Abstract
The Feminist Scarlett O’Hara
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Gone with the Wind is one of the best known movies and novels in the history of American popular culture. When the novel was published in 1936, it was an immediate best seller. This led to the creation of the film in 1939. The movie was voted by the American Film Institute as the sixth greatest movie on the “AFI’s 100 Years – 100 Movies, 10th Anniversary Edition.”¹ One of the most iconic figures from the sources is Scarlett O’Hara, as she is the iconic Southern belle. This paper will argue that Scarlett O’Hara is not a true southern woman; instead, she should be considered a representation of the feminist movement.

All of the chapters will center on the fact that Scarlett is not a true Southern belle, which influences which man is right for her, as well as her relationship with Tara. I will rely heavily on both the movie and the novel to provide the evidence in each of my chapters. This project is looking to fill a gap in Gone with the Wind scholarship so my interpretations and analyzing of the primary sources will be the main evidence presented. Overall, after reading the novel or viewing the movie, people should realize that Scarlett is a very independent female who does not possess many of the traits that women during the Antebellum South were required to have. As a result, this impacts her life, and the lives of her around her, because of the decisions she makes which prove she is not a true Southern belle and should be considered a feminist.

¹ “AFI’s 100 Years...100 Movies -10th Edition,” American Film Institute, last modified 2016. http://www.afi.com/100Years/movies10.aspx
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 1

Chapter 1. Scarlett O’Hara or Melanie Wilkes – Who is the True Southern Lady? .......... 7

Chapter 2. Scarlett O’Hara’s Perfect Foil: Ashley Wilkes or Rhett Butler? ............... 30

Chapter 3. Tara and Scarlett’s Transformation in *Gone with the Wind* .................... 51

Conclusion ............................................................................................................................................. 68

References .............................................................................................................................................. 71
INTRODUCTION

One of the most iconic characters in American literature and film is Scarlett O’Hara. She is the main character from Gone with the Wind, and the person many people view as an example of the perfect southern belle. Scarlett is not the stereotypical southern belle. Rather Scarlett should be included in the feminist movement. She is a very independent female through her actions, choice of spouses, and her love of her home.

Gone with the Wind is one of the most famous novels and movies in the entire world. The novel debuted on June 30, 1936, and by July 4, Macmillan, the publisher, “announced that demand for copies of the book was so incessant that it might be out of stock for a few days.”

Once the movie deal was announced, the book became even more popular. Brown and Wiley remark that people who could not buy the novel would flock to the libraries to borrow the book or even join their money with others to buy a shared copy.

Upon release, the movie was immensely popular and still is today. American Film Institute has compiled thirteen lists on a variety of topics over ten years. Gone with the Wind has appeared on eight lists, including being ranked the sixth greatest American film of all time. The success of the film and novel pertains to the ability of its audience to relate to the story. Farca writes, “Mitchell also responds to historical events au courant with the time she published her novel. The story of a woman who survives the Civil War…becomes a model for the survivors of the Great Depression and World War II – two historical events familiar to the author’s

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3 Ibid. 105.
While that is true, it relates to feminism more argues Artuso. She writes, “…she wrote it between 1926 and 1929, thereby aligning her work more closely with high modernism and Flapper-age feminism than with Depression-era social realism…”

The novel was written over a course of three years by Margaret Mitchell. It was adapted to the screen in 1939 by Selznick International Pictures. Mitchell composed an epic that follows the O’Hara’s and Wilke’s before, during, and after the Civil War. As stated previously, the main character is Scarlett O’Hara. Shockingly, she almost had a different name. Brown and Wiley Jr. write, “At the center of the story would be a spoiled Southern belle named Pansy O’Hara, who reaches adulthood in time to watch her comfortable life at her family’s plantation be swept away by war and its aftermath.” The story begins prior to the outbreak of war, but many of the southern families are discussing it as they knew war would be declared most likely. Fairly early in the story, war breaks out which will impact Scarlett, as well as everyone else, greatly. While there are changes between the book and movie, the main story points are evident in both texts. Brown and Wiley Jr. write,

“In Gone with the Wind, Mitchell presented four distinct Southern viewpoints on the Civil War and the Confederacy. Scarlett, the main female character, is a self-centered belle who pines for the Confederacy when it suits her but just as readily associates with carpetbaggers. . . .Rhett, the lead male character, is cynical about the South and scoffs at its hypocrisy. Ashley, landed gentry, slave owner, and Confederate soldier, fights for ways of the past but crumbles when faced with adjusting to the realities of life off the

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6 Kathryn Stelmach Artuso, “Irish Maternalism and Motherland in Gone with the Wind,” Mississippi Quarterly 65, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 190–233, 201.
7 Ellen F. Brown and John Wiley Jr., Margaret Mitchell’s Gone with the Wind, 9.
plantation. Steel magnolia Melanie, who represents the Old South, dies after much suffering.”

The only two to survive the story and adapt are Scarlett and Rhett.

Scarlett O’Hara is one of Gerald and Ellen O’Hara’s three daughters. Ellen is the perfect southern lady and the first scene in the movie the viewers see her in is when she returning from nursing another lady. Scarlett is first viewed surrounding by the Tarleton twins, neighboring gentlemen, who are catering to her every wish. While in the novel she is not a beauty, Vivian Leigh was a beautiful actress who portrayed Scarlett in the film adaptation. Brown and Wiley Jr. write, “However, in several important aspects, the movie offers a different experience than what Mitchell had given her readers. Perhaps most notably, while Leigh is widely remembered as one of the most beautiful actresses in Hollywood history, Mitchell’s Scarlett was decidedly not a beauty, an important nuance that affected one’s understanding of the story.” While there are other changes, Scarlett has three husbands and is very self-centered at the core of both the novel and the movie.

Ashley Wilkes lives on a neighboring plantation, Twelve Oaks. Throughout the story, Scarlett professes her love for Ashley. But much to her dismay, early in the story he marries his cousin, Melanie. Margaret Mitchell displays through her writing the emotional turmoil Ashley goes through due to his love for Scarlett and Melanie. In the film, this is less evident and his love for Melanie seems to trump all. Overall, Ashley is a southern gentleman who struggles to

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8 Ibid. 50.
9 Ibid. 50.
10 Ibid, 207.
adapt to the society now that the plantation life is withering away. He will rely on Scarlett for his survival after the war is over.

Melanie Hamilton, or Melanie-Wilkes Hamilton, is cousin and wife to Ashley Wilkes as stated previously. She does not have a harmful bone in her body and dearly loves Scarlett. She becomes the leader of the women in society during and after the Civil War. She is the perfect southern woman who displays hospitality to all. She is the opposite of Scarlett O’Hara in many ways, if not all in all behaviors.

Rhett Butler is another main character of the story. His character may undergo the most transitions throughout Gone with the Wind. When readers and viewers are first introduced to him, he is a scalawag that is not accepted by most of society. During the beginning of the war, he is viewed as a hero by most because he is a blockade runner. By the end of the war, some resent him as they believe he should join the army. Rhett does join the army eventually. Throughout all this, Rhett has pursued Scarlett. At one point, he asks her to be his mistress but the viewers and readers recognize his true motives behind all his actions toward Scarlett – his love for her. By the end of the narrative, he is redeemed in society’s eyes and his love for Scarlett is tested time and time again.

These characters are the main focus of Gone with the Wind and this paper. The main focal point is Scarlett O’Hara in each of the chapters, and the other three main characters will be written about as well. I will be exploring the character of Scarlett O’Hara and how she is a symbol of the feminist movement through her actions throughout the tale. Rather than being a simpering southern belle, she is a very independent female. One scholar is in agreement with this sentiment: “By portraying a rebellious, enterprising, and coquettish Scarlett O’Hara, who
redefines the concept of the southern lady, Mitchell prefigures in 1936 the feminist and postfeminist concerns of future decades. Her refusal to conform to the patriarchal requirements of the lady makes Scarlett a feminist who strives for personal freedom.”\(^{11}\) She does not subscribe to the four traits that are a part of the cult of domesticity as developed and described by Barbara Welter.\(^{12}\) Instead, Melanie Wilkes-Hamilton is the perfect example of the cult of domesticity and being a southern belle. But in both the movie and novel, Scarlett is the most memorable female role due to not prescribing to those standards.

As a result, Scarlett is not satisfied with her life or any male companion. Throughout most of the novel, she fancies herself in love with Ashley Wilkes. This is a fantasy and part of Scarlett trying to be a perfect southern belle in memory of her mother. While she never marries Ashley, throughout her three marriages she yearns for him. This includes her marriage to Rhett Butler, her soul mate or as close to one as she will find. Another factor is her love of her homeland – Tara. Scarlett becomes head of the household and becomes man of the house figuratively.

While others can see the difference in Scarlett compared to other southern ladies, Scarlett is not aware of the differences for the most part. Higgins writes, “Scarlett is scarcely conscious of her proto-feminism.”\(^{13}\) This is due to the fact that Scarlett wants to view herself as a southern belle when it suits her needs and in honor of her mother. Unfortunately for Scarlett, she is not a southern belle and never could be as displayed in the following chapters. The first chapter will


\(^{13}\) Geraldine Higgins, “Tara, the O’Haras, and the Irish Gone with the Wind,” *Southern Cultures* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 30–49, 42.
analyze Scarlett and Melanie to prove that Scarlett is not the true southern lady while Melanie is. Next, Ashley and Rhett will be compared to figure out who the perfect foil for Scarlett is to embrace her independent nature. Last, Scarlett’s relationship and connection to her home – Tara – will be explored to show how she has a deeper connection than most females do during this time period. Scarlett should be an icon to the feminist movement.
CHAPTER I. Scarlett O’Hara or Melanie Wilkes – Who is the True Southern Lady?

Visualize the typical southern lady during the antebellum era. Many people will picture Scarlett O’Hara from Gone with the Wind. The film, released in 1939, was adapted from the popular novel of the same name written by Margaret Mitchell, was released in 1936. While many imagine Scarlett as the typical southern lady of this time, she is not. Women during this time period were supposed to conform to the “Cult of True Womanhood,” according to Barbara Welter. Kathyrn Sklar did a study in domesticity using Catharine Beecher to show traits of what a prominent and respectable lady during the nineteenth century in the northern United States acted like. While Catharine lived in the north, the same knowledge can be applied to the southern states which are the focus of Gone with the Wind. Rather than Scarlett O’Hara being seen as the typical southern belle, Melanie Wilkes should be the character from the film to first pop into minds as the typical southern lady from this time period based on the four attributes Welker presents.

In 1966 Barbara Welter wrote The Cult of True Womanhood based on the characteristics she believed true ladies during the antebellum period (1820-1860) displayed. From the research she conducted, Welter narrowed it down to four main traits. She writes, “The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society could be divided into four cardinal values – piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.” These four characteristics would make or break women during this time period.

14 Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood.”
16 Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood,” 44.
Welter ranked piety as the highest characteristic because “. . . it did not take a woman away from her ‘proper sphere,’ her home.” 17 A woman could be religious while still being in the home taking care of her husband and children which were the most important jobs for her. The next trait to be admired was purity. If a woman was impure, she did not stand a very good chance of making an exemplary wife. Additionally, it was the woman’s job to maintain her purity despite the temptation that might arise as woman are “stronger and purer” than men.18
While the other two features are important, Welter believes that “submission was perhaps the most feminine virtue.”19 Women were dependent creatures by nature, whether it was on their fathers or eventually, their husbands. As a result, they should listen to the males as they are more educated and are the ones making the money. Many times women were compared to children in the way they were supposed to be submissive and dependent on the males in their family until they married.20 While Welter values the other three traits, she acknowledges that “…domesticity was among the virtues most prized by the women’s magazines.”21 In a woman’s home, she was supposed to make it welcoming so that the males would wish to spend time at home rather than squander time outside of the house seeking their pleasure. Other roles and tasks encompassed under the attribute of domesticity were being a nurse, cook, being able to sew, and other duties associated with the education of homemaking.22

One of the best case studies of American domesticity, or the four traits of True Womanhood, is exemplified in the model set by Catharine Beecher in the nineteenth century.

17 Ibid, 45.
18 Ibid, 47.
19 Ibid, 50.
20 Ibid, 52-53.
21 Ibid, 54.
22 Ibid, 58.
Catharine grew up with an affectionate Calvinist preacher, Lyman, for a father and a distant mother, Roxana, among many brothers and sisters. She was the eldest child of the family and as such, she held a special place in the heart of her father throughout her life. She had many influences throughout her life but one constant was her father, and by association God, which relates to the first characteristic Welker discusses - piety.

Due to her upbringing, Catharine Beecher was a pious woman. She believed in God but did have periods when she questioned her religion. When she first became engaged, Catharine’s father encouraged her to search for her salvation so she could go to heaven if anything happened to her. Catharine struggled with this for many years. It was not that she did not believe in God or not wish to seek salvation, rather, her issues stemmed from being submissive to another person. She was a firm believer in her relationship with God already. At one point when discussing this issue with her father, Catharine “...argued that if she was born with an inclination toward the sins she was guilty of, then she should not be held wholly responsible for them.”23 But despite this lively discussion she had with her father for years in person and through correspondences, she was quick to defend the Calvinist religion when it is attacked by another young woman, Miss Sedgwick, who wrote her book about her criticisms of the Calvinist church. Beecher was so appalled that she publicly criticized the book. Sklar writes, “The prospect of a wellborn young woman attacking the entirety of Calvinist culture was deeply disturbing to Catharine, perhaps because she feared that she herself had come dangerously close to such an act of symbolic patricide.”24 Furthermore, later in life she led a religious revival.25 She led this revival through the school she established in Hartford, Connecticut. While it was

23 Kathryn Kish Sklar, Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity, 39.
24 Ibid, 39.
centered at her school for awhile, it eventually spread throughout the community much to Catharine’s delight. Religion and piousness played an aspect of Catharine’s life throughout her time on this earth whether she lived under her father’s roof or afterwards when she became an independent school teacher.

