Gone with the Wind

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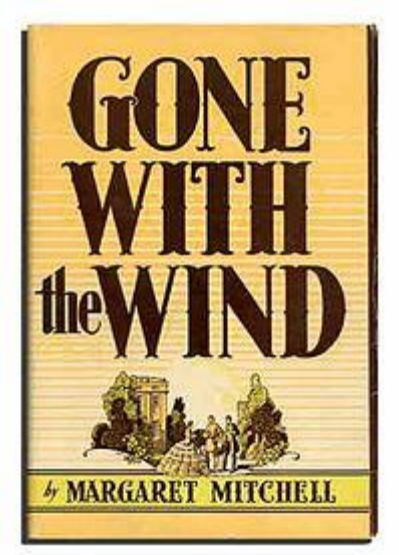
Gone With the Wind



First edition cover

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Gone with the Wind, first published in 1936, is a romance novel written by Margaret Mitchell, who received the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for the book in 1937. The story is set in Clayton County, Georgia and Atlanta during the American Civil War and Reconstruction, and depicts the experiences of Scarlett O'Hara, the spoiled daughter of a well-to-do plantation

owner, who must use every means at her disposal to come out of the poverty she finds herself in after Sherman's March to the Sea. The book is the source of the 1939 film of the same name.

Margaret Mitchell began writing *Gone with the Wind* in 1926 to pass the time while recovering from an auto-crash injury that refused to heal.[1] In April 1935, Harold Latham of Macmillan, an editor who was looking for new fiction, read what she had written and saw that it could be a best-seller. After Latham agreed to publish the book, Mitchell worked for another six months checking the historical references, and rewrote the opening chapter several times.[2] Mitchell and her husband John Marsh, a copy editor by trade, edited the final version of the novel. Mitchell wrote the book's final moments first, and then wrote the events that lead up to it.[3] As to what became of her star-crossed lovers, Rhett and Scarlett, after the novel ended, Mitchell did not know, and said, "For all I know, Rhett may have found someone else who was less difficult."[1] *Gone with the Wind* is the only novel by Mitchell published during her lifetime.[4]

Contents

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[edit] Title

The author tentatively titled the book *Tomorrow is Another Day*, from its last line.[5] Other proposed titles included *Bugles Sang True*, *Not in Our Stars*, and *Tote the Weary Load*.[2] The title Mitchell finally chose is from the first line of the third stanza of the poem *Non Sum Qualis Eram Bonae sub Regno Cynarae* by Ernest Dowson:

> I have forgot much, Cynara! gone with the wind,
> Flung roses, roses riotously with the throng,
> Dancing, to put thy pale, lost lilies out of mind...[6]

Scarlett O'Hara uses the title phrase when she wonders to herself if her home on a plantation called "Tara" is still standing or if it is "gone with the wind which had swept through Georgia."[7] In a general sense, the title is a metaphor for the departure of a way of life that existed in the South prior to the Civil War. When taken in the context of Dowson's poem about "Cynara", the phrase "gone with the wind" alludes to erotic loss.[8] The poem expresses the regrets of someone who has lost his passionate feelings for his "old passion", Cynara.[9]

[edit] Plot discussion

[edit] Structure

Margaret Mitchell arranged *Gone with the Wind* chronologically, basing it on the life and experiences of the main character, Scarlett O'Hara, as she grew from adolescence into adulthood. (During the time span of the novel, from 1861 to 1873, Scarlett ages from sixteen to twenty-eight years.) The literary technique applied in telling the story is Bildungsroman,[10] which is a type of novel concerned with the moral and psychological growth of the protagonist. The growth and education of Scarlett O'Hara is influenced by the events of her time.[10] Mitchell used a smooth linear narrative structure. The novel is known for its "readability".[11] The plot is rich with vivid characters.

