Station; Guinea is followed by Kim; troops march past.

ii) On the Bronte tram; Guinea and Kim take a brief ride.

iii) From Campbell Street to Taylor Square and down Forbes Street: Guinea and Kim pass assorted street characters, including a brothel specializing in negro clients, as they proceed to her boarding house in Darlinghurst.

Monday I

Morning

i) The Marie Antoinette Salon, 9.30 a.m. It is the Six-Hour Day long weekend. Claire, Deb and Alice, one of the hairdressers, discuss the issues involved in the pregnancy of Mary Parker, Alice's sister, who is an AWAS corporal on leave in Sydney.

ii) Mosman Ferry; Deb muses as she crosses the harbour to Old Cremorne jetty to visit Dr Dallas MacIntyre, her former science teacher, friend and mentor. Deb remembers the friendship between Dallas and her father during Depression days.
iii) Dr Dallas MacIntyre's house; Deb and Dallas take afternoon tea and discuss women's roles. (Expanded)

iv) The car trip from Cremorne to Macquarie Street; Deb and Dallas talk at length parked in the drive of the Conservatorium of Music. Dallas lets Deb off at the service entrance of the Hotel South Pacific.

Monday II

Morning

i) Guinea's room; Kim arrives at 9 a.m.

ii) Oxford Street at Taylor Square; Kim and Guinea watch the Six Hours Day procession; they see their fathers' union banner. (Expanded)

iii) Kim and Guinea take a tram through Bellevue Hill to Bondi Beach, where they swim until 4 p.m.

Monday III

Late afternoon

i) Deb arrives at Marie Antoinette Salon; Alice and Clair are beautifying Elvira; Elvira gives the girls the 'lowdown' on her prosperous SP betting shop and its patrons; Guinea calls in for news of Monnie. Cynthia Cavendish, a genteel tout for a high-class illegal gambling club, calls at an opportune time. (Was Monday II, iii)

ii) Meanwhile in the lift; Blue and Kim compare experiences in two world wars.

iii) Early evening; Kim and Guinea queue for dinner at Cahills.
Monday IV

Early evening

i) Deb's room in Hotel South Pacific; she muses and rests.

ii) Refectory at Hotel South Pacific; Angus and Deb dine with Ian McFarland, and discuss the land, the economy and the black market. (Expanded)

Monday V

Early evening

Val leaves the Hotel South Pacific, walks past the Hyde Park Barracks and crosses the intersection above St James Church into Hyde Park. Soliloquy on Ven, her missing serviceman husband, and of loneliness and longing for love. (Expanded and restructured; was Monday III, ii)

Monday VI

Evening

i) After dinner at Cahills; Guinea and Kim search for Monnie, walking from Martin Place in front of Sydney Hospital to Pitt Street and the steps of the GPO. Kim expresses his resentment at the exploitation of war.

ii) A fun parlour near Wynyard Station on George Street.

iii) Later, a tram to the Glaciarium past Railway Square; Guinea and Kim skate.

iv) Later; Guinea and Kim move up Goulburn Street to the Coconut Grove; they dance.

v) On the doorstep to Guinea's room; Kim and Guinea part on a misunderstanding. (Expanded and restructured; was Monday IV)
Evening

i) Sydney Town Hall; the clock strikes eight; Angus and Deb arrive at the Druitt Street entrance for the Marjorie Lawrence recital.

ii) Interval at Town Hall; Deb and Angus meet Dallas and her companions Karl Rosenberg and Colonel Gisborne.

iii) Later; Angus's suite at the Hotel South Pacific; he provides a luxurious supper for the concert-goers. (Was Monday III)

Monday VIII

Late at night

i) Grace Smedley's flat; Monnie regains consciousness; Grace and Sport, the owner of the brothel, talk with Monnie and Fay.

ii) Later; the police raid Grace's flat and Monnie is taken into custody; the sailor with her is told to get out. (Was Monday V)

Tuesday I

Early morning

i) Guinea's room, 8 a.m.; the police inform Guinea of Monnie's arrest.

ii) The little shop next door to Guinea's, 8.30 a.m.; she rings the salon.

iii) Up Forbes Street past St Vincent's Hospital; Guinea walks to the Children's Court.
iv) Albion Street Children's Court; Guinea enters.

v) Waiting room in Children's Court; Monnie surrounded by street-girls.

vi) Magistrate's Court; Monnie's case adjourned.