While Catharine was very religious, she did experience a brief time in her life where she was in Boston and was very social. The most impure moment of Catharine’s time in Boston came when she and her friend would go around with boys unchaperoned, which was frowned upon at this time. Sklar writes, “At nineteen Catharine was beginning to experience romance and think of marriage. She had every reason to anticipate a happy marriage.”26 She became engaged to Alexander Fisher, which she broke off at one point. They resumed their engagement after her father’s pestering, but unfortunately Fisher died at sea. Catharine received other marriage proposals later in life, but she turned them down and would eventually make a decision that sealed her fate to remain a single woman for the remainder of her life.

The virtue that Catharine Beecher most struggled with was being submissive as she became older. She will not be able to fulfill being deferential with any other male except her father. A prime example occurred when her father pled with her to seek her salvation before her marriage so she would go to heaven. Catharine struggled with this for many years as “…she was asked to transfer her loyalties from her father to her husband, and in a religious rebirth she was asked to forswear her past as entrusted with sin and offensive to God. Both experiences required submission to wills other than her own.”27 It was hard for her to imagine giving up the independence she had found running her father’s household previously and then living in Boston

27 Ibid, 28.
with a relative for a brief period of time. Ultimately, she did not have to fully submit to the will of husband because her fiancée died tragically at sea and she was dependent on her father once again. Eventually she began to try to establish her independence from her father while turning down possible suitors. During this time period, Catharine “…found it as hard to assert psychological independence as to establish financial independence” from her father. 28 She reached these goals, at least financial independence as she still heavily relied on her father’s advice, when she opened a school and made the decision to buy her own home. When Catharine decided to buy her own home, the act solidified the fact that she would not be submissive to any other male besides her father. Sklar comments, “This was an important financial and personal step for her since it meant that her savings would be spent in equipping her own home and not reserved for a future marital home.” 29

Overall, Catharine Beecher was looked upon favorably in society no matter what town she lived in as she was considered a respectable member of society due to being accepted into the True Womanhood, or cult of domesticity. When her mother tried to aide her in the necessary ways to run a household when she was younger, Catharine “…was a reluctant pupil.” 30 While she did not have a natural propensity towards being domestic, she learned it after her mother Roxana’s death and the need to help her father run the household. Sklar writes, “For her father she enthusiastically performed the domestic duties she had been reluctant to do for her mother.” 31 Catharine was so agreeable to the task that was set before her that at first she was resentful when her father remarried and her role was relegated back to the eldest child. As

28 Ibid, 54.
29 Ibid, 62.
31 Ibid, 21.
mentioned previously, Catharine was engaged to be married before her fiancé, Alexander Fisher, died. When that happened, she was still dependent on her father and in order to not be a burden on her family, she turned to one of the only acceptable solutions that remained with the sphere of domesticity: teaching. Sklar quotes Beecher from one of her diaries as follows: “‘Generally speaking there seems to be no very extensive sphere of usefulness for a single woman but that which can be found in the limits of a school-room,’ she admitted…”\(^{32}\) She turned this into a profitable occupation and made her mark educating many young women. Additionally, this school served as the focal point for the religious revival Catharine helped begin in Hartford, Connecticut.

Prior to becoming independent from her father, Catharine’s younger years into her mid-twenties were spent in Litchfield with her family where she “became one of its most prominent young women.”\(^{33}\) A majority of the time she was even in the highest social circles based on the traits she displayed. Despite the fact that Beecher lacked the submissiveness required in antebellum women, she still maintained an appropriate profession which kept her respectable in collaboration with her other attributes, making her a woman that could be considered part of the True Womanhood. The same cannot be said for Scarlett O’Hara.

Scarlett O’Hara is the leading female character in the story *Gone with the Wind.* Throughout the tale she has many roles – caring daughter, southern belle, wife, caregiver, nurse, etc. Scarlett is not pious, pure or submissive at any point. Scarlett does display domesticity as it is forced upon her due to her circumstances in relation to the Civil War and the Union army marching upon Georgia. Fox-Genovese writes, “Scarlett stands apart in *Gone with the Wind,* not

\(^{32}\) Ibid, 53.
\(^{33}\) Ibid, 17.
merely because she is the central character, but because for her alone among the female characters do the years of the war and its aftermath render problematical the question of appropriate gender role—the definition of being, the aspiration to become, a lady.”\(^34\) While Scarlett does not possess many attributes of the cult of domesticity, she has become the prime example of a southern lady, as many think of the term today.

Piety is not an overarching theme of *Gone with the Wind*, but there are parts of the narrative where religion can be viewed. Another scholar even remarks about the lack of the role religion plays in a majority of this tale.\(^35\) Scarlett is not observed to have this characteristic. In one of the rare moments of the film where religion is on display, Scarlett, her mother and sisters are praying. But Scarlett was not focusing on her prayers. Instead she was day-dreaming about how she could command Ashley Wilkes’ attention by proclaiming her love for him. Her mother notices her wandering mind, glares at her and Scarlett finishes saying the prayers with her family. No other instances of religion are explicitly viewed in the film. There are a few portrayals and references to religion in the novel. At one point, Scarlett is having a conversation with Mr. Wilkes, Ashley’s father, after the war had begun and he spoke of death. Mitchell writes, "Then in superstitious terror she (Scarlett) crossed herself and tried to say a prayer. He had spoken of death, just as Ashley had done, and now Ashley - No one should ever speak of death! It was tempting Providence to mention death.”\(^36\) But while she was trying to use religion to help ensure Ashley’s safety, the majority of the text she spurns it. When she heard Ashley was alive and returning home, she was ecstatic when she heard the news. Then she realized he


\(^35\) Hayden B. J. Maginnis, “The Trouble with Scarlett,” *Queen Quarterly* 102, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 641–53.

was coming home to Melanie, whom she which died when giving birth in Atlanta. Mitchell
writes, "When such thoughts came she did not pray hastily to God, telling Him she did not mean
it. God did not frighten her any more." In addition, Scarlett claims God has abandoned them.
She states, "'The Lord stopped thinking about us years ago,' said Scarlett savagely. 'And don't go
telling me Mother is turning in her grave to hear me say it, either.'" Scarlett clearly
demonstrates that she is not pious or religious in any manner.

Purity is another attribute important in Welker’s Cult of True Womanhood, and Scarlett’s
actions during the movie make one severely doubt her purity. Throughout the story, Scarlett is
constantly using her charm and flirting with her beaux and other men as well. The tale starts off
with Scarlett engaging in banter with the Tarleton boys. They were excited about the possibility
of war and to get them to focus on her she told them, “If either of you says war, I’ll go in the
house and slam the door.” Additionally, during the war she views the hospital where she is a
nurse as a prime spot to mean beau’s. Mitchell writes,

"The informality made the war a lot of fun for Scarlett. Except for the messy business of
nursing and the bore of bandage rolling, she did not care if the war lasted forever. In fact,
she could endure the hospital with equanimity now because it was a perfect happy
hunting ground. The helpless wounded succumbed to her charms without a struggle.
Renew their bandages, wash their faces, put up their pillows and fan them, and they fell
in love. Oh, it was Heaven after the last dreary year!"

37 Ibid, 478.
38 Ibid, 523.
40 Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*, 218.
This continues throughout the narrative and a crucial example is when she steals her sister’s beau, Frank Kennedy. She lied to Frank and informed him that Suellen was marrying someone else. A few seconds later, she begins to use her charms to convince him to marry her to save Tara, the plantation on which Scarlett and her sisters live. One scholar remarks, “Although Scarlett has nothing but contempt for the simpering girls who live out the prescriptions of southern ladyhood, she nevertheless adopts the conventions when she wants to attract men.”41 A prime example of this is during an interaction with Rhett. He tells her that he is not a marrying man and would like her to be his mistress. Scarlett thinks, "Mistress! Her mind shouted the word, shouted that she had been vilely insulted. But in that first startled moment she did not feel insulted. She only felt a furious surge of indignation that he should think her such a fool."42 This was a crucial part that was left out of the movie. She will attempt to use her charms on numerous southern lads throughout the story if it benefits her.

Her infatuation and love interest throughout the saga is her neighbor, Ashley Wilkes. In the beginning, Scarlett finds out that he is to be engaged to his cousin, Melanie Hamilton, which upsets her greatly. Alas, in Scarlett’s mind the only reason he is doing this is because he doesn’t know that she loves him. Scarlett whispers to herself during prayers, “I’ll tell him I love him and then he can’t marry.”43 In order to inform Ashley of her feelings, she sneaks away while the other ladies are napping to have a private conversation with Ashley. This is very unladylike. During this conversation, she confessions her love to Ashley multiple times until she turns on him when she realizes he will not change his mind. Even after Ashley marries Melanie, there are many times she continues to profess her love for him despite the fact that Scarlett marries three

42 Mitchell, Gone with the Wind, 329.
43 Victor Fleming, Gone with the Wind.
times. There are even times when Scarlett does not understand how Melanie is unaware of her feelings. Scarlett reflects, "She had given herself away a hundred times during these months of torment... But Melanie saw nothing. Melanie, who could see nothing but good in anyone she loved... Yes, she had promised Ashley she would look out for Melanie. Oh, Ashley! Ashley! you must be dead, dead these many months! And now your promise reaches out and clutches me!"  
While Melanie may or may not have realized her feelings, many others in the tale know that she is in love with Ashley Wilkes.

After her first husband, Charles Hamilton -- Melanie’s brother -- dies and leaves her a widow, Scarlett is upset because she is forced to be in mourning and not allowed to go out. Her mother has an idea to send her to Atlanta with her Aunt, where Melanie Wilkes is living, because Scarlett is depressed. This perks Scarlett up and she agrees to the suggestion. Immediately, a household slave, Mammy, realizes the problem with this situation and Scarlett’s impure thoughts. Mammy tells her, “Savannah would be better for you. You’d just get in trouble in Atlanta. . . . You know what trouble I’s talking about. I’s talking about Mr. Ashley Wilkes. He’ll come to Atlanta when he gets his leave and you’re sitting there waiting for him just like a spider. He belongs to Miss Melanie.”  
Scarlett didn’t appreciate or heed Mammy’s advice. When Ashley does return home briefly for Christmas, Scarlett even kisses him before he returns to war in Melanie’s house. She does this all despite the close friendship that she shares with Melanie. Melanie truly believes Scarlett worries about Ashley so much for her sake, while everyone else sees through Scarlett’s facade. At one point after finding out Ashley is still alive after the Battle of Gettysburg, Rhett Butler, a captain in the Confederate army and Scarlett’s third husband,

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44 Mitchell, Gone with the Wind, 314.
45 Victor Fleming, Gone with the Wind.
comments, “Ashley Wilkes is still alive to come home to the women who love him. Both of them.”

This type of behavior continues throughout the whole story, during which exhibits Scarlett’s impure thoughts and behavior, despite the fact that she has three husbands and never marries Ashley Wilkes.

While Scarlett is impure, another attribute she greatly lacks is submissiveness. Throughout the whole movie, Scarlett is shown as a very independent young lady and grows up to become a ruthless woman following the atrocities of the Civil War in order to take care of her family until Rhett Butler marries her. The first taste the viewers get of Scarlett’s independence is when Mammy is trying to get her ready for a barbeque at a neighboring plantation, Twelve Oaks, early in the film. Mammy is attempting to get Scarlett to eat some of the food she brought her so Scarlett does not gorge herself at the picnic later. Scarlett resorts to blackmail to get her way about the low-cut dress she is wearing. She tells Mammy, “If you say one word to Mother, I won’t eat a bite.” Mammy acquiesces but Scarlett still won’t eat as she claims Ashley likes a woman with a healthy appetite.” Fortunately Mammy knows how to manipulate Scarlett and tells her, “…and I ain’t noticed for Mr. Ashley asking for to marry ya.” This comment gets an angry glare from Scarlett, but she sits down to eat then. This was a moment in private where she is not submissive, but later Scarlett will make a scandalous move to prove that she will be independent and do as she likes no matter what society thinks of her.

As mentioned previously, her first husband died during the war of pneumonia in the movie and measles in the novel. She does not mourn Charles at all privately. Scarlett reflects,

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46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
"All because Charles Hamilton had had the measles. He didn't even die in a fine glow of gallantry in battle, so she could brag about him."\(^{50}\) After she went to Atlanta to live with her Aunt Pittypat and Melanie, Scarlett is still in mourning for Charles. While she is Atlanta, there is a charity ball being held to honor the Confederate troops which Scarlett attends to help raise money for the war efforts. That Scarlett attends the ball while in mourning is a shocking fact by itself, but Scarlett and Rhett Butler will add to the already scandalous situation. In order to help raise money, they will auction off the first dance for gentlemen with the lady of their choice. Captain Rhett Butler announces he will pay 150 dollars in gold, but he is adamant that he will only dance with Mrs. Charles Hamilton, Scarlett’s married name. As she is in mourning, Scarlett should not have accepted the dance. Much to the dismay of her Aunt and the shock of those in attendance, Scarlett accepts Rhett’s offer. As they are dancing, Scarlett comments to Rhett, “I don’t care what you expect or what they think. I’m going to dance and dance. Tonight I wouldn’t mind dancing with Abe Lincoln himself!”\(^{51}\) Scarlett’s attitude of not caring what others think of her continues throughout the film.

Scarlett’s independence is cemented when she has to flee Atlanta with Melanie Wilkes and her baby due to the Northern army bombing the town. Rhett helps them flee Atlanta, but then he leaves them to their own devices once they are clear of the burning city so he can go join the Confederate Army despite Scarlett’s protests. Scarlett manages to get them home to Tara safely, but upon arrival she finds out that her mother died the previous day and her father has lost his mind. Her mother was the only tangible facet that connected Scarlett to trying to maintain her status as a southern belle. McGraw writes, “Scarlett sporadically aspires toward the whitest

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\(^{50}\) Mitchell, \textit{Gone with the Wind}, 179.  
\(^{51}\) Victor Fleming, \textit{Gone with the Wind}.  