[edit] Slavery

Slavery in *Gone with the Wind* is a backdrop to a story that is essentially about other things.[12] Southern plantation fiction (also known as Anti-Tom literature) from the early 19th century culminating in *Gone with the Wind* is written from the perspective and values of the slaveholder and tends to present slaves as docile and happy.[13]

> 'Way back in the dark days of the Early Sixties, regrettable tho it was—men fought, bled, and died for the freedom of the negro—her freedom!—and she stood by and did her *duty* to the last ditch—
>
> It was and is her life to *serve*, and she has done it well.
>
> While shot and shell thundered to release the shackles of slavery from her body and her soul—she loved, fought for, and *protected*—Us who held her in bondage, her "Marster" and her "Missus!"
>
> — James W. Elliott, excerpt from *My Old Black Mammy*, a storybook for children, 1914[14]

The slaves depicted in *Gone with the Wind* are primarily loyal house servants, such as Mammy, Pork and Uncle Peter, and these slaves stay on with their masters even after the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 sets them free. The field slaves, among them the foreman, Big Sam, leave the Tara plantation without any apparent hesitation.

James Stirling, a British writer who visited the Southern United States in 1857, stated there is a distinction between slaves that are house servants and slaves that are field hands in his book, *Letters from the Slave States*:

In judging of the welfare of the slaves, it is necessary to distinguish the different conditions of slavery. The most important distinction, both as regards numbers and its influence on the wellbeing of the slave, is that between house-servants and farm or field-hands. The house-servant is comparatively well off.[15]

A slave narrative by William Wells Brown published in 1847 spoke of the disparity in conditions between the house servant and the field hand:

During the time that Mr. Cook was overseer, I was a house servant—a situation preferable to a field hand, as I was better fed, better clothed, and not obliged to rise at the ringing bell, but about an half hour after. I have often laid and heard the crack of the whip, and the screams of the slave.[16]

Of the servants that stayed on at Tara, Scarlett thinks to herself, "There were qualities of loyalty and tirelessness and love in them that no strain could break, no money could buy."[17]

Although the novel is over one thousand pages, Mammy never considers what her life might be like away from Tara.[18] She recognizes her freedom to come and go as she pleases saying, "Ah is free, Miss Scarlett. You kain sen' me nowhar Ah doan wanter go," but Mammy remains duty-bound to "Miss Ellen's chile".[19]

Eighteen years prior to the publication of *Gone with the Wind*, an article titled, "The Old Black Mammy," written in the *Confederate Veteran* in 1918, discussed the romanticized view of the mammy character that had been passed on in literature of the South:

...for her faithfulness and devotion, she has been immortalized in the literature of the South; so the memory of her will never pass, but live on in the tales that are told of those "dear dead days beyond recall".[20][21]

Micki McElya, in her book, *Clinging to Mammy*, suggests the myth of the faithful slave, in the figure of mammy, lingers because white Americans wish to live in a world where African Americans are not angry over the injustice of slavery.[22]

The best-selling anti-slavery novel from the 19th century is *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe, published in 1852. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is mentioned briefly in *Gone with the Wind* as being accepted by the Yankees as, "revelation second only to the Bible".[17] The enduring interest of both *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Gone with the Wind* has resulted in lingering stereotypes of 19th century African American slaves.[23] However, since its publication, *Gone with the Wind* has become a reference point for subsequent writers about the South, both black and white alike.[24]

[edit] Southern belle

The southern belle is an archetype for a young woman of the American old South upper class. The southern belle's attractiveness is not physical beauty, but rather lies in her charm. She is

subject to the correct code of female behavior.[25] The novel's heroine, Scarlett O'Hara, charming though not beautiful, is a southern belle.

Fold away all your bright-tinted dresses,
Turn the key on your jewels today
And the wealth of your tendril-like tresses
Braid back in a serious way;
No more delicate gloves, no more laces,
No more trifling in boudoir or bower,
But come with your souls in your faces
To meet the stern wants of the hour
—Author unknown, excerpt from *Hospital Duties*, a Civil War poem depicting the role of women as nurses and calling for an end to class consciousness.[26]

For young Scarlett, the ideal southern belle is represented by her mother, Ellen O'Hara. In "A Study in Scarlett", published in *The New Yorker*, Claudia Roth Pierpont wrote:

The Southern belle was bred to conform to a subspecies of the nineteenth-century "lady"... For Scarlett, the ideal is embodied in her adored mother, the saintly Ellen, whose back is never seen to rest against the back of any chair on which she sits, whose broken spirit everywhere is mistaken for righteous calm...[27]