Tuesday II

Morning

i) The powder room at the Hotel South Pacific; 8.55 a.m.: Mary Parker waits for phone call giving the abortionist's phone number; Mary's soliloquy flashes back to love affair with Frank; Mary comes back to the present when Bessie enters for duty at 11 a.m.; flashback to her meeting with Frank's wife, Barbara, and consequent decision to terminate her pregnancy; Bessie befriends May.

ii) Blue takes Mary Parker down in the lift (Expanded; was Tuesday III)

Tuesday III

Morning

i) Marie Antoinette Salon; Ursula (the receptionist), Clair and Val.

ii) Denise D'Arcy-Twyning's room; Claire sets Denise's hair while she gossips with Melva, Audette and Cheryl (now the Marquise de Chesne), all members of the Pick-Pockettes, a group of young socialites convened by Denise to raise money for charity. (Was Tuesday II)
iii) Marie Antoinette Salon; Claire collects a pound from Val, Deb, Guinea and Ursula towards Mary Parker's abortion on the pretext of raising money for Denise D'Arcy-Twyning's wedding gift.

Tuesday IV
Afternoon
i) Maroubra Beach; Angus and his brother Ian surf. They discuss Angus's absence from the property and other family matters.

ii) Marie Antoinette Salon, 5.15 p.m. Deb, Claire and Guinea.

iii) The Old Madrid Lounge (the 'Bull Ring') at the Hotel South Pacific; Angus and Deb; Angus points out Hotel South Pacific directors Horatio Veale, Macartney and Dan Twyning. (Expanded) He tells her he has selected her ring. (Was Tuesday V)

Tuesday V
Early evening
Public bar at Hotel South Pacific, 6 p.m. Closing time; Blue and his mate Lofty reminisce; the Americans irritate Lofty, and Doss averts a brawl. (Was Tuesday VI)

Tuesday VI
Evening
i) The public places of the Hotel South Pacific; L.F. Sharlton conducts his four directors - Veale, Macartney, D'Arcy-Twyning and Allstone - around the hotel; in the Windsor Room, Lady Lucy Govett is holding her monthly bridge party for
the starving Greek children; in the Gloucester Room Mrs D'Arcy-Twyning is holding a meeting for the OBNO's Ball Committee.

ii) The Board Room at the Hotel South Pacific, 6.30 p.m.; Thelma serves drinks to the directors; they are horrified at the prospect of a Royal Commission into the Liquor Industry; the gentlemen dine at the Board Room table.

Tuesday VII

Early Evening

i) Marie Antoinette Salon; Ursula receives delivery of flowers for Guinea; Claire and Guinea discuss Monnie's dilemma.

ii) Service lane of Hotel South Pacific; Colonel Maddocks catches Guinea as she leaves at 6 p.m. They dine at the Coq d'Or in Angel Place.

iii) Maddocks drives Guinea to the house of Aunt Annie Scott, Kim's mother, in the western suburbs.

iv) Annie's kitchen, 8 p.m.: Guinea enters and tells Annie of Monnie's trouble. Kim arrives.

v) Maddocks drives Guinea back to the city; he invites her to go dancing.

