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**GENDER, CLASS AND THE AUSTRALIAN LEGEND IN MILES FRANKLIN'S
*MY BRILLIANT CAREER***

PORTO ALEGRE

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“If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.” – C.S. Lewis

“Long life I wish to all my enemies, for them to see every day our victory.” - Valesca

RESUMO

Este trabalho analisa as representações de gênero e classe, bem como a influência sobre as personagens encontradas no romance intitulado *My Brilliant Career*, escrita por uma famosa autora australiana do final do século XIX e início do XX, Miles Franklin. Hoje este livro é considerado um marco do feminismo. Embora atualmente esta seja a marca mais notória deste romance, foi a autêntica descrição australiana, de suas paisagens e as pessoas, que chamou primeiramente a atenção do público. Em 1901, ano de sua publicação, a Austrália tornou-se uma nação unificada e o romance foi aclamado como um verdadeiro exemplar de literatura australiana e nacionalista. Neste trabalho, analiso as personagens como são descritos no romance e comparo com a autoimagem da Austrália, discutida por Russel Ward em seu livro *Australian Legend*. Sua obra descreve a história da lenda australiana, os padrões sociais e padrões masculinos na época descritos por ele são aqui comparados com os do livro de Franklin.

Palavras-chave: Feminismo; Literatura australiana; Australian Legend; Miles Franklin.

ABSTRACT

This paper analyses gender and class representations as well as the influence upon the characters found in the novel entitled *My Brilliant Career* by the famous Australian author of the late 1800's and early 1900's Miles Franklin. Today this book is considered a mark of feminism. Even though it is this that marks the novel nowadays, it was the authentic Australian description of the landscapes and the people that first caught the eye of the public. In 1901, the year of its publishing, Australia became a unified nation and the novel was acclaimed as piece of true Australian nationalist literature. In this research I analyse the characters as described in the novel and compare it to the Australian self-image discussed by Russel Ward in his *Australian Legend*. His book outlines the history of the Australian legend, the social and male standards he points out as being so are here compared to that of Franklin.

Key-words: Feminism; Australian Literature; Australian Legend; Miles Franklin.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In this paper I intend to discuss gender and class representations found in the novel by Miles Franklin called *My Brilliant Career* and analyse the influences of the society she lived in in the late 1800's. Here I seek to outline the main characteristics of Australian society in the 1800's through Franklin's book, more specifically how male and female characters behave in society and how they respond to expectations put upon them because of their gender or their social class. The outline was supported by the book *The Australian Legend* of the historian Russel Ward (1958), who discusses in his book the becoming of Australian society and the forming of the Australian Legend.

My Brilliant Career was Miles Franklin's first novel written in the 1890's and today we read her as what is considered nowadays one of the early works of feminism in Australia. I was unaware feminism began in Australia around the turn of the century until I researched her life and work. Miles dedicated her life to reach independence and to fight to give women their rights as citizens, the right to vote. Her novel was the most important literature piece of the year of Federation, thus greatly welcomed in Australia later on. The Federation of Australia was when the British colonies in the continent of *Australasia* became unified as one country, with the exception of some that voted against the creation of a new country. The fact is that it was not just another romance with a happy ending but a true piece of Australian Literature "born of the bush" and written by a woman and this is what caught the public in its time. To be of the Bush is to be an authentic rural Australian, someone who is hard working, happy and represents the Australian spirit. By addressing "My fellow Australians" and expressing the narrators love for being "of the bush" Miles concludes the novel on a political note, expressing her love to the nation and her brothers and sisters as she says. She loves her nation even before it was a proper nation.

In order to demonstrate the influences of the gender and class standards found in the novel and compare the point of view of the author with a general overview of the Australian self-image I resort to the book by Australian historian Russel Ward entitled *The Australian Legend*. The book is not about Australian history as a whole, it is about the Australian legend and how it came to be based in historical facts. In other words it talks of the idea Australians have of themselves, the Australian self-image and through a male perspective.

Ward was born in Adelaide, Australia, in 1914 and died at the age of 81 in 1995. He graduated in English through the University of Adelaide, taught and lectured at other universities, was a deputy chancellor for eight years and during World War II he served in an army psychological unit. He was also a member of the Communist Party of Australia, which

brought him into the focus of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation and caused him to cancel the membership in the Party.

His book is broadly known for its view on the Australian self-image. In it Ward focuses on how Australian culture was influenced by its colonizers and how the men from the bush carried egalitarian thoughts. The author does not attempt to give a broad history of the Australian culture, as he says himself in one of the forewords to his book, he merely has the intention of informing Australians of the forces that helped shape the nation.

This egalitarian spirit was at peak in the year of the Federation, according to Ward Australia was from its roots essentially an egalitarian nation, which is openly discussed in the novel and reinforced by the narrator's thoughts. Franklin witnessed this egalitarian spirit and was influenced by her early feminist ideas and therefore imprinted her own life in the fictional autobiography of Sybylla Melvyn, as we can relate when researching her life. Even though the characters may be fictional and in some ways exaggerated, they certainly paint the society of the turn of the century.

This paper consists of four main chapters; the first brings a biography of Miles Franklin and deals with the context of the novel in question and a summary of the story, marking the main events of the story told by Sybylla Melvyn. The second chapter is a brief history of Australia outlining main events important to this study based on Russel Ward's book *The Australian Legend*, which traces in the Australian history and how the Australian self-image came to be.

The third chapter outlines the description of female and male characters in the novel and compares it to the Australian Legend of Ward in order to trace the male and female self-image of the late 1800's. In this way, I selected male and female characters to outline their descriptions found in the novel and compare them to the Australian Legend discussed by Russel Ward.

To outline the society where the author inspired her novel, I analysed gender and class influences in the speech and behaviour of the characters. It was interesting to find that influences in the narrator's and character's speech and behaviour proved that even in an essentially egalitarian society there are, even if smaller than we are used to, social class and gender differences, and they influence even the most egalitarian and feminist of people. The next chapter is the discussion of the excerpts selected from the book that represent gender and class influences of the society in context and how Franklin sees the society she lives in. Lastly, follows the closing of the analysis in discussion and the references used.

2 *MY BRILLIANT CAREER*

The focus of this paper is a novel written in the late 1890's and considered a literary icon and perfect representation of the Australian way of life. That not being all, it was written by a woman, a very young woman, in a society that still did not believe in gender equality and therefore carries within its words a perspective that was not even considered acceptable in its own time. The Australian self-image permeates throughout the story evidencing certain patterns of thought and behaviour common in those days. Because of the author it offers the readers a different perspective from that which was expected and at the same time reveals dominating standards of society. The novel in question, being a fictional autobiography, allows a certain closeness of the author with the narrator permitting parallels between their lives. Such parallels caused great commotion among Franklin's society, which makes it evidently necessary to trace the author's life.

This chapter discusses the author's life, the context of the novel and the plot of the story in order to trace the parallels to be analysed in this paper.

2.1 SARAH MILES FRANKLIN

Stella Maria Sarah Miles Franklin was born in 1879 and died at the age of 75 in 1954 at the state of New South Wales. She was a fourth generation Australian, with her great-great-grandfather from her mother's side coming from England as a convict for theft. She was the eldest of seven in her family. Was born in her grandmother's estate where she lived until 1889 when her father decided to make a better living by moving and dealing livestock. He was unsuccessful and for that she and her family had to move many times, because of their low income they were unable to keep larger properties and so moved to smaller residences. She clearly expresses her frustration with her being a woman and her own social conditions in her first novel discussed in this paper, both her and Sybylla suffered from downward mobility which caused them to have a greater social awareness and aspired as career to reach independence aside from men.

Education at home and at a public school brought her to a slight educational disadvantage. Aside from her poor schooling history she used her authentic bush knowledge to her advantage and with her great interest in literature she pursued her own education by reading those who inspired her, such as Charlotte Brontë, and was encouraged by other tutors. With such, she made a choice to write instead of teach and worked as a governess and a nurse, helping build her independence and become the authentic bush writer she is known as today.

Growing up in a nearly unified country, just before Australian Federation, she was always exposed to democratic and egalitarian perspectives. Right along with Federation was Feminism, the first wave of feminism in Australia was concerning suffrage in the late nineteenth century which Australian women fought for and were granted just after the Australian unification. Australia and New Zealand were one of the first countries to grant women the rights as citizens, the right to vote. Living in under these circumstances her novels clearly demonstrate how influential these nationalist, democratic and egalitarian thoughts were to her, evidencing the environment she was witnessing.

By 1899 at the age of 20 she finished her first and most famous novel, *My Brilliant Career*. Her novel was rejected locally, but by being accepted by a famous bush writer and editor, Henry Lawson that had enough influence in Britain to publish her novel in Edinburgh, she published her first novel in 1901 in Britain. And because it came right along with the Australian Federation, when all the British colonies in Australia were united as one nation, it represents as a mark of the Australian unification. Thus, in literary circles around the world the novel marked the beginning of a unified Australia as a representation of the Australian bush culture. It stands till today as a nationalist novel that marked the beginning of the Australian nation.

From 1901 on, Miles' life was changed from a resourceless unknown female to an acclaimed writer. She was well known and introduced into literary niches and feminist circles by several personalities who fostered and sheltered her as a young promising writer. She gained notoriety and encouraged by her feminist friends to pursue her ideal she joined the feminist party disguised as Sarah Frankling, one of her many pseudonyms.

She left Australia for United States in 1906 intending to work and publish one manuscript a year of the three she had written since she published her first novel in 1901. She spent her first months in California and then moved towards New York. But stayed in Chicago up till 1915 where she worked as a secretary in National Women's Trade Union League of America. Growing professionally, in 1912 she was working as an assistant editor to a monthly journal and then as co-editor and by 1915 as editor. During her time in Chicago she wrote the little-known romance *The Net of Circumstance* which she published in London in 1915 under the pseudonym "Mr and Mrs Ogniblat L'Artsau", it being her only creative work done in America to be published.

At the beginning of World War I, because of ideological and political differences, she left the League and went to London in 1915. There she began working as a cook in a café and other odds jobs while she negotiated with publishers or journalism under male pseudonyms-

noms de plume. After that she worked as a nurse in different units around the world during the war.

