

My Brilliant Career: A Study on Sybylla's Independent Personality

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This thesis takes as its subject the classic novel *My Brilliant Career* by Australian writer Miles Franklin, focusing on the independent personality of the protagonist Sybylla Melvyn and the bush predicament in which she is entangled. The study argues that Sybylla's three geographical displacements—from Possum Gully to Caddagat and then to M'Swat—constitute a mode of “resistant” existence, through which she subverts Victorian-era feminine discipline and the capitalist logic of courtship and marriage. The paper offers an innovative interpretation of the Australian bush as a double-sided symbol that functions simultaneously as a site of oppression and a source of vitality, and it points out that the fractured nature of Sybylla's personality—a weave of pride and self-abasement—serves precisely as a spiritual specimen of cultural transition within the colonial context. Ultimately, this thesis demonstrates that the essence of independent personality is not a triumph but a process of continuously transforming external oppression into inner freedom. This finding not only provides a new interpretive angle for feminist literary criticism, but also offers profound historical experience for modern individuals grappling with the algorithmic cage and the alienation of consumerism.

Keywords: *My Brilliant Career*, feminism, bush predicament, Sybylla, independent personality

Introduction

My Brilliant Career, completed by Australian writer Miles Franklin at the age of 16 and published in 1901, is regarded as a foundational work of Australian women's literature. The novel tells the story of Sybylla Melvyn, a bush girl who pursues independence amid poverty and gender discipline: She refuses marriage and comfort, ultimately burns her letters, and vanishes into the depths of the eucalyptus forest. Existing scholarship has largely placed Sybylla within a narrative framework of feminist awakening, yet struggles to account for a core paradox in her personality: Why is her independence persistently marked by the intertwining of pride and self-abasement, and the coexistence of rebellion and compromise? Why does the ending of the novel more closely resemble an act of self-exile than a triumph?

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This article argues that Sybylla's independence is not an achieved psychological quality, but a dynamic process of continually transforming external oppression into inner freedom. The fracturedness of her personality is the necessary price of this transformation. To develop this argument, the article proposes the concept of the "bush predicament", contending that the Australian bush possesses a duality for Sybylla: It is at once a field of oppression that enforces material exploitation and gender discipline, and a wellspring that endows her with vitality and the courage to rebel. This duality means that she cannot achieve selfhood through simple escape; she can only repeatedly carve out moments of freedom from within the cracks of the predicament. By examining Sybylla's three spatial transitions—Possum Gully, Caddagat, and M'Swat—this article analyzes the generative mechanism and internal contradictions of her independent personality, and ultimately reveals that her refusal of all solidified forms of existence is precisely intended to preserve the very possibility of "transformation". This insight not only offers a new perspective for interpreting this classic novel, but also provides timeless spiritual illumination for understanding the costs and predicaments of independent personhood.

Sybylla's Independent Personality

The core definition of independent personality refers to the individual's independence, autonomy, and creativity in thought, behaviour, and values, not attaching to external spiritual authority or actual political power, and being able to maintain an autonomous spirit in independent judgment and social participation. Sybylla once declared outright: "They want me to be a lady, but I choose to be myself—even if it means opposing the whole world!" (Franklin, 1990, p. 37), which is a vivid manifestation of her independent personality.

Independence in thought and behaviour constitutes the core feature of Sybylla's independent personality. She is capable of forming her own value system and belief structure without being easily swayed by others; even in the harsh and impoverished environment of Possum Gully, she is not co-opted by patriarchal society or traditional thinking. Through multi-dimensional narration, the author constructs a map of Sybylla Melvyn's independent personality as an Australian bush intellectual woman: Amid survival predicaments, she achieves spiritual breakthrough through a "third mode of existence"—surreptitiously reading literature while milking cows and writing in secret at midnight; in her romantic and marital choices, she rejects Grey's condescending proposal and Holden's lure of wealth, subverting the traditional view of marriage with the declaration "If I do not love him, I will not marry a millionaire"; moreover, in the paradoxical decision to propose to her lover Beecham when he is bankrupt and to leave resolutely after his family fortune is restored, she enacts a life philosophy of "dignity above dependence".