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part of her lineage, desiring at time to be like her mother, Ellen, who personifies upper class femininity and elegance. . . Scarlett’s attempts at passing as Ellen fail.”

As a result, Scarlett now has to take charge at Tara. When she finds this out, Scarlett pours herself a drink to the dismay of her father. But she tells him, "I know no lady drinks spirits,' she said briefly. 'But today I'm no lady, Pa, and there is work to do tonight.” This cements the fact that while Scarlett may be able to play the role of submissive at times to get what she needs, she truly is not meek and obedient. Scarlett will run the plantation – including farming and ruining her ladylike hands – until an increase of taxes almost causes her to lose the farm. This dire situation coupled with Rhett denying her the money she needed prompts her to lie to Frank Kennedy about her sister taking a lover. He marries Scarlett instead. When this occurs, she takes over Frank’s business that he established in Atlanta. Fox-Genovese remarks upon the cult of domesticity, “To be a lady is to have a public presence, to accept a public responsibility. But the essence of that presence and that responsibility consists in recognizing and maintaining a sexual division of labor that relegates any proper woman to the private sphere.”

Scarlett did not maintain that division when she took over Frank’s business much to Frank’s dismay. Farca argues, “Frank and the southern society do not realize that a woman who works as hard if not harder than men is not unnatural or unwomanly. Erasing the boundaries between genders, Scarlett acts as a feminist because she proves men’s equal or stronger partner, friend, and wife.”

53 Mitchell, Gone with the Wind, 393.
While running the business, she is ruthless. Frank had a lumber yard as a side business, but Scarlett saw the potential money that it could bring in and grew the business to include it with a mill. At one point, Frank commented to her that she would not have been able to expand into lumber if she hadn’t forced his friends to pay back outstanding money owed to him. Scarlett replied, “What are you running – a charitable institution?” Scarlett’s time spent scrimping to get by and barely being able to afford keep Tara had a profound change on her priorities. Money was now the most important thing in the world to her and she proclaimed she will never go without it again. Upon returning to Tara after the Union Army enters Atlanta, Scarlett promised, “As God is my witness. . . As God is my witness, they’re not going to lick me. I’m going to live through this and when it’s all over, I’ll never be hungry again. No, nor any of my folk. If I have to lie, steal, cheat or kill. As God is my witness, I’ll never be hungry again!” Scarlett keeps that promise. Additionally, Frank realizes that Scarlett can run his business better than he could. Mitchell writes, "It had begun to dawn on him that this same pretty little head was a 'good head for figures.' In fact, a much better one than his own and the knowledge was disquieting. He was thunderstruck to discover that she could swiftly add a long column of figures in her head when he needed a pencil and paper for more than three figures. And fractions presented no difficulties to him at all." Furthermore, Scarlett does not hire free black men to work in the lumber mill as Ashley suggested to her. Instead, she gets criminals to work for dirt cheap. They are treated poorly, but because she will have to pay them less she went with this option. In addition to becoming ruthless, she becomes a risk taker as well. She often travels alone through the town which many men and women look down upon her for doing so as it is

56 Victor Fleming, *Gone with the Wind*.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*, 577.
dangerous and unladylike. Rhett even remarks that she should not drive through Shantytown alone, but she does not heed his advice. During one of her trips to the lumber yard, she was attacked, leading her husband Frank to arrange a raid on the shantytown. Frank is killed in the raid, leaving Scarlett a widow for a second time.

While Scarlett lacked purity and submissiveness, she does have some of the characteristics that are involved in the aspect of domesticity, but she does not partake of them selflessly. While the Civil War is being waged, she becomes a nurse with Melanie. Rhett catches her running away from her duties and comments on her abilities as a nurse, “I suppose you weren’t meant for sick men Scarlett.”  

60 She also is happy every time she leaves the hospital. Mitchell writes, "Scarlett had no qualm of conscience as she watched them but only a feeling of vast relief that she had made her escape."  

While she is not the best nurse, she cares for Melanie through her child birth instead of fleeing Atlanta as her Aunt Pittypat did. As the Union Army is bombing Atlanta, Doctor Meade convinces Scarlett that she needs to stay because it would be too detrimental to move Melanie at this stage of her pregnancy considering how weak she was already. But Scarlett truly doesn’t stay for Melanie, she stays because of her promise she made to Ashley to look after Melanie. She thinks about Melanie, “I hate you! I hate you! I hate your baby! If only I hadn’t promised Ashley! If only I hadn’t promised him!”  

62 But despite these negative thoughts, she, along with their household slave Prissy, stay to nurse Melanie through her childbirth. This can be seen as a beginning to her independence being established. Artuso argues, “Scarlett’s new birth of independence begins with the birth of Melanie’s child, when she

60 Victor Fleming, *Gone with the Wind.*
61 Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*, 295.
62 Victor Fleming, *Gone with the Wind.*
realizes that she will have to accomplish something unaided for the first time in her life…”
Scarlett is successful in this task and will begin to attempt more by herself.

Once the baby is safely delivered, Scarlett takes them to Tara where she continues to care for the both of them. Again, this is an act is not selfless. At one point Melanie tries to get up when she is still weak to help as she feels useless. Scarlett did not mince words with her and told her, “Stop being noble. I’ve got enough of my hands without you making yourself sick so you’ll never be of any use.” Eventually Scarlett will realize how important Melanie is to her, but it will be too late.

Scarlett is a very selfish person, and Margaret Mitchell would agree with that description. In a letter she wrote, Mitchell stated,

“All the only good qualities Scarlett had were courage and a refusal to admit defeat. But on the other side she was selfish, vain, almost illiterate, a bungler in her dealings with other people, a person with shoddy tastes and a fondness for cheap companions. She neglected her children and she was the ruination of every man who loved her. She stopped at nothing in her grasping determination to make money, including cheating, swindling, and cruel abuse of the helpless convicts she hired. She committed murder, she stole her sister’s sweetheart with a lie, and offered her body for sale at a price.”

All of her motives are based on her needs and she always thinks of herself as a southern belle. When she returns to Tara during the war, she cannot believe her circumstances. Scarlett reflects, "What was she doing here? Why was Scarlett O'Hara, the belle of the County, the

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63 Kathryn Stelmach Artuso, “Irish Maternalism and Motherland in Gone with the Wind,” 217.
64 Victor Fleming, Gone with the Wind.
65 Ellen F. Brown and John Wiley Jr., Margaret Mitchell’s Gone with the Wind, 193.
sheltered pride of Tara, tramping down this rough road almost barefoot? Her little feet were made to dance, not to limp, her tiny slippers to peep daringly from under bright silks, not to collect sharp pebbles and dust. She was born to be pampered and waited upon, and here she was, sick and ragged, driven by hunger to hunt for food in the gardens of her neighbors."66 While she will show that she regrets some of her choices towards the end of the film, it is not enough to redeem her actions and hold her up as a prime example of a typical antebellum southern lady who should be part of the True Womanhood. An example of her regret is when she tells Rhett, “I ought never to have married Frank to begin with. He was Suellen’s boy and he loved her, not me. And I made him miserable and I killed him. . . .For the first time I am finding out what it is to be sorry for something I’ve done.”67 Despite this, a few minutes later she accepts Rhett’s proposal of marriage even though she does not love him. Accepting Rhett’s proposal of marriage will ensure that she will never have to worry about money again, a primary goal of Scarlett’s.

Despite her brief period of selflessness, she goes right back into her pattern of only being concerned for herself with her acceptance of Rhett’s proposal. Fox-Genovese agrees that Scarlett is not a lady:

“Melanie Hamilton Wilkes is a lady; Aunt Pittypat Hamilton, Mrs. Merriwether, Mrs. Meade, India Wilkes, and the other Atlanta worthies pride themselves on being ladies. Her sisters, Suellen and Carreen, suffering like Scarlett from Ellen’s saintly distance, are pale shadows of ladies. Belle Watling, to be sure, is not a lady, but the classic whore with a heart of gold, a shrewd and successful business woman in her own right, has a far

66 Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*, 405.
67 Victor Fleming, *Gone with the Wind*. 
deeper sense than Scarlett of the essential qualities that informed true ladyhood. But however splendid her personal qualities, the code cannot admit her as a lady. Scarlett, for her part, has no time for irrelevant niceties, and no understanding of the deeper meanings.”

Additionally, Farca agrees by stating, “Scarlett is not a good candidate for the position of southern lady because conventional society criticizes her free-spirited behavior, energy, and rebelliousness – qualities the feminists and postfeminist value. …she rejects the typical attributes of a southern lady…in favor of attributes manifested by independent women.”

Melanie Wilkes possesses all the characteristics that make her an excellent archetype of the True Womanhood, but since Scarlett O’Hara is the leading lady, many people do not think of Melanie as the prime example. Whereas Scarlett is a selfish person concerned only about herself and she lacks many of the traits of True Womanhood, Melanie is the exact opposite. Maginnis writes, “Melanie is considerably more; she is a lady, and the tattered remains of all that was best, for she understands the spirit as well as the form of kindness. She alone recognizes and values Belle Watling’s generosity on the steps of the hospital, and in saving Ashley and Dr. Meade.” Similarly, Mitchell writes, "The difference between the two girls lay in the fact that Melanie spoke kind and flattering words from a desire to make people happy, if only temporarily, and Scarlett never did it except to further her own aims." Even if she is in pain, she is selfless and has all of the traits that Welker discusses in The Cult of the True Womanhood.

69 Paula Anca Farca, “And, You, Miss, Are No Lady: Feminist and Postfeminist Scarlett O’Hara Rethinks the Southern Lady,” 75-76.
70 Hayden B. J. Maginnis, “The Trouble with Scarlett.”
71 Mitchell, Gone with the Wind, 162.
Melanie Wilkes does not have a harmful bone in her body despite what Scarlett does to her numerous times in this picture. Maginnis states, “Her code of behaviour (sic) and her outlook are inherited rather than examined, and in consequence she can neither see Scarlett’s faults nor be a moral force in her life.”

Melanie believes that Scarlett cares for Ashley deeply just because Melanie and Scarlett are sister-in-laws and great friends. At one point, Ashley and Scarlett are caught embracing by Ashley’s sister, India, on the night of Ashley’s surprise birthday party. Scarlett tried to say she was ill to skip out on the party, but Rhett forces her to go and attend it alone. When Scarlett enters, everyone is shocked and staring. Everyone except Melanie. Melanie approaches Scarlett and remarks, “What a lovely dress Scarlett darling. India wasn’t able to come tonight. Would you be an angel? I do need you to help me receive our guests. Mrs. Meade, it’s our darling Scarlett.” Later when Rhett confronts Scarlett about the party, he sums up Melanie perfectly: “Miss Melly’s a fool, but not the kind you think. It’s just that there’s too much honor in her to ever conceive of dishonoring anyone she loves. And she loves you.”

Mitchell does not believe that Melanie ever knew about Scarlett and Ashley’s feelings. Brown and Wiley Jr. write, “When a reader suggested Melanie must have known about Ashley and Scarlett’s feelings for each other, she (Mitchell) disagreed saying that, for Melanie, ‘being the type of woman she was, it would have been impossible for her to dissemble even had she desired to do so.’” Melanie never says an unkind word about anyone, even strangers.

This is exemplified in her experience with one of Rhett Butler’s good friends, Belle Watling. While being a nurse during the Civil War, Melanie is fueled by the fact that Ashley

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72 Ibid, 645.
73 Victor Fleming, *Gone with the Wind*.
74 Ibid.
75 Ellen F. Brown and John Wiley Jr., *Margaret Mitchell’s Gone with the Wind*, 128.
could be hurt and she would hope that another woman somewhere would be nursing him back to health. In the movie, when they were leaving the “hospital” – a church converted into a makeshift medical station – one night, Scarlett and Melanie were stopped by a woman named Belle, who is a prostitute. Scarlett immediately turns down her nose at Belle, while Melanie takes the time to talk to her. As a result, Belle gives Melanie money to use towards the hospital. Melanie talked to Belle out of the kindness of her heart, but this act will aid her later in the film. Ashley is part of the raid on the shantytown where Scarlett’s second husband, Frank, gets killed. Ashley is hurt and Rhett Butler is trying to save him from being arrested so he takes him to Belle’s to have an alibi when the Union Army questions them upon their return home in both the movie and the novel. This alibi is successful and Melanie asks Belle to meet her later to thank her. Belle tells her it was due to her previous kindness, and remarks how she would not have helped had it been Scarlett’s husband alone. Belle tells Melanie, “She just ain’t in the same class as you and I can’t help it if I think so.” Belle is correct – Melanie exemplifies the best characteristics of women of the antebellum period while Scarlett’s traits are purely motivated by egotistical reasons.

Melanie was a nurse during the Civil War as she wanted to do as much as she could for the men, in hopes of thinking some other women could do that for Ashley if he was injured. Mitchell writes, "But as long as she was where the wounded could see her, she was gentle, sympathetic, and cheerful, and the men in the hospitals called her an angel of mercy." In addition to being a nurse during the war, Melanie was called to aid the sick after the war ended as part of her role in society. When Scarlett has her daughter, Bonnie, Melanie is present and

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76 Victor Fleming, *Gone with the Wind*.
77 Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*, 165.
tells Rhett when he may go see his daughter for the first time. Later in the film, Scarlett was pregnant again, but she has an accident and falls down the stairs. Along with the doctor, Melanie was there to help nurse Scarlett, as well as Rhett, through the tragic event. Even when Melanie herself is ill and pregnant, she would still come to the aid of her friends. Bonnie died in an unfortunate riding accident, and Rhett almost lost his mind with grief. Mammy called Melanie because no one else could get through to Rhett, but Melanie was the one person who did before she collapsed due to her pregnancy and illness. Melanie was always more concerned for others’ well-being than her own.