Health problems in her family and homesickness brought her back officially to Australia in 1927. With little money, she had to care for her mother who was sick. But in 1928 she published her well known novel *Up the Country*, the first of seven under the pseudonym “Brent of Bin Bin”, whose identity she made great efforts to keep secret. And in 1936, *All that Swagger* was published and acclaimed as an instant success, this marked her career permanently with her winning the S. H. Memorial Prize of Australia and putting her once again in evidence in Australian Literature.

In the 1930’s she decided to take the cause of Australian writers. For the next twenty years she dedicated her life to promoting Australian literature. And in 1939 she won the Prior Memorial Prize again which gave her a permanent place in Australian literature and in the University, with several lectures on the history and criticism of Australian literature.

With ill health she lived until the age of 74. Her will left provision for a foundation of a literary prize. It was said that the prize was to ease the burden of other authors, for she was never rich herself and struggled with finances in difficult times. Her endowment of the Miles Franklin literary award founded the most prestigious literary institution in Australia.

2.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE NOVEL

The novel discussed and analysed in this paper is the fictional autobiography of Sybylla Melvyn, a typical Australian girl “born of the bush”. It tells the story a teenage girl that resists the perceived limits of female capacity in her society. As Sybylla, Miles was also unhappy with the impositions on her sex and fought for independence, rejecting marriage proposals and pursuing a career of her own.

Initially entitled *My Brilliant (?) Career*, the question mark was later dropped because of editor’s choice. *My Brilliant Career* surprised its editors being written by a teenage girl in the late 1890’s, Miles Franklin was not yet 20 years old when she finished her first novel. Although it was rejected for publication in Australia, it was published in Britain by William Blackwood & Sons in 1901 under the name ‘Miles Franklin’ in Edinburgh by the influence of her mentor Henry Lawson. Franklin hoped to keep her gender a secret, but Henry Lawson gave it away by announcing in the book’s introduction ‘that the story had been written by a girl’. From this point on she was known as Miles and became famous.

As introduction to the autobiography in an opening notice the narrator refers directly to the readers as “my dear fellow Australians”. With such she situates the time, the place, to

whom she writes and why she writes it. By directing the introduction to her “dear fellow Australians”, she positions herself as an Australian writing to Australians, even before it became a country, which happened not long after she wrote. This places the novel as an early display of patriotism, how the narrator situates the story and expresses her love for the place she was born made it a forerunner of Australian literature.

What caught the eye of the critics in the first place was the description of the Australian life and land, considered true native work ‘of the bush’ as put by Lawson in the introduction. The novel takes place in the southern regions of New South Wales during the 1890’s when the egalitarian spirit of Australia was boiling just before the Federation of Australia. The Commonwealth of Australia was officially established in 1901, when colonies of Australia became a Federation part of Britain and became a proper country. Thus joined as a country the British Empire as one nation.

Because of the instant repercussion the author was not ready for the success of her novel. Sybylla’s life was too similar to hers and the public drew parallels and for that she was harshly criticized by her society for writing such a caricature of her family and neighbours. This made her stop its publishing and only a few decades later it was allowed to be reprinted after her death.

The ideal for women in the 19th century was for them to marry good husbands and have many children, it was all that was expected of them and all they should hope for. Sybylla also criticizes what she thinks men hope/look for in a wife that is that they be pretty, know how to take care of the house properly, be well educated only to educate their children, be mild and polite, not talking too much and not thinking much. As the narrator says herself, if you develop the reputation of being clever you will have less chance of finding a husband, even less if you are ugly.

In the words of Sybylla, Franklin opposes herself to these ideals and social conventions imposed on her sex, to her they are a curse. All she dreams of is to be independent enough to choose her fate, if it would be to marry or (in her case) pursue a career. And a career in her time, even though Feminism was not far from bursting, was considered something inadequate for good (family) girls; as Sybylla’s grandmother states her opinion on the matter just as Lucy (the mother) and both represent the general conservative class of that time period.

The fictional autobiography is considered today one of the early works of Australian feminism, consequently feminism as a whole. The feminist movement first began and was

effective in the Australasian colonies, it was successful in both state and federal levels in Australia from 1894 on. Because of this, women's suffrage was a common subject in Miles' teens and we can see the direct link to her words in the novel. It is said by the critics that Sybylla represented not only few women that felt differently from the general expectations imposed to their sex, but she spoke for a whole generation that came with her and after her.

It is interesting to state that the novel was only reprinted in the 1970s and was struck again popularly, coincidentally right along with the third wave of feminism in Australia. The second wave of Australian feminism began in the 1960s and significantly undermined legal and social barriers which made women the 'second sex' - economically and legally subordinate in marriage, discriminated against and exploited in the work place, and denied access to reproductive and sexual freedom.

Miles Franklin dedicated her life to gain independence and fought for women's rights. Her first novel is a first display of her egalitarian ideas, of both gender and class. These ideas were merely the starting point of her life and along with her contacts they brought her into high feminist circles.

2.3 THE STORY

In the introduction Sybylla Melvyn introduces herself as an Australian writing to her "fellow Australians". She is writing as the heroine eager to live out what has been kept from her in her teen years due to her social conditions and expresses her discontentment for these not being suitable to her desires, conditions and happenings she writes along her autobiography. This evidence's one of the main streams in the plot of the story that she discusses throughout the novel. From the very beginning she makes it clear that her "sphere in life [...] is not congenial" to her desires and expectations. Through this she puts herself in a contradiction with herself throughout the novel, where she wants more from her life but also has to learn to live up to the expectations of her social class and responsibilities to her gender.

By explaining that she writes about herself and only to tell her own story, the narrator releases herself from the readers' expectations, implying that they are for a romance and for happy endings, and frees herself to write of reality and real people and not of false happy endings. For that, she makes a point of stating that the story is not of "trash descriptions of beautiful sunsets and whispering of wind," instead it is about herself and herself only. Sybylla also emphasizes her critical view of society through her excuse as to why she does not want the reader to expect the story having a plot. She explains it is because her life has no time for plots, for she belongs to a class of human beings in the social sphere that have not the time for

plots, rather they do all they can to work and make their living. Having a plot in life, or in other words, making plans in life, the narrator calls a luxury, a luxury that she cannot have, but very well dreams of it altogether, as the title suggests: she pursues a Brilliant Career even it being above her social conditions. And with that consideration as final notice she begins the telling of her story.

The novel begins with the first recollections of Sybylla's life in the place called Caddagat where she lived at when she was little and latter returned briefly to live with her grandmother. She and her family stayed there for a little while until they moved to Bruggabrong where she grew into her adolescence just before they moved to Possum Gully, which is when she begins to tell the story. As an opening she describes her everyday life with her family. Her father owned a lot of land, stations that were used as shelter for travellers and had enough space to have a lot of cattle. This was when father was doing well in life, he was able to provide the best for the family. By describing her mother and father's origin's, the reader has an idea of where she comes from in class terms. Her father had no great ancestry, but earned his place in society through his own hands by working and making his own fortune. Her mother was an aristocrat, one of the Bossiers (big land owners, usually called squatters) of Caddagat, whose family maintained land and status in society. With her family's customs, since she was small she learned to be an egalitarian. They treated everyone as equals, being them of the high society or poor rural farmer and welcomed everyone who needed help in their home being them wealthy people or beggars.

Still in Chapter One of the novel she tells that the days lived in Bruggabrong in her early childhood years were the happiest of her life. It was where she was still too young to care and as she describes herself she did not have to face the "conventionalities which are the curse of her sex", where she could play the way she wished to and treat everyone as equals not having to trouble herself with plans for the future and marriage. From the very start her mother (Lucy) is displeased with this careless behaviour this turns out to be the centre of their discussions. She was called by her mother a "great unwomanly tomboy" and often questioned herself who would marry such a daughter.

The story continues with Sybylla telling how drastically her life changed when her family moved to Possum Gully and why her misfortunes began. Her father accepts the idea of some friends that he was wasting his talents with dealing livestock in a place that did not favour that type of business. So in order to be able to continue and enhance his business he decides to change means of income from breeding cows to dealing them in an attempt to

make more money. Because of that he sold his land and moved to a smaller place closer to a larger town. Dick Melvyn's new business eventually turns out to be a complete failure and the whole family was undermined.

Living in a more crowded place, the Melvyn's had a larger number of neighbours and received many visits that weren't at all interesting to Sybylla or her mother. As she points out, they were all good Bushmen, farmers that cared only for their land and only stuck to subjects regarding that or the weather. The ignorance of their neighbours concerning subjects such as literature and other cultural affairs is harshly pointed out by Sybylla and as she states, they all made her life very miserable, especially when she and her brothers were forced to attend school with them. Her mother was against letting her children go to school with such limited people, she preferred to have them be tutored at home, in this way she demonstrates once more how subtly she considered herself above the rest regarding education. Evidencing that what Sybylla and her family valued the most wasn't wealth or social status, but how literate and learned one is. However, Sybylla then had to live with people that had a different lifestyle and different expectations in life than her own. Still, it was the school where she finished her education and the only one she ever new.

The story continues as Sybylla's family starts having financial problems. She describes how her father changed business and tried new ways to profit, making his family work hard to sustain a dairy farm because he did not profit enough from his stock dealing. And with this failure her father started gambling and drinking. Dick Melvyn went from a respectable man, a dear husband and a hero as a father, to a hard drinking and miserable man. He became cruel and a shame for Sybylla and her family, ruining her view of marriage and men in general. She set as example her parents relationship. Throughout the entire story she expresses her aversion to marriage and how it is a curse brought upon women, a view firstly based on her father's business choices and drinking problem and further more added with her expectations towards men.

With the frustration of a bad father and an unhappy place to live, Sybylla starts out expressing her revolt towards her mother and her own situation. As her mother was a proud sort of person, always wanting to meet every obligation in life, she never asked for help from anybody and kept her unhappiness to herself, always respecting her husband as an authority. To this Sybylla did not agree and whenever questioned she would express her harsh opinion of marriage and expectations in life, always being different from what mother thought proper of a girl in those times. Wanting to pursue a "brilliant career" and planning a life not based on

marriage were things considered improper to her sex. In addition the social class Sybylla found herself in also made it impossible for a woman to want more than a wealthy husband and - if that did not happen - to work hard and earn her food and money to help her family. Two things that were taught by her grandmother to her mother not to be wanted and to be considered improper for a respectable woman do desire.