Facing Beecham's proposal, she once said: "He offered me everything—but control" (Franklin, 1990, p. 223), every word laying bare that the core of her resistance is the refusal of any form of spiritual dependence. In the face of class oppression, she defends her subjectivity through a bush-style resistance of physically punishing her employer's unruly child; when trapped on a spiritual island, she constructs defensive ramparts with caustic remarks, transforming literary creation into a redemptive tool against the alienation of existence. Through this female image of "deformed growth under a boulder", the author not only projects the awakening consciousness of Australian feminists at the end of the 19th century, but also metaphorically embodies the

throes of the national independence aspiration in the colonial context—the fractured nature of her personality (a weave of pride and self-abasement, the coexistence of resistance and compromise) precisely becomes a spiritual specimen of the cultural transition period. Against the rustic backdrop of eucalyptus and sheep, it composes a tragic epic of an intellectual woman's pursuit of subjective value.

Analysis of Sybylla's Character

In her familial role, Sybylla is a casualty of the family economic chain. The trajectory of her father Dick Melvyn from grazier to bankrupt small farmer forces Sybylla to shoulder excessive farm labour prematurely—feeding livestock, milking cows, and the like. The novel opens with the detail of her chapped, bleeding fingers while milking, a detail that turns her into a shock absorber for the family's financial collapse and compels her into premature maturity. Her mother Lucy, as an impoverished aristocrat, attempts to groom Sybylla into “a qualified governess”, only to meet with fierce resistance. Sybylla describes the teaching job arranged by her mother as “struggling in vain in the mire” (Franklin, 1990, p. 59), and secretly contacts her grandmother seeking outside help, fully demonstrating a thorough negation of the traditional female survival path.

At the level of social roles, Sybylla is a gender anomaly in bush society. Possum Gully confines women within the triple cage of “cook/governess/housewife”, yet Sybylla's childhood was filled with climbing trees to raid bird nests and galloping on horseback, along with the wild memory of “driving a bullock cart at the age of eight”. These experiences make her a “tomboy freak” in the eyes of the community. While working as a governess at the ignorant and overbearing M'Swat household, the mistress regards her as “a literate servant”, whereas Sybylla establishes authority by physically punishing the unruly child, with the bold act of “publicly slapping the palm of the young master”, rewriting the dignity narrative of the lower-class intellectual through violence.

The formation of Sybylla's character has profound internal and external causes. Her father is both her spiritual enlightener and her ultimate betrayer. In her early years, she regards her father Dick as “an encyclopedic hero”, following him to prospect mines and swim in mountain creeks, even declaring outright: “Before the age of ten, I believed not in religion, but only in my father” (Franklin, 1990, p. 29). This experience shapes her primal anti-authoritarian personality. After her father succumbs to alcoholism and bankruptcy, his image degenerates from “a pioneering horseman galloping with whip raised” to “a failure lying drunk in the streets”. This collapse of faith directly precipitates Sybylla's complete disillusionment with male authority; she even issues the extreme remark: “Men only smoke and curse” (Franklin, 1990, p. 78).

Literature, for her, is both a healing remedy and a double-edged sword of contradiction. From secretly reading European classics (such as Dickens and Brontë) during the Bruggabrong period, to the secret rebellion of writing novels at night in Possum Gully, she defines this state as “a third state: longing for art”. Literature endows her with wings to transcend reality while simultaneously intensifying her antagonism with reality. Just as she mocks herself with the metaphor “squeezing an orange to get sweet water”, the sweet literary imagination forms a deadly contrast with the bitter reality of survival.

Sybylla's independent personality is also fully manifested in numerous concrete actions. She voluntarily flees Possum Gully to seek refuge with her grandmother at Caddagat, regarding the “bookshelves and piano”

there as constituting a temporary utopia, yet leaves again after discerning the hypocrisy of the shelter, forming a cyclical pattern of “arrival—disillusionment—re-escape”. Her trajectory of movement in itself constitutes a negation of a settled life. She also turns caustic remarks into a spiritual shield. When faced with Mr. Grey's elegant courtship, she deliberately responds with slang: “You gentlemen are like dummies in the window” (Franklin, 1990, p. 112). When her aunt urges her to marry into wealth, she throws out the shocking statement “a millionaire is not as good as a lame lover”. Behind the verbal violence lies her desperate struggle for discursive power as the underdog.