Another prime example of this is when she was having her first child, Beau, while the Union Army is marching upon Atlanta. The whole time she is in labor she is concerned about Scarlett and not herself. At one point, Melanie remarks to Scarlett, “Poor Scarlett. You’d be at Tara now with your mother, wouldn’t you if it weren’t for me? No sister could have been sweeter. I’ve been lying here thinking if I should die, will you take my baby?” Not even a minute later she is telling Scarlett to hold off calling for the doctor because “...I couldn’t let poor Dr. Meade sit here for hours, while all those poor, wounded boys...” Another illustration of her selflessness is when she is on her deathbed at the end of the saga. Melanie requests to see Scarlett and makes her promise to look after Beau, Ashley, and Rhett. Rhett is actually the last topic she speaks about to Scarlett. She tells her, “Captain Butler...be kind to him. ...He loves you so.” When Rhett is informed of this fact, he is humbled. He tells Scarlett, “Well God rest her. She was the only completely kind person I ever knew. A great lady. A very great lady.”

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78 Victor Fleming, *Gone with the Wind.*
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
While Melanie is remarkably kind, she is very calm in tense situations and many look to her for her guidance and approval. When Scarlett shocked people by dancing with Rhett while in mourning at the charity ball, Melanie approved auctioning off the first dance in the film. Some of the elderly women in attendance were shocked by this idea until it was announced that Melanie approved in the film. One lady remarks to Aunt Pittypat, “If Melanie says it’s alright, it is all right,” a few moments after she originally called it a slave auction. Additionally, the women start to look to her as their leader. Mitchell writes, "It never occurred to Melanie that she was becoming the leader of a new society. She only thought the people were nice to come to see her and to want her in their little sewing circles, cotillion clubs and musical societies." While that shows her respectability in society, twice in the film Melanie displayed that she has a propensity to keep calm in difficult situations. Before Ashley returns from the war, Scarlett is basically running Tara by herself since her mother died and her father has lost his wits. A union soldier entered the home, and Scarlett ended up shooting him to defend their home. A moment later, Melanie arrived at the top of the stairs with one of Ashley’s swords. The echo of the gunshot alerted the O’Hara’s outside that something occurred, and quickly Melanie covered for Scarlett. She told Scarlett’s sisters and father that Scarlett was cleaning the revolver and it accidentally went off! This saved them much explaining and calmed the fear the O’Hara’s would have felt.

Another situation that required Melanie’s calm demeanor was the men’s raid on the Shantytown and Rhett Butler’s intervention. The Union army was waiting for the men to return as they had been tipped off about their involvement in the raid. While they were waiting for the

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82 Ibid.
83 Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*, 685.
84 Victor Fleming, *Gone with the Wind*. 
return of the men, she read to Scarlett and the other women present as they sewed. Rhett intervened and brought the men home. They acted drunk and Melanie played her role perfectly. Someone else was going to open the door to confront the situation, but Melanie does not allow it: "'No,' whispered Melanie firmly. 'Leave it to me.' There was in her face the same look Scarlett had seen that day at Tara when Melanie had stood at the top of the steps, looking down at the dead Yankee, her weak wrist weighed down by the heavy saber - a gentle and timid soul nerved by circumstances to the caution and fury of a tigress."85 She reprimanded Rhett for getting her husband drunk again, and looks very unhappy when Rhett reveals the men’s alibi was being at Belle’s. This fools the Union army, and the crisis was averted due to Rhett and Melanie’s cool and calm demeanors whereas Scarlett’s frantic emotion can be viewed upon her face.

The cult of domesticity was contradicting at times for women to successfully fulfill all four traits required of them as outlined in Welker’s article. Notwithstanding, Catharine Beecher and Melanie Hamilton-Wilkes are excellent examples of the cult of domesticity that existed in American culture. Unfortunately, Melanie gets overshadowed by the iconic legacy of Scarlett O’Hara. The war helps Scarlett flourish, but she would not be considered a true southern lady even without the war because “Mitchell provides ample evidence that Scarlett would have had trouble with or without the war. But without the war, social structures and norms would have provided a corset for her unruly impulses.”86 But if one truly examines her characteristics and motives, Scarlett O’Hara is not a true southern lady. That recognition belongs to the one and only Melanie Wilkes and her many selfless acts she engages in throughout the entirety of *Gone with the Wind*.

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85 Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*, 746.
CHAPTER II. Scarlett O’Hara’s Perfect Foil: Ashley Wilkes or Rhett Butler?

Almost every girl grows up fantasizing about the man she will one day marry. She has her dream wedding planned out so when she meets her Prince Charming, it seems as if everything has fallen into place. Unfortunately for Scarlett O’Hara in *Gone with the Wind*, her Prince Charming does not seem to reciprocate her feelings. Throughout the saga, Scarlett’s two main love interests are Ashley Wilkes, whom she believes is her one true love, and Rhett Butler, who she professes to despise on multiple occasions. But what are the characteristics of southern gentlemen in the antebellum south? Honor is the main virtue men must possess according to Bertram Wyatt-Brown, and there are many facets to the concept of honor. Scarlett’s two love interests will be compared using the guidelines Wyatt-Brown lays out in order to determine who the better gentleman is. But which one is truly the perfect man for Scarlett O’Hara? Is it the true southern gentleman or the rogue? While Scarlett will proclaim her love for Ashley throughout the entirety of the film, it is actually Rhett Butler who is Scarlett’s true foil to her character because of his personality, wealth, and perhaps most importantly, his love for Scarlett O’Hara.

What is honor? It is a common word with a complicated definition depending on the era one is referring to. Wyatt-Brown takes on the monumental task of defining the word honor in the antebellum south. Honor is so important to gentlemen during that time period that it is one of the causes of the Civil War. He writes, “It was the threat of honor lost, no less than slavery, that led them to succession and war.” Honor was extremely important in defining what a southern gentleman should be during this time period. Wyatt-Brown also believes that it is at the core of southern culture for gentlemen. He writes, “Honor, not conscience, shame, not guilt, were the

88 Ibid, 5.
psychological and social underpinnings of Southern culture.”\textsuperscript{89} He ties in the concepts of family, wealth, and the community to the understanding of honor in the region.

Family was extremely important in the South as the plantations would pass down from father to son. Usually the firstborn son, but this was not a guarantee and depended on circumstances.\textsuperscript{90} Also, family values were very important as they “…differed not at all from public ones. …threat to community was danger to home and vice versa.”\textsuperscript{91} Family will become a big issue for the antebellum south when the Civil War begins as it will divide and tear apart families with the large amount of deaths during the war, and the rebuilding that is necessary in the aftermath of its destruction. While wealth was important to families, it was not an essential component to have to ensure that a male had honor. Wyatt-Brown writes, “At least among the ambitious, the vagaries of world markets for cash crops contributed to life’s uncertainties. Bad luck and accidents also played havoc with the future. As a result of these factors, it was not hard for Southerners to remember how fragile human affairs could be, how fleeting joy…”\textsuperscript{92} They knew due to their agrarian lifestyle that their wealth could fluctuate depending on the market at any given time. But what was frowned upon in society was if a man wasted away his money. Wyatt-Brown writes, “The debt of honor, the gambling debt, was a figurative death; it had to be paid, just as one sacrificed life in battle, heedless of result.”\textsuperscript{93} So while a gentleman could have honor and not be wealthy, if someone lost their wealth through gambling or the likes, then one would not possess honor anymore.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid. 22.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid. 5.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid. 34.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid. 30.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid. 41.
In terms of the community, it was highly important how a man was viewed by his peers. Wyatt-Brown writes, “‘Respectability’ was as popular a term in the South as anywhere else in America.” If a gentleman was not respectable, that could hurt his chances at being received at certain houses depending on his reputation. Wyatt-Brown draws the conclusions “…that those who lacked honor also lacked reputation.” In addition to being respectable, this concept tied in to the notion of masculinity for the southern gentleman. Since these concepts are tied together, this helped lead to the Civil War. Wyatt-Brown argues, “The same impulses towards honor and gentlemanly rule that established the new government and prompted the Declaration of Independence also inspired the Southern course toward secession.” The South felt that their honor had been questioned by the North, and that was an inexcusable offense which led it to leave the Union.

In Gone with the Wind, Scarlett O’Hara lives at Tara. The neighboring plantation is Twelve Oaks, home of the Wilkes family. Ashley Wilkes is introduced early as the man that truly holds Scarlett’s interest and love as she will profess multiple times. She is flirtatiously holding court with other gentleman when she finds out that Ashley will be getting engaged. She runs away from the men who mean nothing to her after receiving the news, much to the dismay of those men in her company at the moment. Later on, she will have a revelation during her prayers. Scarlett thinks, “Ashley doesn’t know I love him. I’ll tell him I love him and then he can’t marry!” Even after Scarlett confesses her feelings to Ashley, he still chooses to marry his cousin, Melanie Hamilton. Throughout the rest of the film, Scarlett is “secretly” harboring her

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94 Ibid, 23.
95 Ibid, 46.
96 Ibid, 20.
97 Ibid, 113.
98 Victor Fleming, Gone with the Wind.
love for Ashley (everyone but Melanie is aware of her feelings). But is Ashley the perfect gentleman for Scarlett? He will be compared to the criteria set out by Wyatt-Brown to discuss if he fits the mold of a true southern gentleman or not.

Ashley’s family is important to him. In the beginning of the narrative, he is at Twelve Oaks with his family – his father, mother, and sister – and they are holding a barbeque. In addition, he will marry his cousin, Melanie, also in attendance. When Scarlett confronts him about the possibility of marriage, he states, “She’s like me Scarlett. She’s part of my blood and we understand each other.” Throughout the story, he is constantly worried about Melanie as she is delicate and meek. He even asks Scarlett to look after Melanie a couple times when he can’t be around. After serving in the Civil War, he returns to Twelve Oaks where he discovers his family’s plantation has been ruined. He does his best to work the land, even joking about Abe Lincoln and splitting rails at one point, but eventually realizes that this will never provide for his family until Scarlett helps him get a job in Atlanta.

Wealth was another part of the criteria laid out by Wyatt-Brown to determine if a southern gentleman has honor. When the film’s viewers get a glimpse of Twelve Oaks at the barbeque for the first time, it is clear that the Wilkes are wealthy despite the fact that it is never outright stated. Ashley himself hints at this in a conversation with Scarlett. He laments, “Not that I mind splitting rails, but I do mind very much losing the beauty of that life I loved. If the war hadn’t come, I’d have spent my life happily buried at Twelve Oaks.” Once the Civil War ends, it is obvious that Ashley has no money left as the Yankees destroyed the only home he ever knew. This is proven when Scarlett comes to him about an increase the Yankees are going to

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99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.
charge her on the taxes on Tara. The Yankees are going to increase the taxes by $300 and she is asking Ashley for help. He replies, “You’ve come to me for help, and I’ve no help to give you.”\textsuperscript{101} Ashley feels guilty over the fact that he was unable to provide for Scarlett as it led her to marry her sister’s beaux in order to ensure she would have the money to pay Tara’s taxes. Later in the film, Ashley reflects in a conversation with Scarlett, “It’s all my fault. I should have committed highway robbery to get that tax money for you.”\textsuperscript{102} Scarlett tells him there was nothing he could do, but Ashley feels she dishonored herself rather than let him do the dishonorable task of getting the money.

Ashley even contemplates going north to find a better job because he cannot afford to stay at Twelve Oaks and provide for Melanie as she should be cared for. In addition, it is another worry for Scarlett as she has taken over being the head of the house at Tara and she helps feed Ashley, Melanie and their child as well. But Scarlett helps him obtain a job at the lumber mill of her second husband, Frank Kennedy, in Atlanta despite Ashley’s protests. When Ashley tells Scarlett of his plan to go north to achieve independence and begin a new life, she is immediately against it as she wants Ashley close to her. But Ashley has an opposing view when she tells him of her plans with the lumber mill which includes her gifting him part ownership of the mill. Ashley tells Scarlett, “That’s generous of you, Scarlett. But it isn’t that. If I go to Atlanta and I take help from you again, I’d bury forever any hope of standing alone.”\textsuperscript{103} Scarlett will manipulate the situation by drawing Melanie into the conversation and they bully Ashley into accepting the other as he cannot fight them both. While working at the lumber mill, Ashley will start to accumulate back some of his family’s wealth.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
While working at the mill, Ashley protests as to how money is being made at the expense of others. Scarlett takes control of the mill from her second husband, Frank, and hires convicts as the labor. Ashley is not in favor of this method and would instead like to hire “darkies.” After Scarlett inspects the convicts with the foreman, she and Ashley have a conversation about her business methods. Ashley comments that he would rather hire “darkies,” while giving the foreman a free hand will result in the mistreatment of the convicts. While Scarlett remains stubborn, he comments, “Scarlett, I will not make money out of the enforced labor and misery of others.” Scarlett remembers what it was like to be without money and vows to never have that happen again. The drive for money is one of her main motivating factors throughout this film. While Ashley does not want to live in poverty either, he constantly clings to his moral concepts, which correspond with the community’s definition of honor on his mind. He tells her, “But we’re not the only Southerners who have suffered. Scarlett, look at all our friends. Their keeping their honors and kindness, too.” While an official decision isn’t stated, it can be assumed from Scarlett’s stubbornness that the convicts will be the labor used to power the mill as it is the cheapest source that will make them the most money.

Ashley Wilkes is well respected in the community and has a strong reputation amongst his peers. This is displayed in the beginning of the film at Twelve Oaks when the gentlemen at the barbeque are discussing the impending war. All the men are discussing the possibility of going to war with fervor. Ashley, who is captain of troops in the Georgia army, does his best to squelch the eagerness for battle. He tells the men, “Well gentlemen, if Georgia fights, I go with her. But, like my father, I hope the Yankees will let us leave the Union in peace. . . . Most of the

104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
miseries of the world were caused by wars. And when the wars were over no one ever knew what they were about.”

The men listen to him during his speech, but when they find out war is declared a short time later, they all eagerly run off to join the military. They believe they will beat the Yankees in just a few months but Ashley, and another man present at the barbeque Rhett Butler, thinks otherwise.