However, Scarlett is not always willing to conform. Kathryn Lee Seidel, in her book, *The Southern Belle in the American Novel*, wrote:

...part of her does try to rebel against the restraints of a code of behavior that relentlessly attempts to mold her into a form to which she is not naturally suited.[28]

Scarlett, the figure of a pampered southern belle, lives through an extreme reversal of fortune and wealth, and survives to rebuild Tara and her self-esteem.[29] Scarlett's bad belle traits, her deceitfulness, shrewdness, manipulativeness, and superficiality, in contrast to Melanie's good belle traits, trust, self-sacrifice, and loyalty, enable Scarlett to survive in the post-war South, and pursue her main interest, making money.[30]

Marriage was the goal of all southern belles, and all social and educational pursuits were directed towards it. Regardless of war and the loss of eligible men, young ladies were still subjected to the pressure to marry.[31] By law and Southern social convention, household heads were adult, white propertied males, and all white women and all African Americans were thought to require protection and guidance because they lacked the capacity for reason and self-control.[32]

During the Civil War, Southern women played a major role as volunteer nurses working in makeshift hospitals. Many were middle- and upper class women who had never worked for wages or seen the inside of a hospital. One such nurse was Ada W. Bacot, a young widow

who had lost two children. Bacot came from a wealthy South Carolina plantation family that owned 87 slaves.[33]

In the fall of 1862, Confederate laws were changed to permit the employment of women in hospitals as members of the Confederate Medical Department.[34] Twenty-seven year-old nurse Kate Cumming from Mobile, Alabama, described the primitive hospital conditions in her journal:

They are in the hall, on the gallery, and crowded into very small rooms. The foul air from this mass of human beings at first made me giddy and sick, but I soon got over it. We have to walk, and when we give the men any thing kneel, in blood and water; but we think nothing of it at all.[35]

[edit] Battles

The Civil War came to an end on April 26, 1865 when Confederate General Johnston surrendered his armies in the Carolinas Campaign to Union General Sherman. The battles mentioned or depicted in *Gone with the Wind* are:

Dearest one! do you remember,
When we did last meet?
When you told how you loved me,
Kneeling at my feet?
Oh, how proud you stood before me
In your suit of gray,
When you vow'd to me and country
Ne'er to go astray
Weeping, sad and lonely,
Sighs and tears how vain!
When this cruel war is over,
Pray then to meet again!
— Lyrics from *When this Cruel War is Over (Weeping, Sad and Lonely)*, 1862[36][37]

- Battle of Fredericksburg, December 11–15, 1862, Fredericksburg, Virginia, Confederate victory.
- Streight's Raid, April 19–May 3, 1863, in northern Alabama. Union Colonel Streight and his men were captured by Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest.

- Battle of Chancellorsville, April 30–May 6, 1863, in Spotsylvania County, Virginia, near the village of Chancellorsville, Confederate victory.

  Ashley Wilkes is stationed on the Rapidan River, Virginia, in the winter of 1863,[38] later captured and sent to a Union prison camp, Rock Island.

- Siege of Vicksburg, May 18–July 4, 1863, Vicksburg, Mississippi, Union victory.

- Battle of Gettysburg, July 1–3, 1863, fought in and around the town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Union victory. "They expected death. They did not expect defeat."[39]

- Battle of Chickamauga, September 19–20, 1863, northwestern Georgia. The first fighting in Georgia and the most significant Union defeat.

- Chattanooga Campaign, November-December, 1863, Tennessee, Union victory. The city became the supply and logistics base for Sherman's 1864 Atlanta Campaign.

- Atlanta Campaign, May–September 1864, northwest Georgia and the area around Atlanta:

  Confederate General Johnston fights and retreats from Dalton (May 7-13) to Resaca (May 13-15) to Kennesaw Mountain (June 27). Union General Sherman suffers heavy losses to the entrenched Confederate army. Unable to pass through Kennesaw, Sherman swings his men around to the Chattahoochee River where the Confederate army is waiting on the opposite side of the river. Once again, General Sherman flanks the Confederate army, forcing Johnston to retreat to Peachtree Creek (July 20), five miles northeast of Atlanta.