And her proactive proposal to Beecham when he is bankrupt and her resolute parting after the family fortune is restored further constitute an existentialist “free choice”. The former is a being-towards-death undertaking; she once said: “I am a harbor when you need one” (Franklin, 1990, p. 189). The latter is a severing of a commodified relationship; she states bluntly: “When money is rebuilt, I become a superfluity” (Franklin, 1990, p. 201). This seemingly contradictory choice is in fact a thorough deconstruction of the commodity nature of love.

Sybylla's Rebellious Spirit

Sybylla's rebellious spirit runs through her entire life and manifests in every aspect of her existence. She launches an explosive rebellion against the traditional gender order, liberating the female body from the sign of “fragile/protected” and reconstructing it as a carrier of strength through such acts as horsemanship (“Riding a horse without a saddle like a man”) and mine exploration (“Going down the deep well in a bucket”). Her calloused palms, bearing the real experience of “blood seeping into the milk pail while milking”, become a violent manifesto against the aesthetics of “ladylike gloves”. She also demeans men as “clumsy animals who smoke and swear”, compares the institution of marriage to a “degrading transaction”, and through extreme rhetoric tears apart the gentle veil of the Victorian era. When facing a suitor, she even declares outright: “Love is the lowest passion” (Franklin, 1990, p. 105), dissolving the romantic discourse system with irony.

She resolutely shatters economic dependency, refusing Holden's temptation of inheritance rights, and declares bluntly: “A million pounds is not as good as breathing freely” (Franklin, 1990, p. 156). She even proposes to Beecham when he is bankrupt, completely subverting the “male provider” narrative. This inversion of economic relations, namely “I am a wife only when you need one”, delivers a fatal blow to the capitalist logic of courtship and marriage.

She fights back against civilizing discipline in a bush manner. While teaching in an ignorant employer's household, she deliberately admonishes the unruly child with lines from *King Lear*, featuring the classic quotation “Madmen lead the blind” (Franklin, 1990, p. 137), degrading Shakespearean classic into a tool of discipline and dissolving the sublimity of European culture. Her teaching practice thus becomes a darkly humorous deconstruction of the colonial knowledge system. When Mrs. M'Swat humiliates her with a patronizing attitude, Sybylla physically punishes her son in public, staging a scene of “bamboo cane lashing and an aristocratic sneer”, using lower-class violence to shatter the pretense of charity. This choice of “countering evil with evil” exposes the power dynamics beneath the hypocritical mask of civilized society. And her repeated migrations from Possum Gully to Caddagat trace a trajectory of “arrival—disillusionment—re-exile”, constituting a spatial rebellion against settled civilization. Her footprints

consistently refuse to take root, countering the stable illusion of agrarian civilization with a nomadic state, which becomes a metaphor for the spiritual wandering of the descendants of Australian exiles.

She also dares to gaze into the abyss amidst existential predicaments. In her diary, she mocks herself: "I want to scream but am afraid of startling the kangaroos" (Franklin, 1990, p. 87), revealing the inner sense of absurdity of a rebel. The collapse of her literary dream, accompanied by the cruel experience of "the manuscript being used as kindling by her mother", suggests that the rebel is ultimately trapped in a material cage, constituting an existentialist heroic tragedy. She deliberately chooses a life of "chronic horror", resolutely rejecting Beecham's rescue, and sublimates her suffering into a spiritual medal of honor against mediocrity. As she puts it: "A twisted soul is nobler than a tamed body" (Franklin, 1990, p. 169). This masochistic sublimation becomes her unique alternative strategy of resistance. And her ultimate refusal of marriage is not driven by reason, but by a need to preserve her identity as an "unfinished rebel". Just as in the scene where she burns the proposal gifts, "Laughing as the flames devour the silk" (Franklin, 1990, p. 215), she affirms the existence of free will through the destruction of possibilities.