Eventually, her family runs out of money and her father accumulate debts with gambling and drinking which they are unable to pay and have their belongings sold in an auction by the government. With the help of the neighbours and some relatives, they regain their belongings but cannot change their poverty situation. At this point her mother is the one running the house and instead of asking for help from the neighbours with her drunken husband she thinks of ways to avoid the situation. Sybylla puts her mother's arguments in a way it seems she is being persecuted by her mother by being the eldest daughter in taking all the responsibility for her family. She makes it seem her mother only drives to her the responsibility of being useful and making money to help with the house. They do not reach an agreement as to what Sybylla should do for she wants to make her own living with a career. But with a letter from her mother to her grandmother they resolve to send her off back to Caddagat to live with her grandmother and to this she agrees only hesitating in leaving her brothers and sisters.

At this point Sybylla begins to narrate the second turning point of her life. After more than ten years, moving back to where she was happy revives the happiest times of her life. She then introduces the three members of her family, her grandmother Mrs. Bossier, her aunt Helen divorced from her husband, and her Uncle Julius that took care of the family business and the farm.

Her grandmother was a very elegant and kind woman, always welcoming everyone in need and as Sybylla points out they even bought extra provisions for occasional travellers that came by and needed assistance. She and the Aunt remind Sybylla several times of her obligations to her family, to her sex and where she stands in the social sphere. They both are parameters of what women ought to be in that society and set examples of what should be expected of them. Aunt Helen was married very young to a Colonel that took her to live in America where his regiment was, in less than a year he was tired of her and fell in love with another woman. Unable to obtain a divorce, he deserted her and she was forced to return home. She then obtained a judicial separation and continued to live with her mother. Uncle

Julius set an example to Sybylla of what a man should be to her, taking care of business and being familiar with cultural affairs such as literature and plays and life in the big city.

Throughout the novel there are three times the heroine faces marriage either being proposed to or disturbed by the thought of such. In all the events she reacts in similar ways but her excuses as to why she will not marry always change. The first time she is faced with such possibility is with Everard Grey. He was an orphan of a very aristocratic family and the adoptive son of her grandmother, he lives in the big city (Sydney) and a promising barrister very good with the ladies. He is the sort of man Sybylla greatly admires for his knowledge in music, literature, and etiquette; as she says, he was the kind of man that was well bred and possessed of leisure and culture. She is pleased with his compliments to her for him being such an expert of the arts at first. But she overhears his confiding to Aunt Helen about taking her to the big city and having a career as an actress by marrying her immediately defies him because she feels he takes her for granted. What was merely a speculation and exchanging of ideas she takes very seriously and thus changes her behaviour towards him. She then needs to prove to him and herself that she does not easily fall in love and does not consider him any more than she considers anyone else. And with her considerations comes her first expression of hatred towards men.

The second time she is faced with marital thoughts is when she is proposed to by Frank Hawden, a helper at her grandmother's place and belonging to the same social class as herself. She considers him a very low sort of person in a literate/literacy way and not like her in any way, she also thinks he is not at all what a man should be instead he behaves like a naïve child. He misreads Sybylla's treatment towards him and therefore thinks she is paying her attentions to him and concludes she like him. This leads him to proposing to her and on an attempt to force her into marriage he asks her hand to her grandmother. With this she is confronted by him, her Aunt and grandmother with the possibility of marriage and this leads her to express how low she thinks he is regarding his education and appealed to his manliness. Secondly, she emphatically says why she never wants to marry because of how degrading to women she considers it to be. Clearly she links it directly to her parent's marriage, as she considers them the ones who taught her what life is like.

In a third instance of marital confrontation she actually accepts the proposal, but only with certain demands and under certain circumstances. Harold Beecham was the man she considered the only one she truly loved and the only one that could change her situation in life. Their first encounter, as she states, was not that of a romantic heroine and her love.

Rather they met as strangers, him thinking she was a servant girl and then latter her counting advantage over him for doing so. Their relationship develops throughout almost half the novel with him evidently treating her differently from the others and her denying any resembling of feelings from him towards her. Seeing each other every week, in less than a year they become close friends and he proposes to her just before her seventeenth birthday.

Sybylla considers him a perfect example of a bushman, someone who knows how to work and also has enough knowledge of etiquette and culture as herself. This made her fonder of him than of any other of her suitors. He was the only one she ever truly considered the possibility of marrying and also the only one who challenged her wits and respected her opinion as a woman ahead of her age in maturity.

But not even the guarantee of a possibility of being a writer, or the multiple demonstrations of affection or her own feelings towards him kept her from denying love. When the first proposal is made by Beecham, as she describes the proposal she also gives way to her own thoughts regarding her plans if they ever effectively were engaged. She thinks of first accepting his proposal and then declining it later just for the fun of playing with his heart. She agrees to being engaged with him but only in secret and they agree in a three month probation period where they will measure their feelings for one another. Both of them are free to end it when they felt like it.

Because Sybylla agrees to the engagement, Harold attempts to kiss her causing her to instinctively hit his face with a whip in her hand, thus once again showing her aversion to physical contact and men in general. Later she reinforces that unless they are effectively engaged she will not allow him to lay a finger on her. The second physical contact they have is fruit of a disagreement between them. On her birthday, just after they are engaged, Sybylla provokes Harold paying her attentions to another man. This causes him to confront her disagreeing with her conduct towards men. They end up arguing about marriage, women and their duty in society, a subject which instigates her greatly and one which she felt compelled to share her strong opinion. She apologizes for her unwomanly behaviour and he also for his jealousy.

Furthermore their plans take a turn when the man she considers incapable of love and feelings towards herself is deprived from his fortune. He comes to her to say goodbye thinking she would never want him when being poor and frees her from their commitment. But she reinforces her feelings towards him and offer to marry him when she is 21, the arrangement is for them to be secretly engaged and in a period of four years they will discuss

the matter again. She commits herself into marrying him if he is poor but makes him free of his duty to keeping true to her during that time.

After the commitment she questions herself as to why she would ever be useful to a man, for as a habit she constantly thinks less of herself and denigrates her image when thinking to herself. This causes her to filter happenings around her and compromises herself as a narrator, for her opinion is always based upon what she thinks of herself, i.e. a useless woman, incapable of love.

The narrator's life takes a turn just around Christmas a little less than a year after she went to live at Caddagat. She receives a letter from her mother explaining the latest events back at Possum Gully. Her mother explains her father is drinking more than ever and has been caught up in dept only to be saved by his old friend Peter M'Swat who lends him money to pay off his dept. The agreement reached by them is that instead of paying off the money loaned little by little, Peter and his family will take the services of a governess instead: Sybylla. With everything already arranged and her mother being irrevocable despite the efforts of the grandmother, the heroine is forced to leave the life she always wanted and is sent off to the M'Swat's residence as a governess.

Sybylla considered herself an egalitarian, treated everyman as equal and would not make a difference between a prince and a beggar. But the within her own contradictions she still believed in differences between social spheres. She considers herself of a different "calibre" from the M'Swats. Attempting in a way to justify her own thoughts she states that she does not find herself in anyway superior to them and even that they might be better people than herself because of their hard work, opposing her beliefs and her own behaviour.

The M'Swats are a simple family, they are hard working and earned their fortune from it. They have eight children and the eldest is named Peter like his father with three younger girls and two younger boys that were in schooling age to be tutored by Sybylla and two babies. The head of the family, Peter, was Sybylla's father childhood friend. Peter's father worked as a blacksmith in Richard's father's station and with time passing he was able to make his own fortune and buy his own land. Because the M'Swats are part of the social rising families, they did not have the tradition of education much less the culture of valuing study and literature as compared to hard labour. As opposed to Sybylla's family history that comes from an older tradition of literacy and education and because of this is that she considers them from different social spheres and herself superior to them in literate terms.

The narrator describes the residence as a filthy place, with the children barely clean and no regards as to household organization and tidiness, very different from what she is used to at her mother's as well as her grandmother's place. She is put in charge of helping the girls get ready for school, set the table for breakfast, for lunch and dinner as well as helping with the dishwashing and the baking of the food, but all under Mrs. M'Swats terms which results in nothing different from the unclean and untidy ways they lived in before Sybylla, despite her efforts to try and change it. They were the only family that owned a piano in their context but none of them learned how to play it, it is evident what they valued most was just the fact of having a piano and not the know to play. Their ignorance is made evident when Sybylla suggests the piano be tuned and Mrs. M'Swat does not even know why one would do so.

With such a different environment from what she was used to, Sybylla grows deeply unhappy every day that goes by reaching a point where she cannot sleep and then starts taking long walks at night around the house. With the night walking, one night she encounters the M'Swats eldest son who is around her age, coming back from his sweethearts house. They walk back to the house and his parents notice this, which leads them to think that Sybylla might be fancying their older son. The father, Peter, questions Sybylla as to what her intentions are with his son explaining to her how he is already engaged with another girl that has more land than her. He then tries to mend the situation by giving her other options with other men that she could be engaged to. With this, Sybylla feels deeply offended by the thought that she would ever want to marry such a "crude" boy and thus expresses her feelings quite rudely in a superior tone as if it were some kind of insult to her for him to think such things.

Sybylla makes many attempts of being rescued and pleas for help through letters for her grandmother saying how miserable she is. She also writes to her mother explaining her degrading situation. Mother eventually answers her grandmother's letters questioning how Sybylla was by regretting that her daughter would trouble her with such thoughts. Her grandmother answers Sybylla's letters by sending her mother's letter of response attached to her own and she explains how this is necessary for the family and how she as a grandmother cannot do much for her but hope for the best. At her time with the M'Swats, she also receives a letter from her brother Horace explain how things were going, how he wished to leave their house very soon and how their mother did not pity her but in every letter she wrote asking to leave she would make her stay more.