  - Battle of Atlanta, July 22, 1864, just southeast of Atlanta. The city would not fall until September 2, 1864. Heavy losses for Confederate General Hood.

  - Battle of Ezra Church, July 28, 1864, Sherman's failed attack west of Atlanta where the railroad entered the city.

  - Battle of Utoy Creek, August 5-7, 1864, Sherman's failed attempt to break the railroad line into Atlanta from the east, heavy Union losses.

  - Battle of Jonesborough, August 31-September 1, 1864, Sherman successfully cut the railroad lines from the south into Atlanta. The city of Atlanta was abandoned by Hood and then occupied by Union troops for the rest of the war.

- Savannah Campaign, conducted around Georgia during November and December 1864.

[edit] Scallawag

The word *scallawag* is an Americanism and is defined as a loafer, a vagabond, or a rogue.[40] Scallawag had a special meaning after the Civil War as an epithet for a white Southerner who willingly accepted the reforms by the Republicans.[41] Mitchell defines Scallawags as, "Southerners who had turned Republican very profitably."[42] Rhett Butler is accused of being

a "damned Scallawag".[43] In addition to Scallawags, there are also other types of scoundrels in the novel: Yankees, Carpetbaggers, Republicans, prostitutes and overseers. In the early years of the Civil War, Rhett is called a "scoundrel" for his "selfish gains" profiteering as a blockade-runner.[44]

As a Scallawag, Rhett is despised. He is the "dark, mysterious, and slightly malevolent hero loose in the world".[45] Literary scholars have identified characteristics of Margaret Mitchell's first husband, Berrien "Red" Upshaw, in the character of Rhett,[45] while another sees the image of Italian actor, Rudolph Valentino.[46] Fictional hero Rhett Butler has a "swarthy face, flashing teeth and dark alert eyes".[47] He is a "scamp, blackguard, without scruple or honor."[47]

[edit] Plot summary

Gone with the Wind takes place in the southern United States in the state of Georgia during the American Civil War (1861–1865) and the Reconstruction Era (1865–1877) that followed the war. The novel unfolds against the backdrop of rebellion wherein seven southern states, Georgia among them, have declared their secession from the United States (the "Union") and formed the Confederate States of America (the "Confederacy"), after Abraham Lincoln was elected president with no ballots from ten Southern states where slavery was legal. A dispute over states' rights has arisen[48] involving African slaves that were the source of manual labor on cotton plantations throughout the South. The story opens in April 1861 at the "Tara" plantation, which is owned by a wealthy Irish immigrant family, the O'Haras. The reader is told Scarlett O'Hara, the sixteen-year-old daughter of Gerald and Ellen O'Hara, "was not beautiful, but"[49] had an effect on men, especially when she took notice of them. It is the day before the men are called to war, Fort Sumter having been fired on two days earlier.

There are brief but vivid descriptions of the South as it began and grew, with backgrounds of the main characters: the stylish and highbrow French, the gentlemanly English, the forced-to-flee and looked-down-upon Irish. Miss Scarlett learns that one of her many beaux, Ashley Wilkes, is soon to be engaged to his cousin, Melanie Hamilton. She is stricken at heart. The following day at the Wilkeses' barbecue at "Twelve Oaks," Scarlett informs Ashley she loves him and Ashley admits he cares for her.[48] However, he knows he would not be happily married to Scarlett because of their personality differences. Scarlett loses her temper at Ashley and he silently takes it.

Then Scarlett meets Rhett Butler, a man who has a reputation as a rogue. Rhett had been alone in the library where the dialogue between Scarlett and Ashley took place, unseen by the couple. Rhett applauds Scarlett for the unladylike spirit she displayed with Ashley. Infuriated and humiliated, Scarlett tells Rhett, "You aren't fit to wipe Ashley's boots!"[48]

Immediately after, she finds out that war has been declared and the men are going to enlist. Seeking revenge for being jilted by Ashley, Scarlett accepts a proposal of marriage from Melanie's brother, Charles Hamilton. They marry two weeks later. Charles dies from measles two months after the war begins. Scarlett is pregnant with her first child. A widow at merely sixteen, she gives birth to a boy, Wade Hampton Hamilton, named after his father's general.[50] As a widow, she is bound by tradition, having to wear black and not allowed to speak to young men. Scarlett goes into a depression over all the restrictions placed upon her.