Using the standards set out above, Ashley Wilkes embodies the definition of a true southern gentleman who holds honor in high regard. Many times he mentions honor being the only value that keeps him at Twelve Oaks with Melanie. For example, Scarlett asks him to run away with him when they return to Tara and Twelve Oaks after the Civil War when she fears losing everything. Scarlett comments to Ashley, “There’s nothing to keep us here,” and he replies, “Nothing. Nothing except honor.”

Ashley will not leave Melanie and their baby for Scarlett despite her protests, and this starts to sink in for her after this conversation. But she still loves him. Rhett Butler is the only man to truly comprehend that Ashley would never do anything with Scarlett since he is married to Melanie and Ashley is too honorable. Mitchell writes on Rhett’s opinion of Ashley, "'He's a gentleman,' said Rhett, and Scarlett wondered how it was possible to convey such cynicism and contempt in that one honorable word.”

In the same regard, Ashley is very frustrated that he could not be the man Scarlett needed when she came to him for help about the raised taxes on Tara which resulted in her second loveless marriage. Wilkes exclaims to her, “Yes, it’s done now. You wouldn’t let me do anything dishonorable, yet you’d sell yourself in marriage to a man you didn’t love.”

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106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 Mitchell, Gone with the Wind, 279.
109 Victor Fleming, Gone with the Wind.
may not want to dishonor himself, the fact that Scarlett had to fend for herself makes him ashamed because he could not provide for her in her time of need.

But does being a true southern gentleman make him the perfect man for Scarlett? Before that question can be answered, one must consider his competition—Rhett Butler. Rhett Butler is from Charleston in South Carolina and is introduced to Scarlett in an unconventional manner at the Twelve Oaks barbeque. Before their chance encounter, Rhett stares at Scarlett with such attention from the bottom of the house’s main stairwell that she inquires as to who he is to a friend, Cathleen. Right away the viewers find out that Rhett is not of the same ilk as Ashley Wilkes. Cathleen proclaims, “My dear, don’t you know? That’s Rhett Butler. He’s from Charleston. He has the most terrible reputation. . . Why, my dear, he isn’t received! He’s had to spend a lot of time up North because his folks in Charleston won’t even speak to him. He was expelled from West Point, he’s so fast.” Scarlett’s Aunt Pittypat agreed with Cathleen’s sentiment. She says,

“"And that awful Captain Butler, making you so conspicuous and he's a terrible, terrible person, Scarlett. Mrs. Whiting’s cousin, Mrs. Coleman, whose husband came from Charleston, told me about him. He's the black sheep of a lovely family - oh, how could any of the Butler's ever turn out anything like him? He isn't received in Charleston and he has the fastest reputation and there was something about a girl - something so bad Mrs. Coleman didn't even know what it was."”

While Scarlett’s friend hints that Rhett may not be a southern gentleman, Scarlett has an interaction with him shortly after that reinforces that notion in Scarlett’s mind. Rhett accidently

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110 Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*, 199.
overhears Scarlett professing her love for Ashley as Rhett was already in the room that Scarlett pulled Ashley into while the other ladies in attendance for the barbecue napped. After being turned down by Ashley, Scarlett smashes a statue against the wall which causes Rhett to reveal himself. Rhett asks Scarlett if the war has already started and by the end of their conversation, Scarlett tells him, “Sir, you are no gentleman.”\textsuperscript{111} Is she right?

As Scarlett’s friend mentioned, Rhett’s own family does not receive him back home in Charleston, which does not bode well for him among the gossipers. Still, he is a very loyal friend to those he considers worthy. Some people he honors with that title include Melanie Hamilton-Wilkes and Belle Watling, a prostitute that frequently pops up in the film. He holds Melanie in very high regard, and at one point he reminisces, "Well, God rest her,’ he said heavily. 'She was the only completely kind person I ever knew.'"\textsuperscript{112} Once he marries Scarlett and has a daughter, Bonnie, he becomes a very dedicated family man. Rhett embraces all society types so that Bonnie will be accepted by the community, while Scarlett thinks she is already above everyone in that regard. Rhett and Scarlett take their daughter for a walk in the neighborhood while Scarlett is complaining that they have servants who could do this. Rhett always has his daughter in mind and replies to Scarlett, “If you’d thought of this years ago, we wouldn’t have to do this. But as it is, we’ll cultivate every female dragon of the old guard in this town.”\textsuperscript{113} Scarlett is not pleased, but she does as Rhett says.

Rhett Butler is a very wealthy man, and he uses it to his advantage. He proudly states, “There’s nothing much that money won’t buy.”\textsuperscript{114} Once the war started, he was not officially in

\textsuperscript{111} Victor Fleming, \textit{Gone with the Wind}.
\textsuperscript{112} Mitchell, \textit{Gone with the Wind}, 948.
\textsuperscript{113} Victor Fleming, \textit{Gone with the Wind}.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
the Confederate Army. Rather he was a well-known blockade runner. Rhett remarks, "This empire we're living in - the South - the Confederacy - the Cotton Kingdom - it's breaking up right under our feet. Only most fools won't see it and take advantage of the situation created by the collapse. I'm making my fortune out of the wreckage."\textsuperscript{115} After the Yankees entered Atlanta, he was captured and put into prison where Scarlett will visit him. Scarlett pretended to fret about his well-being during a visit to the Yankee jail and he retorted, "Well don’t worry yet. The Yankees have trumped up some charges against me, but they are really after my money. They think I have made off with the Confederate Treasury."\textsuperscript{116} This catches Scarlett’s attention as she was going to lose Tara due to the increase of taxes and was there to try to get money from him. In the process, she lies to him about the state of her affairs back at Tara by telling him that everything is going well. It is not until he feels her calloused hands that Rhett realizes Scarlett’s deception and she admits she needs his money. Rhett replies, “I couldn’t give you the money if I wanted to. The funds are in Liverpool, not Atlanta. If I tried drawing a draft, the Yankees would be on me like a duck on a June bug. So you see me dear, you abased yourself to no purpose.”\textsuperscript{117} Scarlett leaves empty-handed and in a rush to get the money she needs, which results in a desperate action on her part. Rhett is released a short time later, the viewers are unsure of how long exactly, and Scarlett has already married her second husband, Frank Kennedy, by then. He teases Scarlett by remarking, “When I think you could have had my millions if you’d but just wait a little while. Oh, how fickle is woman!”\textsuperscript{118} Even though she does not get his money for the taxes at Tara, she will get Rhett Butler to loan her the money to purchase the mill. Scarlett

\textsuperscript{115} Mitchell, \textit{Gone with the Wind}, 197.
\textsuperscript{116} Victor Fleming, \textit{Gone with the Wind}.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
will eventually get her hands fully on his money, and she will make sure everyone is aware of how wealthy they are as well.

The community’s view of Rhett Butler changes throughout the saga. Until the latter part of the film, Rhett Butler is not concerned about the community’s view of him or his reputation. He tells Scarlett, “With enough courage, you can do without a reputation.” When the viewers are first introduced to him, it is clear that he is the outsider at Twelve Oaks. Cathleen, Scarlett’s friend, had remarked that he was not received, and yet he was at the Twelve Oaks barbeque for a reason unknown to the viewers. But Cathleen is not the only one who makes it clear that Rhett is unwelcome at Twelve Oaks. The gentlemen are having cigars and brandy while discussing the possible start of the Civil War when Rhett makes two unappreciated comments. Mr. O’Hara, Scarlett’s father, asks him for his opinion as he has traveled up north. Unfortunately, many of the younger men in the room do not appreciate his response as he strongly hints at first that the South would not win a war. Rhett comments, “I think it’s hard winning a war with words, gentlemen.” Rhett has seen the machine capacity available in the North compared to what they had available in the South. Speaking the truth did not gain him any friends at Twelve Oaks and Melanie’s brother, Charles, immediately confronts Rhett about his views. Rhett truthfully states, “I’m saying very plainly that the Yankees are better equipped than we. They’ve got factories, shipyards, coal mines, and a fleet to bottle up out harbors and starve us to death. All we’ve got is cotton and slaves and arrogance.” His opinion caused such a stir that he removed himself from the room.

\[119\] Ibid.  
\[120\] Ibid.  
\[121\] Ibid.
During the Civil War, he is neither shunned nor received greatly in the film. There is a
dance to raise money for the Confederate troops which Melanie Hamilton-Wilkes and Scarlett
attend. Rhett is announced as a surprise guest, much to Scarlett’s dismay. The announcer
exclaims, “And now, a happy surprise for all of us! We have with us tonight that most daring of
all blockade runners whose fleet schooners, slipping past the Yankee guns have brought us here
the very woolens and lace we wear tonight. . . .None other than our friend from Charleston,
Captain Rhett Butler!”  

This proclamation was met with cheering by almost all except Scarlett. But while he is well received in the beginning, he quickly ruins that rousing reception when he
breaks social convention by asking for Scarlett, Ms. Hamilton’s, hand in the first dance while she
is in mourning, having lost her first husband in the war. When Scarlett accepts, he remarks
while they dance, “We’ve sort of shocked the Confederacy.” In the novel, there comes a point
where no one will receive him except Melanie. Early in the war, due to helping the Confederacy,
society accepts him. Mitchell comments, "Had it not been for the upset conditions due to the war
and his own services to the Confederate government, Rhett Butler would never have been
received in Atlanta.”  

But during the middle of the war, he is resented as he was not serving in
the army while others were dying. Mitchell writes, "Of all the homes which had received him in
the fall of 1862, Miss Pittypat's was the only one into which he could enter in 1863. And, except
for Melanie, he probably would not have been received there.” Rhett will join the army then
after fleeing Atlanta with Scarlett and Melanie.

122 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
124 Mitchell, Gone with the Wind, 224.
125 Ibid, 235.
Later, his respect is shown amongst the Yankee captains when he helps Ashley Wilkes and fellow friends stay out of trouble. Rather than leave the gentlemen to their fate, Rhett goes out of his way to help them concoct an alibi by taking them to Belle Watling’s, who is a close friend of Rhett’s. When the Yankees try to arrest Ashley for leading a raid on a shantytown, Rhett confesses what their alibi is, in front of Melanie, and both act so well that the Yankee captains believe it based on the relationship they have with Rhett already (from when he was in prison).

By the end of the tale, he is worried about his reputation and is doing his best to repair the damage he has done to it previously. The ladies of society state what a family man he is and the grandson of one is going to throw a party for his daughter Bonnie. He and Bonnie are out riding when he happens upon one of the matrons of society, Mrs. Merriweather. He asks her parenting advice and gives thanks for her response. After taking his leave, Mrs. Merriweather is talking to Mrs. Meade about what an upstanding man Rhett Butler is. She comments, “I was just thinking there must be a great deal of good in a man who could love a child so much.”\textsuperscript{126} Much discussion of the matter ensues between the ladies and the end result is Mrs. Merriweather remarking that her grandbaby was going to have a party for Bonnie. Rhett’s reputation was becoming repaired, if not fully repaired, and he was getting Bonnie accepted into society as well.

Rhett Butler is not a true southern gentleman with honor as described by Bertram Wyatt-Brown, and he would be the first to admit it. At one point he warns Scarlett, “I can’t bear to take advantage of your little girl ideas, Miss O’Hara. I am neither noble nor heroic.”\textsuperscript{127} He believes that Scarlett is the same as him as well. Rhett remarks, "I love you, Scarlett, because we are so

\textsuperscript{126} Victor Fleming, \emph{Gone with the Wind}.  
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.
much alike, renegades, both of us, dear, and selfish rascals. Neither of us cares a rap if the whole world goes to pot, so long as we are safe and comfortable.”  

He furthers this notion when he is drunk one night and angry at Scarlett for her actions. He drunkenly yells at her, “Because I know Ashley Wilkes and his honorable breed. They’re gentlemen. We’re not gentlemen, and we have no honor, have we?”  

But Rhett has his own code of honor that he abides by which leads him to volunteering to join the Confederate Army following the Battle of Gettysburg and after the Yankees had reached Atlanta. When Scarlett questions this folly, he replies, “Maybe it’s because I’ve always had a weakness for lose causes once they’re really lost. Or maybe...maybe I’m ashamed of myself. Who knows?”  

Another time prior to this where he shows his honorable side is when he saves Ashley Wilkes and others, who raided a shantytown, from the Yankees who want to arrest them. He rushes to find Melanie, and when he is questioned, he admits why he is there and earns Melanie’s trust. He tells her, “I was playing poker with two Yankee captains. They knew there would be trouble. They’ve sent the cavalry out. Your husband and his friend are walking into a trap.” Rhett would have no reason to rush to see Melanie unless he intended to help, and he was a great help indeed. So while many may not consider Rhett Butler to be honorable in the confines of southern society, Rhett adhered to his own code of honor and lived by it.

If Ashley Wilkes is a true gentleman, and Rhett Butler is not, who is the perfect foil, or love interest, for Scarlett O’Hara? As discussed in the previous chapter, Scarlett O’Hara is not the true southern lady that many people think she is. Instead, the true southern lady is Melanie Wilkes-Hamilton. As a result, Melanie and Ashley are the logical couple as well as Scarlett and

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128 Mitchell, Gone with the Wind, 373.
129 Victor Fleming, Gone with the Wind.
130 Ibid.
Rhett being the other commonsense couple. But Scarlett is too blindsided by her “love” for Ashley to see that Rhett is the perfect man for her, yet Rhett knew right away that she was the woman for him. Rhett is the unequaled match for Scarlett because of his wealth, personality, and his love for her.

There are hints that only Scarlett is aware of to prove that Rhett is the perfect gentleman for her. Scarlett thinks at one point,

"His (Rhett’s) lips traveled to her wrist and she knew that he must feel the leap of her pulse as her heart quickened and she tried to draw back her hand. She had not bargained on this – this treacherous warm tide of feeling that made her want to run her hands through his hair, to feel his lips upon her mouth. She was not in love with him (Ashley), she told herself confusedly. She was in love with Ashley. But how to explain this feeling that made her hands shake and the pit of her stomach grow cold?"  