When living with the M'Swats, Sybylla is faced with the children confront her with her situation as being an educated girl considering herself superior to them but with no money at all, mocking her father as a poor drunken and her family for having to borrow money from them, making her work for them in all her ladylike education. She also faces cultural difference between them in her teaching. As a governess it is her duty to teach them against her and their own will. This generates a clash between the children and Sybylla, where she is not able to teach them because they don't want to and she lacks the authority of a teacher for the mother does not recognize her as having any by defying Sybylla's rules and commands in favour of the children. With several episodes of confrontation between her and the children, one where the mother confronts her for making the children cry and the other where the mother realizes the children are faking and thus recognizes Sybylla's orders.

She eventually grows tired and has a breakdown. She closes herself in her room one afternoon and passes away of tiresome and no sleep during many nights only to be waken by the mother and the children late at night. Worried about her health they take her to the doctor which explains that she has gone through an exhaustion breakdown because of too much stressful work. As recommended, they send her back home.

Back to Possum Gully, Sybylla is apparently all better and listens to her mother's complaints as well as those of all her siblings. Regaining her old life back, she takes on tasks normally and even more gratefully for them because of her previous situation. Gertie, her sister, is sent up the country to her grandmother's place just like she did the year before. In the letters her sister describes how her uncle is very fond of her and that she finally met Harold Beecham. Who as she explains, has again regained her fortune because of an old lover of his father that has left all her fortune to him.

Learning of this, Sybylla writes to Harold questioning what has happened. He answers her explaining everything of the regaining of his fortune and how he met her sister and ends the letter promising to be back for her in less than two weeks. This provoked a series of letter exchanged by them with her liberating him from his duty to herself and him questioning her reasoning behind such suggestions. She expresses how little she thinks of herself in terms of being worthy of such a man's attention, this causes her to think of nothing but reasons why they should not be together.

With the passing by of the days, her brother leaves the house to live with their uncle and make his own living and Sybylla receives many letters from her sister and grandmother

describing how Harold is devoting many attentions to Gertie. And Aunt Helen thinks he might be proposing to her very soon and be going to Possum Gully to ask for her hand.

One summer day and very hot afternoon in the middle of hard work Harold Beecham appears at Possum Gully to encounter Sybylla dirty and dusty from work. She is embarrassed by the way she looks and as her thoughts are always unfavourable to herself she readily thinks he must be wondering how he could have ever felt something for such a person. In addition the explanations she finds for him being there is that he obviously (to her) has fallen in love with her sister and wants to ask her permission to be engaged to her. But such thoughts deceive her for when he explains his affairs in Possum Gully she is surprised to know he is consistently in love with her despite her conditions in life and wishes to marry her. Surprised by his proposal she explains what she had thought and he explains that Gertie had never been anything but a sister to him.

Sybylla refuses to marry him, alleging she did not love him and that he should be with some one that was good enough for him. In attempting to make him cease to want her she explains what she wants of her life and expects him to find it disagreeable enough to stop loving her: she explains she is given to writing stories and how she aspires to be an authoress. He promises her everything she would ever want but still, she relinquishes/gives up marriage in order to pursue her dream to have a career as a writer because to her she is unable have both.

The novel finally ends with several letters from Gertie and grandmother explaining the latest affairs up the country. Harold left his holding in the hands of a keeper that befriends the Bossiers as did himself before, so he can leave to travel to the main capitals of Australia and nor Sybylla or the readers learn of his fate.

Chapter Thirty-eight, the last, is dedicated to the praising of the Australian nation and the Australian life-style. Sybylla greets once again as done in the beginning her fellow Australian, but now calling them her brothers and sisters, comparing themselves to the “blood-suckers who loll on velvet and satin” that weren’t earned by their work. Also compared herself to the peasants of Australia, the hard working men and women that are able to laugh and joke apart from their poor conditions and considering them far superior to herself she expresses her love to them and her pride in being part of the nation.

As an ironic closing to the novel, opposing to her first description in the beginning of the story not being of sunsets, she ends it with the describing of night falling and the sun

setting and birds singing and colourful description the sunset. With this, she bids good night and good-bye.

3 AUSTRALIAN LEGEND

The Australian Legend is not about the proper history of the country or the real life of Australians in general, but it is the self-image that exists amongst the Australians. This self-image may or may not represent the reality of the Australians, however it is much more of the idea they have of themselves than who they really are. The legend is discussed in this chapter as it is discussed in Ward's book, being but a point of view and not representing the totality of the Australians, much less point to be the whole truth of the general opinion.

With Europe's expansion throughout the world, it spread little pieces of itself with the expansion. Each fragment that is detached from it and becomes a new colony of a new nation bears with it ideologies of its time when leaving Europe, this is one reason why so many settings and nations came to be so different, as we have the bourgeois in the United States, the feudal Latin America/Brazil, and the "actually radical, charged with the proletarian turmoil of the Industrial Revolution, as in Australia and British South Africa." According to Hartz (1964) a historian of the New-World "[...] all of them [the colonies] are fragments of the larger whole of Europe struck off in the course of the revolution which brought the rest into the modern world."

The very famous Captain Cook walked the shores of Australia in 1770 and after recognizing the land, finding a safe anchoring later to be known as Botany Bay and proclaiming it as the British territory called New South Wales, nearly twenty years later came the first British settlement for the founding of Australia. It was and still is one of the few successful colonies of a European country, in the sense that they still are considered 'little Europe' and not separate independent countries. Even though the sun never set on the British Empire, none of their conquered land spread around the world was as wealthy and organized as Australia, some of the native born even called the land "Britain's off-shore farm". It is recognized by historians as a true Neo-European society, where the "White" European society is firmly established with little or no mingling with natives or outsiders. The colonies in Australia received majorly white immigrants to colonize and work in the new land, although at a certain early stage other people were brought to work, but because of health and racist issues they remained receiving European whites. This factor makes it different from most if not all of the European colonies, such as Brazil that received more Africans than Europeans as

colonizers and even Western South America that also had more Africans but the European population then mixed with the indigenous population of the Andes.

This being, it is easy to notice that each colonized country has its own particularities from which they grow from and to their own history. Australia had a beginning very different from that to which we are familiar in Brazil. Here the first colonizers paid little attention to the land that could be used for farming and explored more of the natural resources that was abundant throughout South America. In Australia, however, the intentions of the Empire was to have a new route of commerce to the East Indies in which their colonies throughout the navigation route would serve as Ports for trade and supplies. And to put in practice their plan they needed people to populate and maintain their land. Meanwhile, England was suffering with the lack of room to put their prisoners. They had already made plans to send them abroad to islands nearby and even to United States, but with the rebellion and changes in the government it had to be changed.

Combining both plans, it was in 1788 that the First Fleet of 11 ships reached Sydney to begin the building of infrastructure in the colony of New South Wales. The settlers were around 1500 people and of those around 800 were convicts and of these the proportion of men to women was of 3 to 1. The following fleets that were set to colonize and send convicts to NSW arrived around 1793 and of 3 convicts 1 was Irish. The free settlers that arrived in Australia were granted more than 50 acres of land (depending on the family) and were furnished with agricultural tools by the Government. They were to farm the land and employ convicts, each convict was sentenced to 14 years of penal servitude and the employer was to feed and discipline them during their time.

According to Métin (1977) the Australian colonies were more advanced socially than any other colony or European country. Because of the land grants social mobility was greater and even the convicts had the possibility of making their own fortune, that was what happened along the years. In this way, class distinction was less marked the number of people with great wealth was so low and imperceptible; the majority of the population being of the same rank the income was distributed more evenly. Also, political power was shared among adult men and women.

With convicts working in almost everything, their social habits and ideas of equality was what was passed down to the children of the colonizer's families. Society was thus evenly in the same track of mind, Australia was a radical democracy dedicated to mateship (Hartz, 1964). Throughout the years and with generations passing with people born into the colony, they lived the life and the ideals of the colony.

With the economy of Australia changing and the society defining itself along the years, different classes of people emerged. Cattle and live stock raising began to be one of the main sources of work for the convicts and economical balance in Australia. With this, the working men of this line of work were called ‘drovers’. These and the working convicts in general developed a new kind of society called ‘mateship’. Because of the lack of women, men would focus the affection needs of a companion in other men and thus emerged the popular ‘mate’ ideal. Mateship was seen in many ways, some historians classified it as a kind of sect or cult.

The economy in Australia began to grow, more people came and the immigrants that settled had children that were born in the new land. The upper class in Australia, or the free people that were sent to assist the convict immigration still considered England as their home land and had hopes of returning. Their children however were born into the new colony and knew no other land but Australia. The convicts these free settlers employed adopted Australia as their home land and lived their life as Australians.

The convicts were the majority of the population and with the great number they were in, their ideals fixed themselves as the characteristics of the new country that was being born. With them all being as the same social class and with the social mobility the new land allowed the flourishing of the egalitarian spirit the immigrants carried with them. They opposed greatly to political and police British authorities but respected their own “kind” as law keepers or governors. The children of the administrative class were born into this new country and lived its ideals as native’s, they were highly influenced by the convicts social ideals because of their identification with the land they all shared and called their own. The egalitarian spirit spread amongst the native-born and is one of the pillars of Australian nationalism and legend.

With the growth of the colonies came the new economy that stands as basis for Australia. Because of the arid land instead of farming, Australia specialized in cattle and sheep herding. With this, the focus of the workers was pastoral work and this led to the creation of the nomad tribe. This tribe consisted basically of convicts or former convicts that had no family, would live under the regime of “mateship” and would herd cattle for the main land owners. These rural workers could latter save enough money to buy their own piece of land and become important squatters of Australia. This points out the social mobility Australia allowed their people, with work and money you could go from a poor convict to a rural worker to a land owner. These former convicts were the ones that introduced and sustained the egalitarian spirit throughout the history of Australia. Even in case of Sybylla’s

story, she explains how her mother's family came from important squatters and her father's family had nothing but a pirate convict in their ancestry.