Melanie, who is living in Atlanta with Aunt Pittypat, invites Scarlett to live with them. In Atlanta, Scarlett's spirits revive and she is busy with hospital work and sewing circles for the Confederate army. Scarlett encounters Rhett Butler again at a dance for the Confederacy. Although Rhett believes the war is a lost cause, he is blockade running for the profit in it. The men must bid for a dance with a lady and Rhett bids "one hundred fifty dollars-in gold"[37] for a dance with Scarlett. Everyone at the dance is shocked that Rhett would bid for Scarlett, the widow still dressed in black. Melanie smooths things over by coming to Rhett's defense because he is generously supporting the Confederate cause that her husband, Ashley, is fighting for.

At Christmas (1863), Ashley has been granted a furlough from the army and returns to Atlanta to be with Melanie. The war is going badly for the Confederacy. Atlanta is under siege (September 1864), "hemmed in on three sides,"[51] it descends into a desperate state while hundreds of wounded Confederate soldiers lie dying or dead in the city. Melanie is pregnant and in labor with no doctor available, only inexperienced Scarlett to assist. Prissy, a young Negro servant girl, cries out in despair and fear, "De Yankees is comin!"[52] In the chaos, Scarlett, left to fend for herself, cries for the comfort and safety of her mother and Tara. The tattered Confederate States Army sets flame to Atlanta as they abandon it to the Union Army.

Melanie gives birth to a boy named Beauregard, and now they must hurry for refuge. Scarlett tells Prissy to go find Rhett, but she is afraid to "go runnin' roun' in de dahk". Scarlett replies to Prissy, "Haven't you any gumption?"[52] Prissy then finds Rhett, and Scarlett begs him to take herself, Wade, Melanie, Beau, and Prissy to Tara. Rhett laughs at the idea, but steals an emaciated horse and a small wagon, and they follow the retreating army out of Atlanta.

Part way to Tara, Rhett has a change of heart and he abandons Scarlett to enlist in the army. Scarlett makes her way to Tara without him where she is welcomed on the steps by her father, Gerald. It is clear things have drastically changed: Gerald has lost his mind, Scarlett's mother is dead, her sisters are sick with typhoid fever, the field slaves are gone, the Yankees have burned all the cotton and there is no food in the house.

The long tiring struggle for post-war survival begins that has Scarlett working in the fields. There are so many hungry people to feed and so little food. There is the ever present threat of the Yankees who steal and burn, and at one point, Scarlett kills a Yankee marauder with a single shot from Charles's pistol leaving "a bloody pit where the nose had been."[53]

A long succession of Confederate soldiers returning home stop at Tara to find food and rest. Two men stay on, an invalid Cracker, Will Benteen, and Ashley Wilkes, whose spirit is broken. Life at Tara slowly begins to recover when a new threat appears, hiked up taxes on Tara.

Scarlett knows only one man who has enough money to help her pay the taxes, Rhett Butler. She goes to Atlanta to find him only to learn Rhett is in jail. As she is leaving the jailhouse, Scarlett runs into Frank Kennedy, who is betrothed to Scarlett's sister, Suellen, and running a store in Atlanta. Soon realizing Frank also has money, Scarlett hatches a plot and tells Frank that Suellen has changed her mind about marrying him. Thereafter Frank succumbs to Scarlett's feminine charms and he marries her two weeks later knowing he has done "something romantic and exciting for the first time in his life."[54] Always wanting Scarlett to be happy and radiant, Frank gives her the money to pay the taxes on Tara.