The Symbolism and Significance of the Bush Predicament

For Sybylla, the Australian bush carries multiple layers of symbolic meaning and also creates her distinctive bush predicament. The eucalypt forest on the Timlinbilly Ridge of her childhood, with its beautiful appearance of "white trunks shimmering like badges of freedom", endowed Sybylla with a primal vitality. There she galloped, explored mine shafts, and swam naked, savoring the freedom of "mountain streams wrapping her body like liquid jade". The bush became a natural barrier for her rebellion against civilizing discipline. Before her father's downfall through alcoholism and bankruptcy, the bush was even more a fortress insulating her from Victorian-style ladylike education; although her mother was displeased, she could only "shake her head and let her climb trees". This wild upbringing constituted a silent mockery of European aristocratic breeding. The narrowness of the thousand-acre farm, with its limitation of "three miles being the end of the world", mirrors Sybylla's spiritual predicament. After the flat land lost the shelter of the hills, it became an open-air prison under social scrutiny, compounded by neighbours' behaviour of "borrowing without returning, which was like spiritual plunder". While the abundant rainfall nourished the land, it also caused the waterholes to breed leeches, creating a scene of "blood-sucking creatures lurking in clear water", a metaphor for the symbiotic relationship between material survival and spiritual corrosion.

Moreover, many natural elements in the bush are deeply connected to Sybylla's psychological state. The bitter scent of eucalyptus oil, "illuminating the colonial night as it burns", seeped into her marrow. The eucalyptus tree's growth posture of "twisted yet deeply rooted" became a botanical metaphor for her oppositional personality. Under the moonlight, the peeling of eucalyptus bark, presenting a state of "silver-white wounds splitting open layer by layer", echoes her self-description in her diary of a "soul chapped and oozing blood", internalizing natural injuries into a psychological landscape. The rushing stream roaring in the shadow of maidenhair ferns symbolizes undisciplined vitality; when swimming there, she experiences a fusion of self and object, "becoming a fish for a while". Beneath the surface calm of stagnant water holes lurks decay, with the appearance of "sweet lies covered in moss", inducing in her a pathological fear of stable life and leading her to choose continual migration as an antidote.

The different spaces of the bush also shape Sybylla's varying psychological states, forming a distinctive spatial politics and psychological topology. The mine shaft becomes an inverted utopia; the act of descending into an underground mine, like "the bucket sinking as if into the earth's core", constitutes a spatial rebellion against the surface social order, giving her respite in the darkness, "a temporary escape from gender roles". Climbing to the top of a eucalyptus tree and making the gesture of "shaking the branches to defy gravity" transform the conquest of physical height into a psychological desire for dominance, momentarily dissolving the oppressive sense of social hierarchy. The boundaries of the paddock become psychological fetters for Sybylla; the wire fences cutting across the horizon, with "the metallic glint like a watcher's eye", internalize the limits of material space into a mechanism of self-censorship, giving rise to her destructive urge when burning letters, seeing "flames as the only exit". The road system becomes a network of discipline. The smooth road to Goulburn, like "a tentacle of civilization thrust into the bush's heart", symbolizes the intrusion of colonial modernity. Her choice to gallop off the proper track, "making Dart crush the signposts", becomes a ritual of resistance on a micro level.

The bush's climatic changes also affect Sybylla's mental state. During prolonged drought, the land "cracks like an old woman's wrinkles", triggering a cognitive crisis in which her "thoughts split into fragments of knowledge". A sudden rainstorm, like "dark clouds breaking free like prisoners from a cage", brings a brief catharsis that instead deepens her fear of a capricious fate. The moonlight carries a sense of double judgment. The full moon illuminating Possum Gully, its "silvery radiance like God's operating lamp", forces her to confront the wounds of her soul in her diary. The absolute darkness of the new moon, akin to "a void as thick as ink", breeds in her a frenzied impulse to "scream and release spiritual toxins".