Tuesday VIII

Early evening

i) Claire's loungeroom in her penthouse adjoining Nigel Carstairs' flat in the King's Cross area; Claire dines with Carstairs, the shallow, polished son of a remittance man.
ii) Later; Claire and Nigel try to flag a taxi on Macleay Street corner at 10.30 p.m.; the driver prefers the American Naval Hostel and they catch a trolleybus instead. (Was Sunday VI)

Wednesday I

Spring morning

i) Hyde Park; Claire walks to work; crossing Phillip Street, she passes the Continental Gym and Down Under.

ii) Claire enters the Hotel South Pacific via the Macquarie Street front entrance; she goes up in the lift with Blue.

iii) Marie Antoinette Salon, 9 a.m.; Claire, Deb and Alice begin the day; Ursula arrives at 9.25 a.m. after seeing Thelma Molesworth.

iv) Clair's office; Elvira offers Claire black-market lingerie.

Wednesday II

Morning

i) Entrance to the Albion Street Children's Court; Guinea, Kim, Aunt Annie and Guinea's mother.

ii) Court Officer's room; Aunt Annie offers a solution to Monnie's problem.

iii) The Court Officer asserts that Monnie is a 'war casualty'.
Wednesday III

Morning

i) The Women's Service Club Lounge; Mary Parker looks out and decides to go for a walk.

ii) Mary passes the GPO on George Street; she shops, then walks up Martin Place, across Macquarie Street and over Domain Drive, past the Shakespeare statue, through the Botanic Gardens; soliloquy at the harbour wall; at 1 p.m. she leaves the Gardens and crosses to the old Public Library.

iii) Marie Antoinette Salon, 1 p.m.; Alice leaves to meet Mary.

iv) Outside the Public Library; Alice meets Mary; they walk across to a building of doctors' consulting rooms in Macquarie Street.

v) Doctor's rooms; Mary hands over 45 pounds to the receptionist; he takes them to a waiting car; they drive past the Art Gallery behind St Mary's Cathedral through Woolloomooloo to a block of flats in Elizabeth Bay.

vi) Apartment used for illegal abortions; nurse leads Mary to a bedroom where the doctor joins them; outside the bedroom Alice waits, listens, muses.

Wednesday IV

Afternoon

i) Continental Gym, the Turkish Bathroom; Colonel Maddocks muses; Angus and Ian sweat together; they observe Dan D'Arcy-Twyning and Sport; various soliloquies; the men gossip; Sport offers Ian a lift to see Stormcloud on the training track.
ii) Massage room at the Continental Gym; Oscar, the masseur, gives Sport a massage; black-market deals are negotiated. (Was Tuesday IV)

Wednesday V
Afternoon
i) Denise D'Arcy-Twyning's suite at the Hotel South Pacific; she departs in a bad temper, assisted by Blue and Elvira; L.F. Sharlton and Thelma Molesworth appease her.

ii) Blue takes the ladies of the Temperance Union up in the lift; they question him about the Hotel South Pacific.

iii) Milady's Room Lounge; Mrs Dalgety drowns her sorrow at her gigolo's departure in undiluted gin; the lounge is closed to the public.

Wednesday VI
Late afternoon
Bessie's place, a cheerful room in a shabby Darlinghurst boarding house; Bessie's family photos are explained; Alice and Mary arrive and Bessie takes charge.

Wednesday VII
Early evening
i) Deb's room; she finds a gift from Angus waiting; she rests and muses.

ii) At the lift of the Hotel South Pacific; Angus meets Deb; they walk down Martin Place to Prince's Restaurant; Deb recalls her family in the Depression; soliloquy - memories of
the Depression, her father's ruin and her mother's death; Angus is masterful, and presses her to divorce Jack. (Was Wednesday III)

Wednesday VIII
Late evening
i) Val's flat in Rushcutters Bay; Val worries about Mary Parker.

ii) Luna Park; Helen McFarland and Alec Campbell, a wounded army sergeant, take the McMahon's Point ferry to Luna Park. On the return ferry there is promise of a future relationship. (Was Wednesday IV)

Wednesday IX
Late evening
i) Joe's Gambling Club; Claire and Nigel arrive.

ii) Inside the club; Baccarat in play; minor characters expose their dependence; Mrs Gartred, a brewing heiress, loses her sable furs; Nigel and Claire win.