4 MALE AND FEMALE SELF-IMAGE

This chapter intends to discuss the male and female (Australian) self-image imprinted in the novel in discussion. By comparing it to the book by Russel Ward *The Australian Legend* there is a clearer view of the male self-image, but even the absence of the female description in his book points to their self-image and expectations in this society. Literature and anything considered art is product of its time and context. In this way *My Brilliant Career* reflects not only the author's life but as she is a product of her time it also reflects her time period, the ideals and social context that were in evidence in her days. In this way, this chapter focuses on the characteristics that Miles gives to her characters and what she criticizes as well as exalts in each of them through the words of Sybylla in order to trace, through her words, the Australian self-image of her time.

As most authors, Miles uses as inspiration her own life for that of her story and here we deal with similarities. Creating a story based on her life she reflected the environment she lived in, personality of those who she writes of and even allowing parallels with her neighbours, evidencing her origins and leaving hints of the life and society she lived in. As a true Australian, bred from the Bush and as an independent woman in her time, she expresses her life through that of her main character in her novel. Making it as an autobiography, this draws the author and the narrator closer together allowing Miles to express herself in a more personal way.

By analysing the representation of the men in Australia in the late 1800's that Miles chooses to evidence in her novel through her characters and comparing it to the Australian self-image discussed by Ward in his book we can notice consistencies in both representations. One complements the other as one explains why it is how it is and the other contextualizes it in the late 1800's. As it is common in European culture women are often neglected and considered incapable of rational judgment, we read few descriptions of their habits and way of life other than to serve men as wives. Therefore the female representation of the self-image in the Australian legend is not in focus in Ward's book, for the strongest descriptions are of men and their habits. However along with her strong opinions of society and men, we find strong descriptions of women and their societies in Miles' novel. In this way we see that the few mentions of women in Australian history (Ward's book) are enough to trace the expectations

on them in those times lived by Miles and in the Australian context and through Ward's book we understand how that came to be.

Focusing on Franklins representations of the Australian self-image in the late 1800's found in her first novel we can outline some of the main characteristics of men and women she represents with her characters. The intention here is to detail the male and female representations in order to associate gender and class influences expressed in the novel. Of the characters brought by Miles I chose here male representations and female representations of the Australian self-image. Six that are described in more details by the character and that have the most impact on the novel, on Sybylla's life.

As an autobiography she chooses to begin with the first recollections of life, therefore the first man Sybylla is in touch with is her own father. He is responsible for the first memories she has of her life in early childhood. Richard Melvyn has two different moments in his life as described by Sybylla. In the first moment he is a gentleman, a good husband and an adored father; and in the second moment he drowns in alcohol and his poor dealing in stocks drives his family into poverty, thus a loathed father and unwanted husband, as Lucy (mother) says so herself.

In the first moment, Richard's best moment, Sybylla worship's him as a man, a father and a husband. He is the working Australian man that gained his position in society discussed by Ward, the ideal representation of the Australian legend.

“My father was a swell in those days – held Bruggabrong, Bin Bin East, and Bin Bin West, which three stations totalled close on 200,000 acres. Father was admitted into swelldom merely by right of his position.”

Although he had no “pedigree”, in other words no important ancestors, he was respected throughout the land.

““Dick” Melvyn was as renowned for hospitality as joviality, and our comfortable, wide-veranda'ed, irregularly built, slab house in its sheltered nook amid the Timlinbilly Ranges was ever full to overflowing. Doctors, lawyers, squatters, commercial travellers, bankers, journalists, tourists, and men of all kinds and classes crowded our well-spread board; but seldom a female face, except mother's, was to be seen there, Bruggabrong being a very out-of-the-way place.”

From the highest social sphere to the lowest, he was known and respected. Hospitality, joviality and egalitarian spirit is what Ward states as expected of an Australian “mate”. Accentuating more of his “Australianess” Sybylla ends her descriptions of the perfect father with more regards of what it was to be a good authentic Australian, one that Richard was before he gave in to alcohol.

“He was my hero, confidant, encyclopedia, mate, and even my religion till I was ten. Since then I have been religionless.”

Richard Melvyn, you were a fine fellow in those days! A kind and indulgent parent, a chivalrous husband, a capital host, a man full of ambition and gentlemanliness.”

With “those days” passed, much like Miles’ own story, Sybylla paints that of Richard’s through critical eyes, drawing a comparison with her own father. Miles also had a father that lost money and went through difficult financial times. In attempting a new line of work he loses money and begins a declination towards poverty. But as Sybylla states, he fails because he is too honest and honourable to live up to compete with the people in the new line of work, he lived up to utopian standards.

“He need not necessarily be downright unscrupulous, but if he wishes to profit he must not be overburdened with niceties in the point of honour. That is where Richard Melvyn fell through. He was crippled with too many Utopian ideas of honesty, and was too soft ever to come off anything but second-best in a deal. He might as well have attempted to make his fortune by scraping a fiddle up and down Auburn Street, Goulburn. His dealing career was short and merry. His vanity to be considered a socialistic fellow, who was as ready to take a glass with a swaggie as a swell, and the lavish shouting which this principle incurred, made great inroads on his means. Losing money every time he sold a beast, wasting stamps galore on letters to endless auctioneers, frequently remaining in town half a week at a stretch, and being hail-fellow to all the spongers to be found on the trail of such as he, quickly left him on the verge of bankruptcy. Some of his contemporaries say it was grog that did it all.”

His ideals lead him to treat every man as equal and friendly manners led him to lose money, he tried to always be friendly and never refused a drink with his mates. In a way, the very fact of being a typical Australian deceived him in his weakness for alcohol.

Here Sybylla compares both versions of her father. It is noticeable the complete opposition between the two.

“Dick Melvyn of Bruggabrong was not recognizable in Dick Melvyn, dairy farmer and cocky of Possum Gully. The former had been a man worthy of the name. The latter was a slave of drink, careless, even dirty and bedraggled in his personal appearance. He disregarded all manners, and had become far more plebeian and common than the most miserable specimen of humanity around him. The support of his family, yet not, its support. The head of his family, yet failing to fulfil the obligations demanded of one in that capacity. He seemed to lose all love and interest in his family, and grew cross and silent, utterly without pride and pluck. Formerly so kind and gentle with animals, now he was the reverse.”

He changed to the point of not being recognizable and from being humble he turned out to be ‘cocky’, a low class worker. He became the representation of the lowest form of life Sybylla considered, even lower than the most plebeian and miserable man. He became a common man and Sybylla’s social prejudice couldn’t accept this. Not even his family cared for him anymore, Sybylla loathes him for what he became and what he did with the family. He

became cruel and perverse, the complete opposite of the Australian self-image, the Australian legend that is expected.

Sybylla's mother Lucy (Bossier) Melvyn suffers with her husband's conditions, but as a perfect representation of the ideal woman in those times, she submissively takes care of her house and meets to her obligations and her husband's as well.

Unlike Richard, Lucy has an important family and was part of the high circles of society:

“My mother, however, was a full-fledged aristocrat. She was one of the Bossiers of Caddagat, who numbered among their ancestry one of the depraved old pirates who pillaged England with William the Conqueror.”

Her family has a history and is relatively wealthy enough to help the Melvyn's eventually. But because of his low conditions in life and her pride as a former member of the “squattocracy” she loses contact with her old friends and her family greatly disapproves of the depraved husband she has to follow. Her pride didn't allow her to ask for help or even approve her children going to public school, she herself had gone to one of the best boarding schools. “But mother – a woman's pride bears more wear than a man's – would never allow us to come to that.”

Even though Lucy disagreed with her husband's new intentions of work, as the perfect woman, she would never disagree with her husband and simply followed his orders meeting to every need in the house and even work to make a living. “The heavy work told upon my gentle, refined mother. She grew thin and careworn, and often cross.”

But Lucy suffered the consequences of being a woman in her times, “the curse of Eve”, a curse every woman suffers when they marry, fell upon her.

“The curse of Eve being upon my poor mother in those days, she was unable to follow her husband. Pride forbade her appealing to her neighbours, so on me devolved the duty of tracking my father from one pub to another and bringing him home.”

And to Sybylla “A woman is but the helpless tool of man – a creature of circumstances.”

Though Sybylla does not dislike her mother, because of their different opinions they constantly argue and disagree with each other:

“There never was any sympathy between my mother and myself. We are too unlike. She is intensely matter-of-fact and practical, possessed of no ambitions or aspirations not capable of being turned into cash value. She is very ladylike, and though containing no spice of either poet or musician, can take a part in conversation on such subjects, and play the piano correctly, because in her young days she was thus cultivated; but had she been born a peasant, she would have been a peasant, with no longings unattainable in that sphere.”

Lucy is the constant reminder of Sybylla's obligations as a woman, she constantly reminds her of the duties she has in society in her time. As a poor girl she could not afford to hope and marry a wealthy husband, her first worries should be to help her family. As the eldest daughter, Sybylla was to help at home or work to help provide a living. But the idea of having independence and a career was far above the expectations of poor people, it was something more of the city, they could not afford to plan a career. Lucy's words regarding the hope of Sybylla having a career express that:

“Music! But it would take years of training and great expense before you could earn anything at that! It is quite out of the question. The only thing for you to do is to settle down and take interest in your work, and help make a living at home, or else go out as a nurse-girl, and work your way up. If you have any ability in you it would soon show. If you think you could do such strokes, and the home work is not good enough for you, go out and show the world what a wonderful creature you are.”

She sets the example of what is expected of the perfect wife, following her husband and obeying him and meeting every need of the household. Franklin puts Lucy as a representation of the acceptable women in the 1800's, one that has inheritance, that masters the arts, is well educated and any man would wish to marry, the one that gives up her life to serve her husband. She is the kind of woman Franklin did not want to be but knew that was the expected. Her objections towards Sybylla's life are essentially the worries of Miles' own mother and that of any mother in the late nineteenth century regarding their daughters.