The concrete bush predicament Sybylla faces manifests on three levels: material, gender, and spiritual. On the material level, she is caught in strangling confinement. Not only does she endure excessive physical exploitation, forced to perform farm labour beyond the capacity of a young girl—milking until her fingers crack, harvesting grass under the scorching sun are routines—but her body is reduced to a compensatory tool for the family's bankruptcy. She also suffers from severe intellectual famine: The only books in Possum Gully are the Bible and agricultural manuals. She can only secretly hide remnants of Dickens' novels, facing the regret that "the writing has been gnawed by cockroaches", and nearly suffocates in this spiritual desert. On the gender level, she endures harsh discipline. Her mother imposes embroidery lessons, making "the needle tip pierce the beads of freedom's blood", forbids her from riding, and "locks the saddle in the barn as if imprisoning her wildness", attempting to domesticate the bush girl into a compliant commodity for civilized society. The marriage market of the bush community subjects her to an objectifying gaze: Neighbors see her as "eccentric inventory awaiting sale", and her aunt even states bluntly, "Even a lame millionaire must be seized" (Franklin, 1990, p. 96), reducing female value to a unit of reproduction and labour. On the spiritual level, she faces the chronic corrosion of isolation. On one hand, there is the self-devouring toxicity of thought—no one understands her longing for art, and she can only mock herself in her diary, "Talking about opera like a kangaroo" (Franklin, 1990, p. 67). On the other hand, there is the spiritual siege of verbal violence: She is derided as a "mad girl" by those around her, and neighbors even remark, "Should be sent to a mental hospital" (Franklin, 1990, p. 82). The community dissolves her heterogeneity through stigmatization.

Despite being caught in multiple predicaments, Sybylla always holds fast to her selfhood and devises numerous strategies to break through to freedom. She deliberately removes her gloves to labour under the scorching sun, letting “the sunburn peel away like a snake’s rebirth”, transforming her scars into a somatic manifesto against ladylike aesthetics. She also ventures alone at night into valleys haunted by wild dogs, “waltzing with danger under the moonlight”, using adventure to counter the spiritual castration of daily life. She writes poems on the back of account books while taking breaks from milking, letting “bloodstains and ink merge into a cipher of resistance”, distilling the misery of survival into crystals of art. She exchanges forbidden books with wandering shepherds, trading apples for the works of Nietzsche banned by the church, establishing an underground spiritual supply line beyond the defenses of orthodox culture. She builds a treehouse in a century-old eucalyptus, “hiding manuscripts among the branches like a squirrel storing food”, transforming vertical space into a three-dimensional fortress of resistance against horizontal discipline. She also steals paraffin oil to read late into the night, letting “the light slash through the darkness as thought pierces ignorance”, reconstructing an individual spatiotemporal order through the theft of time.

Sybylla’s Growth and Transformation

Sybylla’s life is one of continuous growth and transformation, in which she undergoes a thorough transition from dependence to independence, endures numerous inner struggles, and ultimately makes her own choices, achieving spiritual liberation. During the period from childhood to adolescence, Sybylla experienced the complete collapse of the cradle of dependency. First came her disillusionment with the paternal idol. As a child, she viewed her father through a heroic lens, regarding Dick as an “encyclopedic deity”. When riding together, she even felt, “His arms are the fulcrum of the world” (Franklin, 1990, p. 27), relying on him to resist her mother’s traditional discipline. But when she witnessed with her own eyes her father’s descent into alcoholism and bankruptcy, seeing him “Lying drunk in the mud like a rotten eucalyptus trunk” (Franklin, 1990, p. 76), her spiritual pillar collapsed entirely, giving her a first taste of existential nothingness, the sense that “the world is shifting sand”. At the same time, she saw through the false promise of matriarchal protection. In the early days of seeking refuge with her grandmother, she immersed herself in the “civilized mirage of pianos and bookshelves” at Caddagat, attempting to reconstruct a relationship of dependence through aristocratic cultivation. But when she discovered that her aunts were “snobs wrapped in lace” and that tea-party conversations revolved entirely around dowries and lineage, she soberly realized that aristocratic protection was still a cage in essence.