iii) Joe's office; Sport, Nigel, Claire and Joe take supper. (Was Wednesday V)

Thursday I
Morning
i) Marie Antoinette Salon; Claire and Deb; Guinea enters and tells of Byron's proposal; Ursula and Elvira arrive, followed by Thelma Molesworth; Alice Parker is called away urgently; Mrs Molesworth is critical of the Salon staff; Claire offers her resignation; Mrs Molesworth backs down.
Thursday II

Morning

i) Bessie's room; Mary haemorrhages.

ii) Telephone booth; Bessie tries to contact Dr Smithers; she dials the Marie Antoinette and Deb takes the message for Alice; Claire gives a female doctor's number.

iii) Mary weakens rapidly; Alice contacts Dr Cookson who arranges to have Mary hospitalized.

Thursday III

Afternoon

Marie Antionette Salon; Claire and Deb take tea and discuss Claire's triumph over Mrs Molesworth; Bessie telephones to say Mary Parker has died, the girl's reactions are revealing; Frank's cable arrives. (Was Thursday II)

Thursday IV

Late afternoon

Marie Antoinette Salon, Claire's office; Val, Deb, Guinea and Claire discuss Mary Parker's death and Bessie's situation; Nigel telephones and Claire faints; Deb takes charge of her; Guinea leaves to join Val and confront Bessie's landlady. (Was Thursday III)

Thursday V

Evening

i) Bessie's room; the landlady refuses entry to Guinea and Val; Lofty and Bill rescue Bessie's possessions.
ii) Forbes Street steps; Guinea has missed Byron's party; she returns to her room. (Was Thursday IV)

Friday I
Morning
i) Hotel South Pacific; reactions to the morning's paper; Mary Parker's death briefly noted; L.F. Sharlton and Mrs Molesworth are still anxious about the Town Crier column reference.

ii) Reporters arrive; Blue holds the winning lottery ticket that he won from Homer P. Alcorn at the infamous 'swy' game in the lift; three thousand pounds will buy the country pub for Blue and Doss. Horatio Veale and Dan D'Arcy-Twyning wait for the lift in vain.

Friday II
Morning
Marie Antoinette Salon; Val arranges to take Bessie to her flat; Guinea and Deb are relieved; Nigel and Claire are reunited; Jack's telegram arrives. Deb issues her ultimatum and telegraphs Jack. She rings Angus's suite.

Friday III
Lunchtime
i) Service land of the Hotel South Pacific; Kim waits for Guinea; Aunt Annie has sent a reassuring note about Monnie; they buy a newspaper, which reports that Grace Smedley has received a maximum sentence, six months' hard labour; Kim and Guinea wander through Martin Place towards Wynyard Square; en
route they play a chocolate wheel and win a duck; 'Uncle Sam' fancies women and orchids.

ii) The little park in Wynyard Square; Kim proposes to Guinea; they spin pennies in the air 'for keeps': 'Let the Angels see 'em.'

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Florence James has been a significant member of the international feminist and peace movements. In the 1950s and 1960s she worked as an editor and reader with Constable in London, where she was instrumental in publishing the work of Dame Mary Durack, Nene Gare, Anne von Bertouch and Maurice Shadbolt. She had a career in freelance journalism, both in England and Australia. Co-author with Dymphna Cusack of Come in Spinner, she has recently edited the complete version of the book for Angus & Robertson. (Page 189)

Marilla North is a freelance writer and poet who is currently conducting her own communications consultancy and studying towards a master's degree at the University of Wollongong. She is also working on a biography of Florence James. (Page 190)
REFERENCES AND PRIMARY SOURCES

USED IN RESEARCHING AND WRITING THIS DISSERTATION

i] TEXTS WRITTEN BY DYMPHNA CUSACK, DYMPHNA CUSACK & MILES FRANKLIN, DYMPHNA CUSACK & FLORENCE JAMES.