In the beginning of the novel, Scarlett reveals that she had her fortune read previously and she disagrees with the prophecy. Scarlett comments, "I don't like Mammy Jincy's fortunes. You know she said I was going to marry a gentleman with jet-black hair and a long black mustache, and I don’t like black-haired gentlemen." While she claims that she doesn’t like black-haired gentleman, she will realize by the end of the story that she is in love with one.

After the Civil War comes to Georgia and personally touches Scarlett, the conflict affects the status of Scarlett’s family. While Tara survived, her mother died and her father has gone crazy as a result of the death of his wife and deterioration of Tara. This forces Scarlett to

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131 Mitchell, Gone with the Wind, 327.
132 Ibid, 30.
become the head of the household and she becomes obsessed with money as they were poor and starving at times. One of the most famous quotes is when Scarlett declares, “As God is my witness. As God is my witness, the Yankees aren’t going to lick me. I’m going to live through this, and when it’s all over, I’m never be hungry again. No, nor any of my folks. If I have to steal or kill - as God is my witness, I’ll never be hungry again!” In order to achieve this goal, and not to lose Tara, Scarlett will marry her second husband for his money. After he dies, Rhett will ask for her hand in marriage and she will eventually say yes to his proposal. Rhett is perceptive and asks if it is just because of his money. Scarlett truthfully admits, “Well…partly. …If I said I was so madly in love with you, you’d know I was lying, but you always said that we had a lot in common.” Rhett acknowledges the truth in that statement and they marry. Scarlett may believe that wedding Rhett will help her become a true lady in society’s eyes, but this is not the case. Fox-Genovese comments, “Her marriage to Rhett Butler and the ensuing hold on material security do not suffice to transform her into a real lady. But then Scarlett lacks any vital understanding of what is it to be one.”

After they wed, Rhett encourages Scarlett to use the money as he knows how well she likes to flaunt their wealth. Moments after she agrees to marry him, he inquires as to what kind of ring she would like. Of course, Scarlett O’Hara wants the biggest diamond ring money can buy! Rhett replies to her, “You shall have the biggest and most vulgar ring in Atlanta. We’ll go to New Orleans for the most expensive honeymoon my ill-gotten gains can buy.” Even if Ashley Wilkes had the means or ability to marry Scarlett, he would not understand this

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133 Ibid, 408.
134 Victor Fleming, Gone with the Wind.
136 Victor Fleming, Gone with the Wind.
component of her personality as he was a very simple man and did not like to flaunt material possessions or wealth. Rhett understood this in Scarlett, and he did not object to it himself. As a result, they rebuild Tara and a new house in Atlanta as well. Scarlett exclaims, “Oh Rhett, won’t everyone be jealous? I want everybody who’s been mean to me to be pea-green with envy.” Rhett just softly chuckles at her, but Ashley would never understand this sentiment as Melanie does not have a mean bone in her body.

Rhett’s personality is equally matched to handle Scarlett and the tantrums that she throws. He actually goads her into having fits with him as he enjoys riling her up which he does numerous times throughout the film. For example, when they first meet, Scarlett tells Rhett that he is not a gentleman, and Rhett fires back, “And you, miss, are no lady.” Not many people question Scarlett or have the nerve to spar verbally with her, but Rhett does it in almost every conversation they have. He constantly tells her to stop acting like a simpering young lady as he knows that is not what she is. He wants the true Scarlett and not the act that she puts on for everyone else. Furthermore he will inform Scarlett of her flaws as well, which no one has ever done before.

Rhett helps Melanie, her baby, and Scarlett escape Atlanta before the Yankees arrive so they can go back to Tara. When Rhett informs her that he will be leaving them to go join the Confederate Army, Scarlett is not pleased and tries to her best to get him to change his mind. Rhett tells her, “Selfish to the end, aren’t you? Thinking only of your precious hide, with never a thought for the noble cause.” This same type of situation occurs after Scarlett and Ashley are caught embracing, and Rhett forces her to attend Ashley’s surprise party that night. Many of

137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
Atlanta’s high-society types are in attendance. Melanie welcomes Scarlett with open arms much to Scarlett’s surprise and Rhett addresses that later. He proclaims, “So she stood by you, did she? How does it feel to have the woman you’ve wronged cloak your sins for you? You’re wondering if she knows all about you and Ashley. You’re wondering if she did it just to save her face. You’re thinking that she’s a fool for doing it even if it did save your hide.” He goes on to say how much honor Melanie has compared to Scarlett, and she would never disgrace herself, or Scarlett, in that manner. This scene ends controversially as he is drunk and charges after Scarlett, picks her up, and carries her up stairs to have relations with her. But the next morning, Scarlett is humming in bed and extremely happy with what occurred the previous night. She becomes very despondent when Rhett apologizes for his behavior and informs her that he will be going on an extended trip.

In addition to the two factors listed above, Rhett Butler truly loves Scarlett O’Hara. At first, he tells Scarlett that he is not the marrying kind of man. At one point he propositions her: "He rose to his feet and, hand on heart, made her a burlesque bow. 'Dear,' he said quietly, 'I am complimenting your intelligence by asking you to be my mistress without having first seduced you.'" But after her second husband dies, he proposes to her. He jokes with her, “I can’t go all my life waiting to catch you between husbands.” They both agree they were not in love with each other when they agree to marriage, but to the viewer it would seem that Rhett is in love with Scarlett. Scarlett claims she will never love anyone but Ashley Wilkes, despite the fact that he is married to Melanie. Once they get married, Rhett continues to spoil Scarlett with his attention and wealth, but eventually catches her with a picture of Ashley Wilkes which infuriates him. He

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140 Ibid.
141 Mitchell, Gone with the Wind, 329.
142 Victor Fleming, Gone with the Wind.
leaves Scarlett, and takes their daughter with him, but returns a short time later after Bonnie experiences home sickness and misses Scarlett. Scarlett is thrilled to see Rhett upon his return, but unfortunately, thinking she wants no part in seeing him, he exchanges harsh words with her and she falls down the stairs and miscarries their second child.

During her recovery period, Scarlett will call out for Rhett, but unfortunately no one hears her so Rhett is unaware of this fact. By the end of the story, Melanie is dying due to complications she has from becoming pregnant a second time, and Rhett and Scarlett go to the Wilkes’ residence to say their goodbyes. Once Scarlett emerges from Melanie’s room, she collapses into Ashley’s arms. Despite Rhett’s love for her, he has finally had enough and leaves. It is at this moment that Scarlett discovers that Ashley never truly loved her but loved Melanie the whole time. Maginnis writes, “Ashley: who marries his cousin because they are of the same blood and understand each other, who but for the war would have remained buried at Twelve Oaks, who is ineffectual at Tara after the war and who eventually derives his livelihood from Scarlett’s mill, who ‘can’t be mentally faithful to his wife, but can’t be unfaithful technically,’ who cannot confess his love for Melanie to Scarlett until Melanie’s death.”\footnote{143}

Scarlett laments,

"...Oh, Ashley, you should have known, years ago, that you loved her and not me! Why didn't you? Everything would have been so different, so - Oh, you should have realized and not kept me dangling with all your talk about honor and sacrifice! If you'd told me, years ago, I'd have - It would have killed me but I could have stood it somehow. But you wait till now, till Melly's dying, to find out and now it's too late to do anything. Oh, Ashley, men are supposed to know such things - not women! You should have seen so

\footnote{143 Hayden B. J. Maginnis, “The Trouble with Scarlett,” 643.}
clearly that you loved her all the time and only wanted me like - like Rhett wants that Watling woman!"\cite{Mitchell2002}

Scarlett runs home to Rhett to inform him of her revelation. Unfortunately for Scarlett, she has ruined her chance for love with Rhett by wasting all her efforts and attention on Ashley Wilkes rather than the man she had in front of her the whole time - Rhett Butler. When she tells Rhett that she truly never loved Ashley and asks what she will do without him, as he is packing to leave her, Rhett famously responds, "Frankly my dear, I don’t give a damn."\cite{Victor2002} This quote was voted the greatest film quote of all time by the American Film Institute in 2005.\cite{AFI2002}

Scarlett O’Hara is the main focal point of the movie Gone with the Wind. While many men are involved in her life as she is married three times, the two true love interests she has are Ashley Wilkes and Rhett Butler. Using criteria set out by Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Ashley Wilkes is the true southern gentleman in this movie while Rhett Butler is the rogue. Both men believe in honor, Rhett’s honor is just slightly different from society’s idea of it at the time. But Ashley is a dreamer. Scarlett observes, "Melly and he were always talking such foolishness, poetry and books and dreams and moonrays and star dust. He was not fearing the things she feared, not the gnawing of an empty stomach, nor the keenness of winter wind nor eviction from Tara."\cite{Mitchell2002}

Rhett is not a dreamer and provides the contrast that Scarlett needs in her life. She will lead him in a merry chase but she will make Rhett her third husband and he constantly challenges her and provides for her. Unfortunately for Scarlett, she realized too late that she loved Rhett instead of Ashley and he leaves her. But that won’t stop Scarlett from going after what she wants…which

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Mitchell2002} Mitchell, Gone with the Wind, 938.
\bibitem{Victor2002} Victor Fleming, Gone with the Wind.
\bibitem{AFI2002} “AFI’s 100 Years…100 Movie Quotes,” American Film Institute, last modified 2016. http://www.afi.com/100Years/quotes.aspx
\bibitem{Mitchell2002} Mitchell, Gone with the Wind, 499.
\end{thebibliography}
is Rhett Butler as she finally discovered she loved him. Farca remarks, “Rejecting the decorative role of the ‘southern lady’ throughout the novel, Scarlett finally realizes she loves Rhett, particularly because he is not a gentleman.” Scarlett boldly proclaims in the final scene, “Tara!...Home. I'll go home, and I'll think of some way to get him back! After all, tomorrow is another day!”

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148 Paula Anca Farca, “And, You, Miss, Are No Lady: Feminist and Postfeminist Scarlett O’Hara Rethinks the Southern Lady.”
149 Victor Fleming, Gone with the Wind.
CHAPTER III. Tara and Scarlett’s Transformation in Gone with the Wind

“There was a land of Cavaliers and Cotton Fields called the Old South. . . Here in this pretty world Gallantry took its last bow. . . . Here was the last ever to be seen of Knights and their Ladies Fair, of Master and of Slave... Look for it only in books, for it is no more than a dream remembered. A Civilization gone with the wind. . .”\(^{150}\) Gone with the Wind demonstrates that there are many factors that can transform a nation and its inhabitants. Some important reasons for change are humans, technology, nature, etc. One of Leo Marx’s arguments in his book The Machine and the Garden is that technology has been the main factor that has promoted change in nature throughout the centuries. Marx refers to notes recorded by Nathaniel Hawthorne, an American author, when he was sitting in woods near Concord, Massachusetts jotting down his thoughts.\(^{151}\) While this may not sound very important, one of the contemplations that Hawthorne registers can be found throughout American society – technology invading nature. Marx writes, “The central device of Hawthorne’s notes is to expose the pastoral ideal to the pressure of change – to an encroaching world of power and complexity or, in a word, to history.”\(^{152}\) As Hawthorne was meditating in the woods recording his thoughts, industrialism intrudes upon him. Hawthorne writes, “I hear the whistle of the locomotive in the woods. Wherever that music comes it has its sequel. It is the voice of the civility of the Nineteenth Century saying, ‘Here I am.’”\(^{153}\) While Marx addresses that the interruption of technology was not Hawthorne’s main objective in his musings, it is the only objective that will be used for the intent of the argument presented in this paper. The intrusion of technology is prevalent in the film Gone with the Wind. Scarlett O’Hara lives at Tara, and both Scarlett and the estate go

\(^{150}\) Ibid.


\(^{152}\) Ibid, 24.

\(^{153}\) Ibid, 17.
through three distinct phases in their lives: pastoral, the machine, and being reclaimed by the wilderness.

The beginning of *Gone with the Wind* focuses on the pastoralism present in the Old South in the early 18th and mid-19th centuries, specifically focusing on two plantations and their families. For the purpose of this paper, pastoralism will be defined “according to the relationships between humans, animals, and the land.” Tara is owned by the O’Hara’s and Twelve Oaks, which is nearby Tara, is owned by the Wilkes. Many southerners – including the O’Hara’s and Wilkes – believed the south was better than the north, and the reverse was true as well. Robert Crunden expresses this pride in the south in a notion entitled southern agrarianism. He writes, it “. . .became a defense of values which seemed to them to have set the Old South apart from the industrialized North: its aristocracy, its hierarchical social structure, its uniform religion and code of conduct, its pervasive sense of ritual and mystery.” These ideals, particularly the invasion of industrialization, can be viewed throughout the movie *Gone with the Wind*.

Tara and Twelve Oaks are similar to one another in appearance. Both estates have large white homes with pillars that have long lanes leading up to the house. In regards to Tara, Hayden Maginnis writes, “Tara’s four-square pillars, its whitewashed brick, and the pale grey of its hall characterize Scarlett’s home. . .” Twelve Oaks lane is lined by trees which makes it very scenic as the visitors enter the grounds. In addition, the estate’s “porch, even more of its interiors, are neo-classical, loosely inspired Palladianism, that widespread movement in the

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156 Hayden B. J. Maginnis, “The Trouble with Scarlett.”
eighteenth century determined the style of country houses in England, Ireland, and America.”157

At Tara there are many resources available on the estates such as cotton, cows, lumber, and horses, while at Twelve Oaks, the only resources seen are horses and trees. Additionally, there are numerous scenes, in particular “Love of the Land” and “Twelve Oaks,” in which the viewers are treated to fields of greens with plenty of trees in the background. In the scene “Love of the Land,” Gerald O’Hara, Scarlett’s father, is seen riding his horse throughout the countryside which gives a picturesque view of the land that encompasses Tara. The scene at Twelve Oaks is an outdoor barbeque where the neighborhood gathers for one last hooray before the war strikes and the young men go off to enlist in the war.