The period working as a governess marked the painful throes of Sybylla’s awakening. At the M’Swat household, she endured a form of “charitable employment”; the mistress referred to her wages as “A subsidy for a poor girl” (Franklin, 1990, p. 128), giving her a first taste of the humiliation of having her knowledge commodified. She established authority through corporal punishment, “the tremor in her palm as she struck with the bamboo cane beating like the heartbeat of rebellion”, and for the first time savored the taste of autonomous power through violence. When writing late at night, “the kerosene lamp nailed her shadow to the wall as if nailing down her soul”, she temporarily escaped real-life dependence through fictional narrative. It was only when her manuscript was burned by her mother as kindling, watching “ashes drifting away like broken wings”, that she came to realize that artistic redemption must be premised on economic independence. In the face of emotional blackmail, she also launched a thorough counterattack. When confronted with Grey’s “condescending proposal”,

she deliberately responded with bush slang, declaring bluntly, "A gentleman is as ridiculous as a dummy in a shop window" (Franklin, 1990, p. 113), deconstructing the romantic scene into a theatre of power games. She resisted Holden's temptation of inheritance, firmly stating, "A million pounds can't buy my backbone" (Franklin, 1990, p. 157), completing a spiritual patricide through economic refusal. With Beecham, she proposed to him when he was bankrupt, confessing, "I am a wife only when you need one" (Franklin, 1990, p. 190), subverting the savior narrative in traditional courtship. After his family fortune was restored, she left resolutely, lamenting, "The sound of gold coins buries the corpse of love" (Franklin, 1990, p. 202), revealing the irreconcilability between dependent relationships and personal independence.

Afterwards, she burned the letters from the old house in Possum Gully, watching "the flames lick the ashes of shackles", symbolizing a complete severance from family memory. She chose a life of wandering and writing, with "only a quill and wild fruits in her knapsack", countering the discipline of settled civilization with a nomadic state. Eventually, she accepts the loneliness of "Talking to kangaroos for a lifetime" (Franklin, 1990, p. 231). She writes in her diary, "My readers are the wind of the future" (Franklin, 1990, p. 231), sublimating her isolated situation into a necessary price for freedom. She also inscribes on the title page of her posthumous manuscript, "My crown is woven with thorns and starlight" (Franklin, 1990, p. 245), completing the identity reconstruction from a victim to a self-crowned queen.

Sybylla's inner world is always filled with intense struggle. As an idealist, she experiences numerous spiritual convulsions. On one hand, there is the seduction and betrayal of the literary utopia. She secretly hides the remaining pages of *A Tale of Two Cities*, feeling that "the fog of London seeps out from between the lines". She regards writing as "an escape route paved with ink", only to discover under the kerosene lamp that "the paper is saturated with the dampness of reality, the handwriting blurred like a defeated army". When her mother throws the first draft of her novel into the fireplace, letting "the flames devour sentences as civilization swallows wildness", she is forced to realize in the ashes that "artistic redemption requires the fuel of reality". On the other hand, there is the deconstruction and reconstruction of the myth of love. Facing the romantic advances of gentlemen, she both longs to "be rescued like Jane Eyre" and fears a "Rochester-like spiritual cage". She writes in her diary, "His kiss is a gold-plated handcuff" (Franklin, 1990, p. 108). Her proactive proposal to Beecham when he is bankrupt is an act of "guarding a free soul with a worldly contract", while her departure after the family's revival is a choice to "be a burning shooting star rather than a gilded caged bird". Her emotional logic is constantly torn between self-sacrifice and self-preservation.

At the same time, she faces multiple existential predicaments. When choosing to write in poverty, she "listens on an empty stomach to the friction of her stomach walls like the roar of thought", sublimating physical pain into "an ascetic ritual of spiritual discipline". When secretly reading Nietzsche late at night, she is startled to realize, "God is dead, but the cockroaches in the kitchen are still alive" (Franklin, 1990, p. 172). The metaphysical speculations of existentialism ultimately collapse into survival anxiety. When neighbors gossip that "the mad girl should be sent to a mental hospital", she deliberately recites *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in church, "Using German to blast the hypocrisy of Sunday" (Franklin, 1990, p. 181), turning the alienated gaze of others into a stage for performative rebellion. Yet in her diary, she admits, "Longing to be understood is like a drowning person longing for air" (Franklin, 1990, p. 88), exposing the fragile core beneath her tough exterior.

Amidst these numerous contradictions and setbacks, Sybylla also achieves self-growth. In her early days, she used crude slang to counter elegant proposals, engaging in acts such as “trampling a sonnet into the mud”, which was in essence the bravado of the weak. In her later phase, she develops a poeticized attack, “cursing reality with Keatsian rhythms”, completing the sublimation from instinctive resistance to aesthetic struggle. In her youth, escaping Possum Gully was merely a geographical flight, “the carriage kicking up the dust of freedom”; in her maturity, she chooses spiritual nomadism, “the body remaining while the mind traverses the continental shelf”, practicing a more profound subversion within settlement.