As the representation of the ideal of a single woman in their society, Lucy puts her younger daughter Gertie and constantly compares Sybylla to her sister Gertrude, who she considers the perfect example of the teenage/coming of age girl (quite, compliant, sweet, etc.):

“She wondered why I did not cry and beg forgiveness, and thereby give evidence of being human. I was too wrought up for tears. Ah, that tears might have come to relieve my overburdened heart! I took up the home-made tallow candle in its tin stick and looked at my pretty sleeping sister Gertie (she and I shared the one bed). It was as mother had said. If Gertie was scolded for any of her shortcomings, she immediately took refuge in tears, said she was sorry, obtained forgiveness, and straightaway forgot the whole matter. She came within the range of mother's understanding, I did not; she had feelings, mother thought, I had none. Did my mother understand me, she would know that I am capable of more depths of agony and more exquisite heights of joy in one day than Gertie will experience in her whole life.”

Gertie was beautiful, quiet and compliant. Sybylla was very plain and had little hopes of being well married, the opposite of her sister that even though she was poor could easily find a husband because of her beauty.

To Sybylla, the perfect representation of the Australian man is Harold Beecham. He represents the male Australian self-image, as she says herself, he is a perfect example of an

Australian man, he carries in him all that is expected of a man in the 1800's. He is of the same social sphere as the Bossiers, but has more money which makes him more well connected than them.

Sybylla describes him in their first meeting, a Bushman, sunburnt, evidencing he worked in the land and knew his way through it.

“There stood a man I had never before set eyes on, smiling mischievously at me. He was a young man – a very young man, a bushman tremendously tall and big and sunburnt, with an open pleasant face and chestnut moustache – not at all an awe-inspiring fellow, in spite of his unusual, though well-proportioned and carried, height. I knew it must be Harold Beecham, of Five-Bob Downs, as I had heard he stood six feet three and a half in his socks.”

He was a man of little words, expressing wisdom when he spoke, a man usually every female in the lad would fall for easily. He never expresses his feelings, is quiet and keeps to himself, but is also a friendly and good host.

“What were his ideas and sentiments it were hard to tell: he never expressed any. He was fearfully and wonderfully quiet. Yet his was an intelligent silence, not of that wooden brainless description which casts a damper on company, neither was it of the morose or dreaming order.”

Sybylla is very fond of him: “Harold Beecham is my favourite of all the men hereaway. He is delightfully big and quiet. He isn't good-looking, but I like his face.”

People around him also consider him agreeable, such as his sisters and Sybylla's aunt:

“He is young, and very kind and gentle. He is one of the biggest and finest-looking men you could find. He is a man whom no one could despise, for he has nothing despicable about him. But, best of all, he is true, and that, I think, is the bedrock of all virtues.”

But in the end Sybylla refuses him and she justifies her choice based on the description she gives of an even more perfect man that she might never find, leading us to understand that an even more perfect man would be one that suffered what she did and understood her beyond the social sphere.

“Ah, why did I not love him as I have it in me to love! Why did he look so exasperatingly humble? I was weak, oh, so pitifully weak! I wanted a man who would be masterful and strong, who would help me over the rough spots of life – one who had done hard grinding in the mill of fate – one who had suffered, who had understood. No; I could never marry Harold Beecham.”

To Sybylla, Harold was showing himself weak when demonstrating his love to her. As she says, he wants someone “masterful and strong”. This man she speaks of and is even more perfect than Harold because of his suffering and understanding, she know he may never be found.

“What was the good of waiting for that other – the man who had suffered, who knew, who understood? I might never find him; and, if I did, ninety-nine chances to one he would not care for me.”

The representation of the high society in Australia is evidenced by Everard Grey, the adoptive son of Mrs. Bossier as an example of the high class man, literate and well bred in society, connections with Sydney and high society.

“Grannie had discovered, reared, and educated him. Among professions he had chosen the bar, and was now one of Sydney’s most promising young barristers. His foster-mother was no end proud of him, and loved him as her own son.”

He was wealthy and well connected, being a barrister he also had a considerable knowledge of all arts.

“Everard Grey’s opinion on artistic matters was considered worth having. He dabbled in all the arts – writing, music, acting, and sketching, and went to every good concert and play in Sydney. Though he was clever at law, it was whispered by some that he would wind up on the stage, as he had a great leaning that way.”

Sybylla aspired to be part of his society, such men were far above those she knew in her circle.

“He was a perfect gentleman and a clever conversationalist.

I was always desirous of enjoying the company of society people who were well bred and lived according to etiquette, and possessed of leisure and culture sufficient to fill their minds with something more than the price of farm produce and a hard struggle for existence. Hitherto I had only read of such or seen them in pictures, but here was a real live one, and I seized my opportunity with vim. At my questioning and evident interest in his talk he told me of all the latest plays, actors, and actresses with whom he was acquainted, and described the fashionable balls, dinners, and garden-parties he attended. Having exhausted this subject, we fell to discussing books, and I recited snatches of poems dear to me.”

Even though she aspired to be part of such society and being friends with someone well connected, her country pride spoke louder than her wishes to climb the social ladder. As the woman she is she would not give herself in to any man:

“Little country maiden, indeed! There’s no need for him to bag his attractions up. If he exerted himself to the utmost of his ability, he could not make me love him. I’m not a child. I saw through him in the first hour. There’s not enough in him to win my love. I’ll show him I think no more of him than of the caterpillars on the old tree there. I’m not a booby that will fall in love with every gussie I see. Bah, there’s no fear of that! I hate and detest men!”

At the end she wished however to be friends with him, but society disapproved of having friends of different sexes.

“He was very handsome and winning, and moved in literary, musical, and artistic society – a man from my world, a world away.

Oh, what pleasure I might have derived from companionship with him! I bit my lip to keep back the tears. Why did not social arrangements allow a man and a maid to be chums – chums as two men or two maids may be to each other, enjoying each other without thought beyond pure platonic friendship? But no; it could not be. I understood the conceit of men.”

He was a man of the place she felt she belonged, and she wished they could be friends. But men, to her, were the same always and could never be friends with a woman without second intentions.

Along the story she is faced with another representation of the high society, this one being the female self-image of the aristocracy of Australia.

“Joe Archer informed me in a whisper that she was Miss Blanche Derrick from Melbourne, and was considered one of the greatest beauties of that city.

[...]

He informed me that Miss Derrick had arrived at Five-Bob three days before, and was setting her cap determinedly at his boss.”

When asking of Miss Derrick’s beauty, Joe Archer answers her with a straight answer. She is the sort of rich beauty that is too above regular society to be polite to those less than her: “[...] But one of your disdainful haughty beauties, who wouldn’t deign to say good-day to a chap with less than six or seven thousand a year.”

All around her treat her as though nobility, she imposes as a superior woman of the city. She was the unreachable dream of any man in those times: beautiful and wealthy and strong.

“...and then Miss Derrick brought herself and her dress in with great style and airs. She was garbed in a sea-green silk, and had jewellery on her neck, arms, and hair. Her self-confident mien was suggestive of the conquest of many masculine hearts. She was a big handsome woman.

[...]

She was given the best seat as though she were a princess. She sat down with great indifference, twirled a bracelet round her wrist, languidly opened her fan, and closed her eyes as she wafted it slowly to and fro.”

But in the face of such special treatment, she is indifferent, as indifferent as Sybylla is to her:

“I looked at her critically. She was very big, and in a bony stiff way was much developed in figure. She had a nice big nose, and a long well-shaped face, a thin straight mouth, and empty light eyes. If my attention had not been called to her I would not have noticed her one way or the other, but being pointed to as a beauty, I weighed her according to my idea of facial charm, and pronounced her one of the most insipid-looking people I had set eyes upon.”

She was the utmost perfection a woman could reach in this society. In the late 1800’s she held in her everything that was expected of a woman and possible wife. But to Sybylla she was not at all in her standards, as she says her “idea of facial charm” she was not pleasant

at all. Sybylla describes these ideals that are not her own, but the society's in her description of the lady:

“She was the kind of woman with whom men become much infatuated. She would never make a fool of herself by letting her emotions run away with her, because she had no emotions, but lived in a sea of unruffled self-consciousness and self-confidence. Any man would be proud to introduce her as his wife to his friends whom he had brought home to dinner. She would adorn the head of his table. She would never worry him with silly ideas. She would never act with impropriety. She would never become a companion to her husband. Bah, a man does not want his wife to be a companion! There were myths and fables in the old day; so there are now. The story that men like a companion as well as a wife is an up-to-date one.”

The Australian men wished for companions as wives, but not just any woman, a beautiful and submissive woman that preferably would not speak much. To Sybylla this is the dull women society expected her to be.

At last, the representation of working rural class Australians. The M'Swats represent the people Sybylla is forced to live with when she faces poverty, the people she respects as brother and sister of the same nation, but of different calibre than herself.

“Of course, we were of calibre too totally unlike ever to be congenial companions, but I appreciated his sound common sense in the little matters within his range, and his bluntly straightforward, fairly good-natured, manner. He was an utterly ignorant man, with small ideas according to the sphere which he fitted, and which fitted him; but he was “a man for a' that, an' a' that”.”

Their desires and expectations in life are the very things Sybylla runs from, she does not wish to marry and pays no attention to a man's money. She fights against the very things they live for, she wants independence and a career of her own.

Mrs. M'Swat is completely unaware of the social standards of the time, she is completely careless of her appearance.

“ Mrs M'Swat was a great, fat, ignorant, pleasant-looking woman, shockingly dirty and untidy. Her tremendous, flabby, stockingless ankles bulged over her unlaced hobnailed boots; her dress was torn and unbuttoned at the throat, displaying one of the dirtiest necks I have seen. It did not seem to worry her that the infant she hold under her arm like a roll of cloth howled killingly, while the other little ones clung to her skirts, attempting to hide their heads in its folds like so many emus.”

They consider them a waste of time and money. When suggesting anything that resembled education of things similar to those of the upper society they showed their little regard for such things.

“Then I suggested that the children should be kept tidier, for which I was insulted by their father. I wanted them to be dressed up like swells, and if he did that he would soon be a pauper like my father. This I found was the sentiment of the whole family regarding me. I was only the daughter of old

hard-up Melvyn, consequently I had little weight with the children, which made things very hard for me as a teacher.”

Education, music, arts, literature were useless things to them. All they dreamed of was making more money and marrying well, both the daughters and the sons.