While the story focuses on the O’Hara’s and the Wilkes, the star of the narrative is Scarlett O’Hara, who is a typical southern belle. She always wears the latest fashion, is very polite in public yet gossips, flirts while all the gentlemen court her, and she believes that the universe revolves around her. Mitchell writes, "She knew how to smile so that her dimples leaped, how to walk pigeon-toed so that her wide hoop skirts swayed entrancingly, how to look up into a man's face and then drop her eyes and bat the lids rapidly so that she seems a-tremble with gentle emotion. Most of all she learned how to conceal from men a sharp intelligence beneath a face as sweet and bland as a baby's."158 The tale takes the viewer through her triumphs and downfalls throughout a brief period of her life. Towards the beginning, Scarlett is unhappy about hearing about possibility of war and wishes that the South would not go to war. At one point, Scarlett insinuates that she does not even want Tara after her father told her that he would leave Tara to her after he passes. Gerald O’Hara disagrees with his daughter since the South

157 Ibid, 649.
158 Mitchell, Gone with the Wind, 75.
would be fighting over their land and livelihoods – two very important concepts to southern men. Mr. O’Hara says to her, “Do you mean to tell me, Katie Scarlett O'Hara, that Tara, that land, doesn't mean anything to you? Why, land is the only thing worth working for, worth fighting for, worth dying for, it’s the only thing that lasts!”¹⁵⁹ Gerald believes this as “Tara serves to connect Gerald O’Hara to his place of origin while simultaneously re-rooting him in the red earth of Georgia.”¹⁶⁰ This theme is prevalent throughout the film as Scarlett will keep returning to the land, particularly Tara, in order to survive.

Scarlett’s main romantic focus is her neighbor Ashley Wilkes. Scarlett believes she is in love with him and finds out relatively early in the movie that Ashley is going to marry his cousin, Melanie Hamilton. She is distraught when she finds this out, but convinces herself that if she tells Ashley that she loves him that he would be with her instead of Melanie. At the barbeque held at Twelve Oaks, Scarlett confesses her feelings to Ashley but he does not change his mind which angers Scarlett. Despite this anger, Ashley Wilkes is a motivating factor in most of Scarlett’s life decisions for years to come.

Eventually, the way of life and pastoralism present in the Old South is interrupted by the machine, which Marx refers to as technology in his novel. As mentioned earlier, the machine that interrupted Hawthorne’s reflection in the woods was a train whistle. Marx writes, “Since Jefferson’s time the forces of industrialism have been the chief threat to the bucolic image of America.”¹⁶¹ In Gone with the Wind, the bucolic image is burst by the machine that is the Civil War. The Civil War brought life as the O’Hara’s and Wilkes knew it crashing down around them. Ransom remarks, “The old Southern life was of course not nearly so fine as some of the

¹⁵⁹ Victor Fleming, Gone with the Wind.
¹⁶⁰ Geraldine Higgins, “Tara, the O’Haras, and the Irish Gone with the Wind.”
traditionalists like to believe. It did not offer serious competition among the world-types against the glory that was Greece, or the grandeur that was Rome.”

But the gentleman of the South defended their way of life as was seen at a barbeque held at Twelve Oak prior to the start of the war. Ashley even acknowledges this fight in a letter to Melanie. Ashley writes, "For I am fighting for the old days, the old days I love so much but which, I fear, are now gone forever, no matter how the die may fall. For, win or lose, we lose just the same. If we win this war and have the Cotton Kingdom of our dreams, we still have lost, for we will become a different people and the old quiet ways will go.” Ashley was perfectly correct.

During the barbeque, Rhett Butler, a charismatic southern man who is not received by any family with a reputation, inferences that south stands no chance if America goes to war. This angers many of the gentleman present as they are fighting for their way of lives they believe “which had been considered and authorized. The establishment had a sufficient economic base, it was meant to be stable rather than provisional, it had got beyond the pioneering stage, it provided leisure, and its benefits were already being enjoyed.”

Many did not want to give up this life of leisure they had established. But Rhett was not necessarily commenting on the southern lifestyle. Specifically, Rhett remarks that all the south has “is cotton and slaves and arrogance.” Rhett makes this comment because he understands where most of the industry in America is located at this time. During the war the Confederacy could not rely on the railroad for a reliable means of transportation as approximately 90 different companies were in charge of the network and the track widths varied depending on the company. This presented a problem

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163 Mitchell, Gone with the Wind, 212.
165 Victor Fleming, Gone with the Wind.
in the transportation of supplies and troops throughout the war. Additionally, rarely did the Confederate soldiers receive full rations, whereas the Union soldiers occasionally faced shortages throughout the years.\textsuperscript{167} While Rhett’s comments outraged most of the men present, his comments prove to be true by the end of the war.

While the war is mentioned rather quickly in the story, the effects of war are not seen immediately on the main characters. The first effect viewed is when Scarlett becomes a widow. Scarlett married Charles Hamilton prior to him joining the Confederate army. While Charles died serving his country, he died of pneumonia after contracting the measles while in the army. Mostly the main characters are untouched by the war at Tara, Twelve Oaks, and Atlanta where Scarlett and Melanie Hamilton relocate to during the war. Scarlett follows Melanie to Atlanta at the suggestion of her mother soon after losing her husband Charles, but she has an ulterior motive. If Scarlett goes to Atlanta, she would stay with Melanie and her Aunt Pittypat which means if Ashley gets leave from the Confederate army, Scarlett would be there waiting for him. Scarlett shows great concern, and some people – such as Rhett Butler and Mammy, a slave at Tara - think too much concern, for Ashley but Melanie thinks her concern is purely for her sake. Before Scarlett leaves for Atlanta, Mammy tells her, “You'll just get in trouble in Atlanta… . You know what trouble I's talking about. I's talking about Mr. Ashley Wilkes. He'll be coming to Atlanta when he gets his leave - and you sittin' there waitin' for him jes' like a spider. He belong to Miss Melanie. . .”\textsuperscript{168} Mammy’s prediction will prove to be correct.

While in at Atlanta, there is a charity ball to raise money for the troops, but it is a very festive occasion despite it occurring in the middle of the Civil War. The festive nature of the

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{168} Victor Fleming, \textit{Gone with the Wind}.
event is partly due to the fact that the South is winning the war and the fighting is occurring in the north so the effects cannot be seen in Atlanta. During this ball, Scarlett O’Hara is in mourning for the loss of her husband and should not be out in public due to the dictates of society. But under the ruse of raising money for the troops, Scarlett attends the ball and then shocks society by accepting a dance with Rhett Butler. While the landscape is starting to change due to the Civil War, Scarlett O’Hara is also starting to change as well during this time period. She tells Rhett, “I don’t care what you expect or what they think. I’m going to dance and dance. Tonight I wouldn’t mind dancing with Abe Lincoln himself!” This is a drastic change from when she decided to marry her husband Charles after being rejected by Ashley Wilkes, who chose Melanie instead, and over hearing other girls’ gossip about the fact that no one will ever marry her.

Furthermore, Scarlett begins to mature during this time period. Rather than thinking that the world revolves around her, she is learning that there are more important issues occurring all around her. Maginnis writes, “Scarlett is a survivor; more than that, she seems capable of forging her own reality, of building from ruins, of staying her course – even when surrounded by disaster and the weak.” These characteristics will be proven during this period as she will be surrounded by weak people from this point forward, except for Rhett Butler. Along with Melanie, Scarlett becomes a nurse during the Civil War to help care for the wounded Confederate soldiers. During one scene, she seems to revert back to her southern belle ways by complaining about how tired she is. But Melanie is quick to point out that they are needed at the hospital and even tells Scarlett that any of the men could be Ashley, whom Melanie is unaware

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169 Ibid.
Scarlett secretly loves. In addition to nursing injured Confederate soldiers, Scarlett quickly matures when she is forced to stay with a pregnant Melanie in Atlanta when Aunt Pittypat flees the city and Melanie is unable to travel. To make matters worse, when Melanie goes into labor, Doctor Meade is unable to come to the house to deliver the baby. Scarlett goes to personally summon the doctor, but he informs her that he cannot leave when men are dying all around him as they speak. This causes Scarlett to mature greatly as she now, with the help of a slave, has to help Melanie deliver her baby. Immediately after that she contacts Rhett Butler to help them escape Atlanta as the Union army has finally reached Atlanta and she fears for their safety.

The first time the machine – the Civil War - is viewed in Gone with the Wind is when the Union army, led by General Sherman, is outside Atlanta after leading a 35-day siege against the city. Prior to the Union army reaching Georgia as a “little battle” was occurring in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Rhett remarked to Scarlett, “The South is sinking to its knees. It will never rise again. The cause. The cause of living in the past is dying right before us.”171 The South prided itself on its lands and old value system, which is the cause Rhett is referring to, but now the Confederacy didn’t have the necessary supplies to defend their land any longer. For example, Rhett remarked earlier in the movie that there wasn’t a cannon factory to be found in the whole south. Since the south rebelled against industrialism, this hurt them when the war began and continued to hurt them the longer the war goes on. Crunden writes, “The South simply could never agree that ‘the whole duty of man was to increase material production’ or that one’s culture was in any way related. Concerns of religion, hierarchy, stability, and order came first.”172 As a result, the South did not place an emphasis on industrialization as the north did in

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171 Victor Fleming, Gone with the Wind.
the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Due to the massive industrialization that occurred in the north, General Sherman and his troops marched down through the south and began bombing Atlanta. Windows are being blown out, wagons are blowing up, and people are attempting to flee the city, including Scarlett, which adds to the mass chaos and leads to the wilderness taking back over the country.

The final part of the movie shows what happens after the machine invades – the wilderness will reclaim nature and revert it back to its true form. Thomas Carlyle, famous English writer of the nineteenth century who favored the heroic view of history, infers that the machine does not just change one aspect of life. Marx writes, “The machine represents a change in our whole way of life, Carlyle argues, because ‘the same habit regulates not our mode of action alone, but our modes of thought and feeling. Men are grown mechanical in head and in heart as well as in head.” 173 This theory can be seen in the landscape at Tara and in human nature, particularly Scarlett and her father. The first aspect of the wilderness reclaiming nature is when the city of Atlanta turns to pandemonium as Scarlett is asking for Rhett’s help to escape the city. Sherman is finally preparing to enter the city after the 35 day siege, the Confederate soldiers are fleeing, and General Hood of the Confederate army is setting fire to warehouses in order to prevent Sherman from obtaining Confederate supplies. As Rhett Butler, Scarlett O’Hara and Melanie Hamilton and her baby are trying to escape, outlaws try to steal their horses. With no law left in the city, the wild is reclaiming the city as its own. The outlaws are reverting back to their primal urges to claim what they can by force whereas Rhett, Scarlett and Melanie are trying to escape to Tara, which proves to be just as uncivilized as Atlanta.

On the way to Tara, viewers see that trees are burned down and fields are destroyed, which is quite a different picture of the south than the beginning of the movie where pastoralism is present. Even as Scarlett and Melanie arrive at Twelve Oaks and Tara, the plantations are vastly differently than the picturesque estates Scarlett remembers them to be. A title card remarks on this vast difference: “Tara had survived…to face the hell and famine of defeat.”

Prior to Scarlett and Melanie arriving home, there was fighting around Twelve Oaks and Tara. Scarlett had heard about this fighting earlier. Mitchell writes,

"But to Scarlett, sick for her mother's safety, fighting to the south only meant fighting near Tara. …It was the thought of Sherman's thousands so close to Tara that brought it all home to her, brought the full horror of the war to her as no sound of siege guns shattering windowpanes, no privations of food and clothing and no endless rows of dying men had done. Sherman's army within a few miles of Tara! And even if the Yankees should be defeated, they might fall back down the road to Tara."

Higgins argues, “Gerald’s passion to defend Tara at all costs is his (only) major legacy to his daughter.” This is evident with her concern about Tara’s condition. When the ladies first come upon Twelve Oaks, they discover it was partially burnt down by the Yankees. Melanie can barely look at the burnt ruins and Scarlett looks around with tears in her eyes. Tara was used by the Yankee army as its headquarters when there was fighting around the plantations. Scarlett is devastated to see the condition the Yankees left Tara in. While the house is still standing, the barn is no longer standing as the Yankees used it for firewood and the house was ransacked as

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174 Victor Fleming, *Gone with the Wind*.
175 Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*, 336.
176 Geraldine Higgins, “Tara, the O’Haras, and the Irish Gone with the Wind,” 46.
well for valuables. Mr. O’Hara, who has undergone a drastic change since the beginning of the film, informs Scarlett that the only thing left is Confederate bonds which are worth nothing since the north won the war. Scarlett then realizes there is no money or food in Tara which inspires her to make a promise: “As God as my witness…I’ll never go hungry again.” Scarlett fulfills this promise due to the change in her character which can be seen throughout the rest of the movie.

Tara is not the only estate in this situation. Many soldiers are coming back from war and seeking shelter along the way, including shelter at Tara. A title card in the film proclaims it best: “Grim they came hobbling back to the desolation that had once been the land of plenty.” Soldiers are coming back from war and finding their homes in ruins. Ashley Wilkes, Melanie’s husband and Scarlett’s unrequited love, returns from the war to find the despairing conditions that the Yankees left Twelve Oaks in for the wilderness to reclaim. Scarlett is overjoyed at his return and Mammy has to subdue Scarlett from rushing to him. Once Ashley returns, Melanie rushes out to greet him and Mammy “must restrain Scarlett with the question: ‘He’s her [Melanie’s] husband, ain’t he?’” Despite that fact that he isn’t her husband, Scarlett goes to Ashley for advice as to how to keep Tara when she finds out that she needs $300 to pay taxes on the property. Ashley admits to her that he has no advice to offer. Ashley says, “If the war hadn’t come, I’d have spent my life happily buried at Twelve Oaks. But the war did come and I saw my boyhood friends blown to bits. I saw men crumple up in agony when I shot them. Now I find myself in a world which for me is worse than death. A place in which there is no place for me.” Ashley is unsure of how to fit into this world, and Scarlett will forge a place for him in

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177 Victor Fleming, *Gone with the Wind.*
178 Ibid.
180 Victor Fleming, *Gone with the Wind.*
order to help him stay in Atlanta and not move to the north since she does not want him to move away from her.