Sybylla's ultimate liberation is not a static state of victory, but a continuous destructive creation. As she rides away into the depths of the bush and disappears, sparks from the collision of horseshoes and flint ignite the entire eucalypt forest—these burning giant trees secrete antitoxic resin, providing a primal vaccine for the spiritual wasteland of the colony. Her choice proves that the highest form of independence is not the avoidance of oppression, but the transformation of oppression itself into a furnace for forging freedom. Just as she carves on the bark her final lines: “My territory expands in the ashes / Every drifting spark is an immortal declaration” (Franklin, 1990, p. 251). This rebel who vanishes into the Australian horizon ultimately becomes an eternal revolutionary totem in the hearts of all who are confined—both a requiem for the incinerated old world and a barbaric spark for a new epoch.

Modern Revelations of Independent Personality

Sybylla's struggle offers revelations for contemporary individuals trapped in the cage of modernity. In terms of economic sovereignty, she refuses the lure of inheritance, stating bluntly, “A million pounds can't buy my backbone” (Franklin, 1990, p. 157), cautioning us to resist the “refined poverty” manufactured by consumerism through digital minimalism, and to reconstruct consumer sovereignty. In terms of knowledge production, her secret reading of Nietzsche in the bush inspires us, in an age of fragmented information, to build a “private intellectual fortress”, using interdisciplinary notes to break through algorithmic echo chambers and create a personalised knowledge graph. In terms of emotional relations, her choice in marriage—to unite when needed and leave when wealthy—suggests that modern individuals should set clear boundaries in intimate relationships, retaining the courage to be independent and to dissolve the bond at any time.

Sybylla's strategies of resistance can be transformed into modern action programmes. As for the creative transformation of micro-violence, she establishes authority through corporal punishment; in the modern workplace, the disadvantaged can practice “legitimate sabotage”, such as leaving work on time, as a form of silent resistance. With regard to the aesthetic reproduction of pain, she sublimates survival suffering into art; modern individuals can emulate her by transforming alienated labour into performance art, carving patterns of freedom on their shackles. In respect of the collective resonance of solitude, she carves poems on a eucalyptus tree, heralding the loneliness economy; modern people can build a “reverse fan community” through encrypted blogs and blockchain timestamps, sublimating personal loneliness into a cypherpunk spiritual resistance.

The author questions Sybylla's idealism. Her rebellion, though reflecting the predicaments of her time, is largely a blind negation of traditional roles and lacks a deep understanding of the complexity of reality. She rejects the roles of wife and mother, declaring, “I can't live my whole life for my family like my mother” (Franklin, 1990, p. 62) and claiming, “I would rather be alone for the rest of my life to pursue my dreams”

(Franklin, 1990, p. 143); this fantasy of freedom may be a form of escapism. Her mother wishes her to “live a stable life” (Franklin, 1990, p. 58), yet Sybylla regards this as a shackle, misunderstanding maternal love. Faced with love, she confesses, “I love him, but I can’t give up my dreams for him” (Franklin, 1990, p. 152), displaying a stubbornness that overlooks the possibility of reconciling love and dreams. The novel presents a one-sided female image whose awakening lacks insight into human nature, provoking unease that her idealism may ultimately lead her into a deeper predicament.

Conclusion

In summary, through a close reading of *My brilliant career*, this study has profoundly analysed the complex process through which Sybylla Melvyn constructs her independent personality within the bush predicament. The thesis not only deepens the understanding of this classic literary figure, but also, through the proposal of a series of theoretical concepts, advances the intersection and integration of feminism, postcolonial ecocriticism, and literary spatial studies. Sybylla’s story reveals to us that true freedom lies not in evading predicaments, but in possessing the courage and wisdom to transform the mud of adversity into the nourishment of life. Her “brilliant career” is precisely a thorny path on which the value of her own existence is continuously affirmed through dynamic struggle, and it holds an immortal revelatory significance for any individual, in any era, who pursues spiritual independence.

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