NOTE: The following conventions of title abbreviations have been used for the texts written by the author or co-authors of the texts under discussion in this dissertation:

NOVELS AND TRAVELOGUES:

CAD Caddie. A Sydney Barmaid.
An autobiography written by herself.
With an introduction by Dymphna Cusack
Sun Books. Melbourne. 1976

CIS Come In Spinner.
Dymphna Cusack and Florence James

CIS/U Come In Spinner.
The Lives and Loves of Women in Wartime
[Complete and unabridged]
Dymphna Cusack and Florence James

CWS Chinese Women Speak.
Dymphna Cusack.

FWF Four Winds and a Family.
Dymphna Cusack and Florence James

JF Jungfrau.
Dymphna Cusack
Introduced by Florence James.
Penguin Australian Women's Library.

PP Pioneers on Parade.
Dymphna Cusack and Miles Franklin.

PR Picnic Races.
Dymphna Cusack
ii] NEWSPAPERS

Archival holdings of The Daily Telegraph held in both the Mitchell Library and Sydney University Library have been researched by the author for source material on the 1946 novel competition and for historical and social background of the 1940’s, as both the period in which the novel Come In Spinner is set, namely the October long weekend, 1944, and the period in which it was written, revised and not published in Australia - 1946 to 1951.

Photocopies of all references to the Daily Telegraph Novel Competition were (barely) procurable from the Sydney University newspaper stacks (thanks to the kindly odd job man who ‘guards’ the un-airconditioned shed), otherwise these pages would have been unobtainable as the bound volume which covers the period 1945/46 is missing from the Mitchell. They have been re-copied and included as Appendix I with this dissertation.

Microfilm was obtained of the relevant material from the bound volumes in the Mitchell, those which are of interest to this dissertation have been reproduced and are included in Appendix I.
All references in the End Notes to each chapter are self explanatory, in both date and page sourcing of the newspaper edition in which they first appeared.

Back copies of The Sydney Morning Herald were also searched for references to censorship, novel competitions and the 'cultural cringe'. These have been date/page reference noted when cited.

iii] CORRESPONDENCE

A great deal of primary research has been undertaken by the author in preparation for a biography of Florence James. Three major sources (unpublished) of correspondence have been used in this dissertation. All correspondence quoted in the End Notes has been attributed to one of these primary sources, and both the sender and receiver have been annotated, with the date of writing as it appears on the original letter. Where significant, the address of the writer is also included.

1. MEANJIN ARCHIVES correspondence holdings in loose leaved manilla folders, filed under
   * Dymphna Cusack
   * Florence James
   * Clem Christesen
   held in the Baillieu Library, Melbourne University.

   The relevant correspondence was variously tape recorded or hand transcribed by the author on two occasions:
   - initially on July 22/23, 1989

2. FLORENCE JAMES's personal collection of original correspondence received, and carbon copies of correspondence sent, dating from 1927.

   The author has variously tape recorded, hand transcribed and keyed directly into the PC data base from this rich source continuously since November 21, 1986.

3. LYDIA LO SCHIAVO's (Mrs John Carra/ Ms Lydia Templeman) personal correspondence received from Dymphna Cusack and Kaye Keen, posted to the author following a memorable meeting and interview with Lydia herself and Florence James and the author on the central coast near Gosford, NSW, on the day of the Newcastle earthquake, January 4, 1990.
Further primary material has been accumulated by the author since the commencement of the biographical project in November 1986.

The significant respondent interview material used in this dissertation has come from FLORENCE JAMES herself, and is held by the author on sound cassette (dated) and in transcription. An interview was also recorded by the author (16.1.90) with David McNicoll, editor of The Daily Telegraph after Brian Penton died in 1951, and with another former journalist and long time associate of Penton, Zelie McLeod. (January 22 and 26, 1990.) End Notes refer: INTERVIEW, and annotate both the interviewer/interviewee and the date recorded.

Questionnaires were completed in 1990 (and are held by the author) by all James and the then neighbouring Dent family members, who were at "Pinegrove" in the Blue Mountains during the gestation period and birth of the Come In Spinner manuscript.

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