Aside from all their ignorance, they are the very representation of the rural Australia. As Ward states, the egalitarian ideal sustained by the population and composing the Australian self-image, allowed people to follow their own career allowing some to aspire high society and some not even caring for it. But in sum, the representation of the Australian self-image, being that male and female, are essentially happy people. They are people that welcome everyone as equals and never deny help even to those they may dislike, them being above or below them or even being indifferent to them.

5 GENDER AND CLASS INFLUENCES

As discussed previously in this paper, Australia’s roots are egalitarian and their self-image and “legend” is that of one that is friendly and joyful and does not make distinction amongst people. Its population is described as not knowing/caring for social differences and as treating everyone as their equals. The only distinction they are known to have is to those who think they are more than others. In this way one can see that even when we try to live out equality, we still live up to certain standards that generate certain prejudices that we think are common of even impartial and these are a reflection of the influences we suffer. Throughout her novel Miles describes the society she lives in through the eyes of Sybylla’s autobiography, she reflects the society she finds herself part of. Even though she tries her best to be egalitarian, she suffers the influences of her social class and the weights of her gender.

Here I will analyse the influences of gender and class that are apparent in Sybylla’s autobiography. Describing specific situations where we can see the manifestations of her own thoughts and ideals and those that are imposed as acceptable social behaviour, thusly opposing both.

Until the time she finished writing her autobiography Sybylla had lived in three different places, dividing the novel in three parts. In each of these places she finds herself being the same person with the same social conditions but in different social positions regarding who and where she is: Possum Gully, Caddagat, and the M’Swats residence.

Before moving to Possum Gully she and her family lived in a bigger farm, raised cattle and were better off in life. There they received under their roof and helped anyone in need.

They were very influential in the community because of Richard's work, he knew everyone and everyone knew him.

““Dick” Melvyn was as renowned for hospitality as joviality, and our comfortable, wide-veranda'ed, irregularly built, slab house in its sheltered nook amid the Timlinbilly Ranges was ever full to overflowing. Doctors, lawyers, squatters, commercial travellers, bankers, journalists, tourists, and men of all kinds and classes crowded our well-spread board; but seldom a female face, except mother's, was to be seen there, Bruggabrong being a very out-of-the-way place.”

The women worked less, as said one of their maids afterwards at Possum Gully and it was the men that worked mostly outside. Because Sybylla was younger, she didn't have to “face the curses of her sex” and could ride as she wanted and play as she wished. The Melvyn's were higher in the social sphere because of Dick's work, money and acceptance and so they praised for the egalitarian spirit, treating every man as their equal, as says Sybylla herself.

“In flowery language, selected from slang used by the station hands, and long words picked up from our visitors, I propounded unanswerable questions which brought blushes to the cheeks of even tough old wine-bibbers.

Nothing would induce me to show more respect to an appraiser of the runs than to a boundary-rider, or to a clergyman than a drover. I am the same to this day. My organ of veneration must be flatter than a pancake, because to venerate a person simply for his position I never did or will. To me the Prince of Wales will be no more than a shearer, unless when I meet him he displays some personality apart from his princship – otherwise he can go hang.”

Sybylla's words mean that to her hard working and heavy labour men that were generally poor (boundary-riders and drovers) are the same as rich men (appraiser and clergymen). To one she was expected to show more respect and in social terms the others deserved little notice because of their social position.

But when the family moved to Possum Gully, they made a social decline which caused the family and Sybylla to change their way of life and even leave their old friends. They changed their means of income, from raising cattle to a dairy farm.

“Ah, those short, short nights of rest and long, long days of toil! It seems to me that dairying means slavery in the hands of poor people who cannot afford hired labour. I am not writing of dairy-farming, the genteel and artistic profession as eulogized in leading articles of agricultural newspapers and as taught in agricultural colleges. I am depicting practical dairying as I have lived it, and seen it lived, by dozens of families around me.”

Being lower in the social sphere made the family detach from their former acquaintances, changing their address made Lucy (mother) not return her old friends letters and because of the pride of a former “lady of the upper class” she did not ask for help even

when most needed. And Sybylla describes the Australian democracy that weighed over their condition:

“When the body is wearied with much toil the desire to cultivate the mind, or the cultivation it has already received, is gradually wiped out. Thus it was with my parents. They had dropped from swelldom to peasantism. They were among and of the peasantry. None of their former acquaintances came within their circle now, for the iron ungodly hand of class distinction has settled surely down upon Australian society – Australia’s democracy is only a tradition of the past.”

“We felt the full force of the heavy hand of poverty – the most stinging kind of poverty too, that which still holds up its head and keeps an outside appearance. Far more grinding is this than the poverty inherited from generations which is not ashamed of itself, and has not as an accompaniment the wounded pride and humiliation which attacked us.”

Ward discusses the traditions of the past and how they formed the traditions of the future. He wrote sixty years ago of a reality sixty years before him. According to him Australian democracy was much more liberal in early Australian colonies than after it was a proper nation, the times changed and the more people accumulated wealth the more they made social distinction. He however states that democratic spirit is one of the ideological foundations of Australian society, thus remaining part of the character of Australians in general.

However, their social decline did not change the kindness and joyful spirit their new neighbours welcomed them and helped them when needed.

“Our goods were disposed of on the premises, and the neighbours arranged a mock sale, at which the bailiff winked. Our friends had sent the money, and the neighbours did the bidding – none bidding against each other – and thus our belongings went for a mere trifle. Every cloud has its silver lining, and the black cloud of poverty has a very bright silver lining.

In poverty you can get at the real heart of people as you can never do if rich. People are your friends from pure friendship and love, not from sponging self-interestedness. It is worth being poor once or twice in a lifetime just to experience the blessing and heartrestfulness of a little genuine reality in the way of love and friendship.”

But the family looked with a certain disdain to these uneducated neighbours, Sybylla tries to appeal to her egalitarian/socialistic side and explain that they were not for an instances worst people than she, but they were inferior to her for not wanting more to life than working in a dairy farm. Her attitude towards them is much like what she feels for the M’Swats.

While at Possum Gully she is faces her neighbours every day and is forced to live with their differences. She shows herself amused/amazed by how all they wanted out of life was to work as they always did and with the women who could only hope for a good husband to give them a home to look after as did their mother.

“Possum Gully was stagnant – stagnant with the narrow stagnation prevalent in all old country places.

Its residents were principally married folk and children under sixteen. The boys, as they attained manhood, drifted outback to shear, drove, or to take up land. They found it too slow at home, and besides there was not room enough for them there when they passed childhood.

[...]

The men were honest, good-natured, respectable, common bushmen farmers. Too friendly to pay a short call, they came and sat for hours yarning about nothing in particular. This bored my gentle mother excessively. She attempted to entertain them with conversation of current literature and subjects of the day, but her efforts fell flat. She might as well have spoken in French.”

Here she is constantly confronted with her duties as a woman, her mother worries for her future and thus worries her as well. As opposed to the former residence, here she faces her future and feels her duties in the social sphere and expectations of her gender. She pays attention to what her mother suffers with her father:

“The curse of Eve being upon my poor mother in those days, she was unable to follow her husband. Pride forbade her appealing to her neighbours, so on me devolved the duty of tracking my father from one pub to another and bringing him home.”

Unlike her first feelings towards her father she expresses the disdain and even loathing towards him as well as her pity for her mother’s conditions.

“Dick Melvyn being my father did not blind me to the fact that he was a despicable, selfish, weak creature, and as such I despised him with the relentlessness of fifteen, which makes no allowance for human frailty and weakness. Disgust, not honour, was the feeling which possessed me when I studied the matter.

Towards mother I felt differently. A woman is but the helpless tool of man – a creature of circumstances.”

But her sympathy towards her mother does not make them agree with their expectations in life. Lucy reminds her of what is expected as a woman in her social sphere mocking Sybylla’s dreams that are uncongenial to her sphere in life, as she states herself in the beginning. Her mother expresses what is expected of her, remonstrating against her dreams and bringing Sybylla back to reality:

“Music! But it would take years of training and great expense before you could earn anything at that! It is quite out of the question. The only thing for you to do is to settle down and take interest in your work, and help make a living at home, or else go out as a nurse-girl, and work your way up. If you have any ability in you it would soon show. If you think you could do such strokes, and the home work is not good enough for you, go out and show the world what a wonderful creature you are.”

Lucy questions Sybylla as to what to do out of her life, because she constantly is unhappy with everything she does. And after several suggestions as to what to do, with the

letter from Mrs. Bossier (Lucy's mother) inviting Sybylla to live with her, they all agree she should live with her grandmother. With great joy she leaves to Caddagat:

“The other side of the letter – the part which gave me joy – was the prospect of going to Caddagat.

Caddagat, the place where I was born! Caddagat, whereat, enfolded in grandmotherly love and the petting which accrued therefrom, I spent some of my few sweet childish days. Caddagat, the place my heart fondly enshrines as home. Caddagat, draped by nature in a dream of beauty. Caddagat, Caddagat! Caddagat for me, Caddagat for ever! I say.”

Back to the place where she was born, Sybylla lives her dream. She worries of nothing but what she always cared for the most: arts, literature, music and playing. Things she had no contact with in Possum Gully, not because of the lack of company because there were plenty of neighbours, but because of lack of equals in “refinement and education” as she states:

“The pleasure, so exquisite as to be almost pain, which I derived from the books, and especially the Australian poets, is beyond description. In the narrow peasant life of Possum Gully I had been deprived of companionship with people of refinement and education who would talk of the things I loved; but, at last here was congeniality, here was companionship.”

Here she could live her feminist and egalitarian spirit to the fullest not having to worry about her duties and her future. Sybylla is able to live her dream she has now worries and even forgets her unfavourable looks which she spends time criticizing with the help of her aunt.

At Caddagat her family, the Bossiers, was a very important family of the region. They were respected among their neighbours and were one of the traditional families, along with the Beechams who were their close friends. Both were part of the first squatter families to occupy the region. “The Bossiers and Beechams were leaders of swelldom among the squattocracy up the country, and firm and intimate friends.” Here they lived in their social sphere and shared same interests in life. Sybylla describes them as being a like in every way, but with a small difference she does not count to herself.