Gerald O’Hara, Scarlett’s father, changes after Scarlett comes back from Atlanta. He lost his land, his wife, and his wits all at once it seems. Despite the fact that Tara is still standing after the Yankees come through, this is not adequate to sustain Mr. O’Hara. Maginnis comments, “...the preservation of Tara is not enough to preserve his sanity.” At one point, Scarlett asks her father what they will do in regards to the fact that there is no food or money at Tara. He replies, “We must ask Mrs. O’Hara.” Scarlett’s mother died during the war, and Scarlett realizes while her father is still alive, he is not the same man as when she left either. A similar event occurs when he scolds Scarlett for her treatment of the slaves. He tells Scarlett she needs to lighten up in her treatment or he is going to speak to Mrs. O’Hara. Mr. O’Hara did have moments of clarity, and his last moment of clarity pertained to Tara and precluded his death. In the film, a man was threatening Scarlett, and as a result threatening Tara. Mr. O’Hara overheard the whole incident and decided to intervene. Mr. O’Hara tells the man, “I’ll show you who the owner of Tara is. …Yankee Coward,” and then proceeds to chase him on a horse. Unfortunately, Mr. O’Hara does not live to see Scarlett, with the help of Rhett Butler, restore Tara to its glory.

As the head of the house, Scarlett is responsible for feeding everyone at Tara. The first glimpse the viewer is provided of the Tara estate postwar, it is plain to see the estate is different from when Scarlett departed to go to Atlanta. There are very few cotton plants, there are trees with no leaves, the grass is over growing over the lane, and vines are growing on the side of the

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182 Victor Fleming, Gone with the Wind.
house. The wilderness is overrunning the land. Due to the condition of the land, the O’Hara’s will have to work the land in order to survive which is a vast change from the life of leisure the O’Hara’s, particularly Scarlett and her sisters, led prior to the war. Scarlett does not shy away from the work either. Mitchell writes,

"Only her feeling for Tara had not changed. She never came wearily home across the fields and saw the sprawling white house that her heart did not swell with love and the joy of homecoming. She never looked out of her window at green pastures and red fields and tall tangled swamp forest that a sense of beauty did not fill her. Her love for this land with its softly rolling hills of bright-red soil, this beautiful red earth that was blood colored, garnet, brick dust, vermilion, which so miraculously grew green bushes starred with white puffs, was one part of Scarlett which did not change when all else was changing. Nowhere else in the world was there land like this."\(^{183}\)

She would, and will, do anything to save Tara.

At one point, Scarlett’s sister – Suellen – complains about the fact that she has to pick cotton as it has damaged her hands. Carreen tells Suellen, “I guess things like hands and ladies don’t matter anymore.”\(^{184}\) Instead, Scarlett’s calloused hands prove to Rhett Butler that she is lying to him. Later in the film, Scarlett goes to visit Rhett Butler while she is in jail because she needs $300 dollars to pay for the taxes on Tara. Rather than tell Rhett the truth immediately, she tells Rhett that everything has been going fine at Tara and she hasn’t a care in the world. When Rhett goes to kiss her on the hands, he has found out her deceitfulness. Rhett says to her, “What have you been doing with your hands? …These don’t belong to a lady. You have been working

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\(^{183}\) Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*, 413.

\(^{184}\) Victor Fleming, *Gone with the Wind*. 
Due to her deceit, Rhett does not help her and she marries Suellen’s beau, Frank Kennedy, in order to get the necessary funds to save Tara. Scarlett reflects, "Suellen should not have Frank and his store and his mill! Suellen didn’t deserve them. She was going to have them herself. She thought of Tara and remembered Jonas Wilkerson, venomous as a rattler, at the foot of the front steps, and she grasped at the last straw floating above the shipwreck of her life. Rhett had failed her but the Lord had provided Frank."  

When Scarlett marries Frank Kennedy, she takes over his furniture business and expands a lumber business he had been running on the side as well. In order to help Ashley with his financial woes and keep him close to her, she gives Ashley part of the business – including renaming the business to Wilkes and Kennedy. Scarlett becomes a ruthless businesswoman who takes over control from her husband and does whatever she needs to do make a profit – including trading with the Yankees despite the protest of Melanie and others who remember what the Yankees did to them during the war. At one point Scarlett tells Rhett, “I found out that money is the most important thing in the world and I don’t intend to be without it again.”

While Scarlett is successful in her business ventures, her independence gets her into trouble. As she was thrust into the role of taking care of her family, Tara, and now her husband’s business, she became a very independent and mobile woman. At one point, she is going to the lumber mill by herself which requires her to drive through a shanty town of carpetbaggers. While Rhett warned her that this area of town was dangerous, she proceeded to drive by herself anyway and was attacked by two men who tried to steal her horse. While she escaped, with the help of a former slave from Tara, this event caused the death of her husband Frank and Ashley

185 Ibid.
186 Mitchell, Gone with the Wind, 557.
187 Victor Fleming, Gone with the Wind.
Wilkes was injured when a group of men raided shanty town in order to make the town safe again. While this occurs in the novel, there is an additional character that will aide Scarlett in running Tara, Will Benteen. He was a solider who arrived at Tara and ended up never leaving. Will loved Scarlett’s youngest sister, but ended up marrying Suellen to save her from scandal. Even before the marriage, he became the head of the household at Tara. Mitchell writes, "So he stayed and, gradually, unobtrusively, a large part of the burden of Tara shifted from Scarlett's shoulders to the bony shoulders of Will Benteen."\(^{188}\)

After Frank Kennedy dies, Rhett visits Scarlett. Scarlett’s character is still maturing as she confesses her sins to Rhett. She says, “I ought never to have married Frank to begin with. He was Suellen’s boy and he loved her, not me. And I made him miserable and I killed him. …For the first time I’m finding out what it is to be sorry for something I’ve done."\(^{189}\) Rhett is quick to point out that while this may be true, Scarlett would have done the same thing all over again in order to save Tara. But Rhett Butler confesses his love for her during this visit, which is not new to her. This time Scarlett decides to marry Rhett Butler, and Rhett understands that she is still in love with Ashley Wilkes but plans to change that.

While Rhett and Scarlett are away on their honeymoon, Scarlett has nightmares. Her nightmares encompass her time spent living in poverty when she was cold and hungry. Rhett tries to reassure, but Scarlett asks him to take her home to Tara. Up until this point, the wilderness still claimed Tara, but now Scarlett and Rhett will restore Tara to its former glory. Earlier in the movie, Scarlett told her father that she wished nothing to do with Tara. This is a crucial part in the film because Scarlett is now finally realizing how deep her connection with

\(^{188}\) Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*, 482.
\(^{189}\) Victor Fleming, *Gone with the Wind*. 
Rhett tells her, “You get your strength from this red earth of Tara Scarlett. You’re part of it and its part of you.”\textsuperscript{190} Scarlett replied, “I’d give anything to have Tara the way it was before the war.”\textsuperscript{191} As a result, Rhett and Scarlett rebuild Tara. While the machine came through and the wilderness reclaimed the land, Scarlett “has not only saved Tara but restored it, perhaps beyond its original condition.”\textsuperscript{192} In rebuilding Tara, one can only assume that Tara is rebuilt close to its former glory, but is also modernized to a certain extent to help aide the people of the South in moving forward during Reconstruction.\textsuperscript{193}

While they rebuild Tara, they choose not live in Tara. Instead, the couple lives in Atlanta were Scarlett’s final character transformation will occur. Rhett and Scarlett will have a daughter, Bonnie. Despite starting a family with Rhett, Scarlett still has feelings for Ashley and is caught embracing him by Ashley’s sister India Wilkes. The news quickly spreads around town, and Scarlett does not want to attend his birthday party that night due to the scandal. Rhett forces her to attend by herself in a scarlet colored dress, for Bonnie’s sake, and Melanie does not shun Scarlett despite the rumors. Rhett points out the shame that Scarlett should feel: “How does it feel to have the woman you wronged cloak your sins for you? You’re wondering if she knows all about you and Ashley? You’re thinking that she’s a fool for doing it even if it did save your hide.”\textsuperscript{194} In addition to this situation, Rhett and Scarlett suffer a tragic loss with the death of their daughter. Bonnie enjoyed riding her horse, very similar to Scarlett’s father. As Rhett and Scarlett are having a conversation, Bonnie tells them she is going to jump despite their protests. As Bonnie starts riding away despite Rhett telling her to stop, Scarlett says, “Just like Pa,” and

\textsuperscript{190} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{192} Hayden B. J. Maginnis, “The Trouble with Scarlett,” 651.
\textsuperscript{194} Victor Fleming, Gone with the Wind.
Bonnie suffers the same unfortunate end that Mr. O’Hara did at the hands of their horses in the film. This tragedy will lead Melanie to come to the house to try to diffuse the tension between Rhett and Scarlett.

Melanie becomes fatally ill. When Scarlett and Rhett visit while Melanie is on her death bed, Scarlett collapse into Ashley’s arms rather than Rhett’s. Rhett immediately leaves, but then Scarlett has a realization that she never loved Ashley at all. She always loved Rhett, but Rhett has finally decided to leave her. Scarlett is devastated when Rhett leaves, but one thought seems provide her optimism: Tara. As she is on the steps crying, she hears the voice of the three most important men in her life: her father, Ashley and Rhett. They remind her of the strength she receives from the soil at Tara. One scholar comments, “Tara, which initially figures as a dynamic, frontier plantation – the locus of vitality – ends as a place of retreat.”195 Whether it is the pastoral Tara, machine-ridden Tara, or wilderness-Tara, Scarlett preserved and grew while learning the importance that Tara held in her life. “Tara…Home!..I’ll go home!”196

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196 Victor Fleming, Gone with the Wind.
Conclusion

*Gone with the Wind* is a tale of epic portions that centers on Scarlett O’Hara. While many people remember her as the stereotypical southern belle, this is not the case. She could and would not conform to society and the cult of domesticity. Instead of being seen as a belle, she should be viewed as an emblem of the feminist movement. Mitchell may not have intended this, but it still is the case. The performance of Vivien Leigh is a factor, but so too is the characterization of Scarlett. One scholar argues, “Mitchell describes Scarlett as an independent and strong woman throughout the novel and, in doing so, she anticipates the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s.” Some have even argued that Scarlett is very similar to Margaret Mitchell, but Mitchell took offense to that as noted earlier.

Scarlett does not conform to the cult of domesticity. She lacks piety, submissiveness, and purity. Whenever religion is discussed, she is distracted at times and blasphemous at others. Scarlett is not submissive as she does not listen to her father, her first two husbands, and barely heeds the advice of Rhett Butler. Additionally, she flirts and attempts to seduce Ashley Wilkes was he is married. Those are not the actions of a pure woman. While she does have aspects of domesticity, she does not compare to others – mainly Melanie Wilkes – in this category. She barely takes care of her children, begrudgingly becomes a nurse during the war, and is very selfish in all her marriages. Her selfishness is one trait that Rhett Butler will admire at times while he is courting her.

Rhett Butler encourages Scarlett to be independent and different from southern ladies. In fact, when she tries to emulate her mother, Rhett discourages that behavior. Farca writes, “Rhett

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suggest here that while her mother’s views and behavior are honorable, Scarlett should not remain ‘tied to mamma’s apronstrings’ and lie Ellen’s restrictive and ladylike life.”¹⁹⁸ Rhett is not a southern gentleman as he does not possess honor. Ashley Wilkes is the iconic southern gentleman, which is why he is the perfect companion to Melanie Wilkes-Hamilton, the true southern belle of the story. Rhett and Scarlett are perfect for one another as he encourages her to be herself, including her love of Tara. In this way, Rhett shows himself a modern male, far beyond the strictures of old-fashioned southern gender stereotypes. He is the match for Scarlett, but she is the focus of the story.

Tara is the true love of Scarlett O’Hara. Even when Rhett Butler leaves her, Scarlett immediately thinks of Tara. Her father has instilled this love in her due to their Irish ancestry. Mitchell writes, “Moreover, now that she was away from Tara, she missed it dreadfully, missed the red fields and the springing green cotton and the sweet twilight silences. For the first time, she realized dimly what Gerald had meant when he said that love of the land was in her blood.”¹⁹⁹ Tara goes through many phases, including pastoral, the machine, and being reclaimed by the wilderness. Scarlett lives at Tara during its pastoral phase and takes the land for granted. She is absent during the arrival machine age, the Civil War, when it invades Tara, but she arrives shortly after. Much to her relief, Tara is safe and she can care for it like her child.

Tara is the child she takes exceptional care of. She works the fields with her own hands in order to sustain the land and her family. With the help of Rhett Butler, she will rebuild Tara to its glory once it is claimed by nature after the war. While all ladies care for their home, Scarlett goes above and beyond, even committing murder, to save and protect Tara.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 85-86.
¹⁹⁹ Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*, 161.
While there are many males in the tale, strong females dominant the storyline, particularly in the novel. Artuso writes, “From Ellen and Grandma Fountaine to Mrs. Tarleton and Mrs. Merriwether, the maternalists stand at the helm of this novel, wielding power over all the men except Rhett – the quintessential Southern paternalist who fill finally be dethroned by the end of the novel.” 200 Scarlett is the strongest female due to her story in *Gone with the Wind*. While many people view her as a southern belle, she should be recognized as part of the feminist movement. She did not conform to the cult of domesticity, her perfect foil is Rhett Butler – who is not a southern gentleman, and her rare connection to Tara. As Rhett tells her, “All you’ve done is to be different from other women and you’ve made a little success of it.” 201

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200 Kathryn Stelmach Artuso, “Irish Maternalism and Motherland in Gone with the Wind,” 208.
201 Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*, 634.
Bibliography