“The Bossiers and Beechams were congenial spirits in every way – they lived in the one sphere and held the one set of ideas, the only difference between them, and that an unnoticeable one, being that the Bossiers, though in comfortable circumstances, were not at all rich, while Harold Beecham was immensely wealthy.”

This expresses her little regard for money, as to now it was not a problem at stake and also that to her the difference in “calibre” is mostly in one's mind and not in how much money one has.

Even if Sybylla feels equal to all above her, she is in fact of a lower social class than her grandmother and those she befriends along her stay at Caddagat, such as Everard Grey

and the Beechams. She looks up to Everard in great regard for all his knowledge in various things:

“Everard Grey’s opinion on artistic matters was considered worth having. He dabbled in all the arts – writing, music, acting, and sketching, and went to every good concert and play in Sydney. Though he was clever at law, it was whispered by some that he would wind up on the stage, as he had a great leaning that way.”

“After breakfast I was left to entertain Everard for some while. We had a fine time. He was a perfect gentleman and a clever conversationalist.

I was always desirous of enjoying the company of society people who were well bred and lived according to etiquette, and possessed of leisure and culture sufficient to fill their minds with something more than the price of farm produce and a hard struggle for existence. Hitherto I had only read of such or seen them in pictures, but here was a real live one, and I seized my opportunity with vim. At my questioning and evident interest in his talk he told me of all the latest plays, actors, and actresses with whom he was acquainted, and described the fashionable balls, dinners, and garden-parties he attended. Having exhausted this subject, we fell to discussing books, and I recited snatches of poems dear to me.”

Her values are evidenced in her praise towards the city man that is her grandmother’s adoptive son Everard Grey, who she praises for having all the artistic attributes she considers important and for having a vast knowledge of literature and arts and everything to her.

But in the middle of such love she soon remembers her egalitarian spirit and states he is no better than any other, but this only happens because she feels defied by him with the idea of marriage that she overhears in a conversation between him and her Aunt. Sybylla greatly opposes the idea of marriage, which makes her treat Everard with indifference and draws to conclusions as to his intentions with her, always thinking the worst of men around her. Although he might be superior to her in education and being of a sphere above her own, she remembers how she does not care for such things:

“Little country maiden, indeed! There’s no need for him to bag his attractions up. If he exerted himself to the utmost of his ability, he could not make me love him. I’m not a child. I saw through him in the first hour. There’s not enough in him to win my love. I’ll show him I think no more of him than of the caterpillars on the old tree there. I’m not a booby that will fall in love with every gussie I see. Bah, there’s no fear of that! I hate and detest men!”

She is again confronted with the possibility of marriage with Frank Hawden, a man who works for her grandmother. Although he is equal to her in social class, even having more money than she and her family, she protests and despises him for his ignorance.

“[...] In three years you will be almost twenty, and by that time he will be in possession of his property which is very good – in fact, he will be quite rich. If you care for him there is nothing against him as I can see. He is healthy, has a good character, and comes of a high family. Being a bit wild won’t matter. Very often, after they sow their wild oats, some of those

scampy young fellows settle down and marry a nice young girl and turn out very good husbands.”

Here she opposes two ideas regarding class and gender. She is proposed to someone of her own social class, but she opposes to it inside the respects of her gender.

““While a girl is disengaged, any man who is her equal has the right to pay his addresses to her if he is in earnest,” interrupted Mr Hawden. It was he who stood before me.

“I am well aware of that,” I replied. “But it is a woman’s privilege to repel those attentions if distasteful to her. You seem disinclined to accord me that privilege.”

Having delivered this retort, I returned to the house, leaving him standing there looking the fool he was.

I do not believe in spurning the love of a blackfellow if he behaves in a manly way; but Frank Hawden was such a drivelling mawkish style of sweetheart that I had no patience with him.”

“Blackfellow” stands for Aboriginals in Australia, this demonstrates another interesting social and racial factor that evidences the times she lives in. It appears even involuntarily in her discourse, showing even to her it was acceptable for having a certain resistance towards different colours.

Sybylla and her family show compassion to the many beggars that pass through the residence and call them brothers, showing her nationalist spirit. As did the Melvyn’s long ago, they never fail to assist anyone in need and fed the beggars and shared their land.

An acute manifestation of the gender and class implications of the society described in the book is the first meeting of Harold Beecham and Sybylla. He mistakes her for one of the servants:

“I hurriedly let down my dress, the lemons rolling in a dozen directions, and turned to flee, but that well-formed figure bounded before me with the agility of a cat and barred my way.

“Now, not a step do you go, my fine young blood, until you pick up every jolly lemon and put them away tidily, or I’ll tell the missus on you as sure as eggs.”

It dawned on me that he had mistaken me for one of the servant-girls. That wasn’t bad fun. I determined not to undeceive but to have a lark with him. I summed him up as conceited, but not with the disgusting conceit with which some are afflicted, or perhaps blessed. It was rather an air of I-have-always-got-what-I-desire-and-believe,-if-people-fail-it-is-all-their-own-fault, which surrounded him.”

In comparison to the way her treats Sybylla as a woman of the house, it seems clear that as a man he had certain liberties with a servant girl that he did not have with Sybylla. The attitude she describes he has demonstrates that as a man in a higher sphere as the servant he would not care for her worries with her master or with her respect.

Moving on to the next place Sybylla lives at, the M'Swats residence. Here she is at equal estates as Possum Gully, only the M'Swats are one of the wealthiest of the district and her family borrowed money from them. The M'Swats are superior to the Melvyns in terms of money and land, however in the past Peter M'Swat worked for Richard Melvyn's father but unlike Richard, Peter was able to make his own fortune and rise in the social sphere. Even so, Sybylla considers them less than her much like she considers Frank Hawden:

“As we drove along, I quite liked my master. Of course, we were of calibre too totally unlike ever to be congenial companions, but I appreciated his sound common sense in the little matters within his range, and his bluntly straightforward, fairly good-natured, manner. He was an utterly ignorant man, with small ideas according to the sphere which he fitted, and which fitted him; but he was “a man for a' that, an' a' that”.”

She explains how she considers that ignorance keeps them from in fact reaching the social sphere they belonged too when regarding their money:

“Those children, not through poverty – M'Swat made a boast of his substantial banking account – but on account of ignorance and slatternliness, were the dirtiest urchins I have ever seen, and were so ragged that those parts of them which should have been covered were exposed to view.”

It is said that their neighbour carried lives similar to theirs but they still looked down on them and Sybylla even states regarding the neighbours:

“They were very friendly and kind to me, and I found them superior to my employers, in that their houses were beautifully clean; but they lived the same slow life, and their soul's existence fed on the same small ideas.”

Because to the ones around the M'Swats, even though not being matches to their money, they did not consider them at all pleasant people because of their manners and behaviour:

“When Lizer's back would be turned, the girls would ask me how I managed to live at Barney's Gap, and expressed themselves of the opinion that it was the most horrible hole in the world, and Mrs M'Swat the dirtiest creature living, and that they would not go there for 50 pounds a week.”

Her situation at Barney's Gap (the M'Swats place) is different from the other two because, unlike the others here she is confronted with her economic status. In reality she is a poor girl with lots of aspirations in life but little means to reach them. The M'Swats, although comforting people (in some ways) frequently reminded her of her situation and that of her family:

“Then I suggested that the children should be kept tidier, for which I was insulted by their father. I wanted them to be dressed up like swells, and if he did that he would soon be a pauper like my father. This I found was the sentiment of the whole family regarding me. I was only the daughter of old hard-up Melvyn, consequently I had little weight with the children, which made things very hard for me as a teacher.”

The M'Swats show themselves of a different type of people with different expectations than that expected of people with their money. In trying to fit in the expectations of their "class" they hire Sybylla as a tutor/governess, which turns out very irrelevant aside from the fact that this helps her pay her father's debts. Because of their ignorance and in consequence of their children she is unable to exercise her duty as a teacher/tutor, her authority is constantly defied by them and not supported by the parents.

For the class of people the M'Swats find themselves in, Sybylla's expresses a strong point of view:

"Their idea of religion, pleasure, manners, breeding, respectability, love, and everything of that ilk, was the possession of money, and their one idea of accumulating wealth was by hard sordid dragging and grinding.

A man who rises from indigence to opulence by business capabilities must have brains worthy of admiration, but the man who makes a fortune as M'Swat of Barney's Gap was making his must be dirt mean, grasping, narrow-minded, and soulless – to me the most uncongenial of my fellows."

In this way she criticises the M'Swats behaviour and ignorance and even the way they made their fortune at the same time she still calls them "fellows" in a patriotic way.

6 CLOSING

In sum, what is seen here is how the world in Australia behaved almost one hundred years ago. Franklin describes her society and with this, her struggles in her own time. What she narrates is part of the society Ward discusses constituted the Australian Legend. The influences gender and class have upon her story is the evidence of the times she lived in. The egalitarian spirit speaks strongly, but gender is still an issue when a woman wants to be equal to a man.

What defines the social position of Sybylla's family is mostly their education and not their money. They have refinement and were well educated, but this is only important to those that care for this, in places and social spheres that these things are relevant. At Possum Gully the Melvyn's are like everyone else, all their neighbours treat them as equals; at Caddagat, Sybylla's curiosities and education make her equal to those in that social sphere; but when working for the M'Swats her education is of little use and no value to them, there they count only for the money that they have but her family doesn't. The M'Swats treat kindly she and her family, but the true feeling they have is clear in their children's behaviour.

As to Sybylla's view of gender and class expectations in her society, she defies the expectations of her time implied to her class and gender by going against all that is considered proper to her. The expectations are represented by her mother who accepts her own condition of married woman and belonging to a specific social class that has to suffer the consequences of having married a man with no social class and that expects the same of her daughters. Her grandmother also represents the ideal woman of the time, but only as successful example of a well married woman. Both are conservative in the same way and to Sybylla they are cursed in the same way, she defies them by desiring a career and independence. She wants to live detached from society's expectation. In some ways, she sees herself in terms of Caddagat (big property owners), although in other ways she accepts that she is part of the working class and unless she marries above her she is fated to live in poverty. The idea of a career is outside the expectations of either of those classes: it is more an urban possibility than something that can fit in either class of the rural world.

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