While Frank has a cold and is being pampered by Aunt Pittypat, Scarlett goes over the accounts at Frank's store and finds many of his friends owe him money. Scarlett is now terrified about the taxes and decides money, a lot of it, is needed. She takes control of his business while he is away and makes many Atlantans resent her. Then with a loan from Rhett she buys a sawmill and runs the lumber business herself, all very unladylike conduct. Much to Frank's relief, Scarlett learns she is pregnant, which curtails her activities for awhile. She twists Ashley's arm to come to Atlanta and manage the mill, all the while still in love with him. At Melanie's urging, Ashley takes the job at the mill. Melanie soon becomes the center of Atlanta society, and Scarlett gives birth to a girl named Ella Lorena. "Ella for her grandmother Ellen, and Lorena because it was the most fashionable name of the day for girls."[55]

The state of Georgia is under martial law and life there has taken on a new and more frightening tone. For protection, Scarlett keeps Frank's pistol tucked in the upholstery of the buggy. Her trips alone to and from the mill take her past a shanty town where criminal elements live. On one evening when she is coming home from the mill, Scarlett is accosted by two men who attempt to rob her, but she escapes with the help of Big Sam, the former negro foreman from Tara. Attempting to avenge the assault on his wife, Frank and the Ku Klux Klan raid the shanty town whereupon Frank is shot dead. Scarlett is a widow for a second time.

Rhett puts on a charade to keep the men who participated in the shanty town raid from being arrested. He walks into the Wilkeses' home with Hugh Elsing and Ashley, singing and pretending to be drunk. Yankee officers outside the home question Rhett and he tells them he and the other men had been at Belle Watling's brothel that evening, a story Belle later confirms to the officers. The men are indebted to Rhett for saving them, and his Scallawag reputation among them improves a notch, but the men's wives, with the exception of Melanie, are livid at owing their husbands' lives to Belle Watling.

Frank Kennedy lies cold in a coffin in the quiet stillness of the parlor in Aunt Pittypat's home. Scarlett is in a remorseful state. She is swigging brandy from Aunt Pitty's swoon bottle when Rhett comes to call. She tells Rhett tearfully, "I'm afraid I'll die and go to hell," to which Rhett replies, "Maybe there isn't a hell."[19] Before she can cry any further, Rhett asks Scarlett to marry him saying, "I always intended having you, one way or another."[19] Scarlett declares she doesn't love him and doesn't want to be married again. However, Rhett kisses her passionately, and in the heat of the moment she agrees to marry him. One year later, Scarlett and Rhett announce their engagement.

News of the impending marriage is the talk of the town. Mr. and Mrs. Butler honeymoon in New Orleans, spending lavishly. Upon their return to Atlanta, the couple take up residence in the bridal suite at the National Hotel while their new home on Peachtree Street is being constructed. Scarlett chooses a modern Swiss chalet style home like the one she saw in *Harper's Weekly*, and red wallpaper, thick red carpet and black walnut furniture for the interior. Rhett describes the house as an "architectural horror".[56] Shortly after the Butlers move into their new home, the sardonic jabs between them turn into full-blown quarrels. Scarlett wonders why Rhett married her. Then "with real hate in her eyes"[56] she tells Rhett she is going to have a baby, a baby she does not want.

Then here's to our Confederacy, strong we are and brave,

Like patriots of old we'll fight, our heritage to save;

And rather than submit to shame, to die we would prefer,

So cheer for the Bonnie Blue Flag that bears a single star.

Hurrah! Hurrah!

For Southern rights, hurrah!

Hurrah for the Bonnie Blue Flag that bears a single star.

—The Bonnie Blue Flag, 1861 (marching song)

Wade is seven years old in 1869 when his sister, Eugenie Victoria, named after two queens, arrives in the world. She has blue eyes like Gerald O'Hara and Melanie gives her the nickname, "Bonnie Blue," in reference to the Bonnie Blue Flag of the Confederacy.

When Scarlett is feeling well again, she makes a trip to the mill and talks to Ashley, who is alone in the office. In the conversation with him, she comes away believing Ashley still loves her and is jealous of her intimate relations with Rhett, which excites her. Scarlett returns home and tells Rhett she does not want more children. From then on, Scarlett and Rhett sleep in separate bedrooms, and when Bonnie is two years old, she sleeps in a little bed beside Rhett's bed (with the light on all night long because she is afraid of the dark). Rhett turns his attention towards Bonnie, dotes on her, spoils her, and worries about her reputation when she is older.

Melanie is giving a surprise birthday party for Ashley. Scarlett goes to the mill to keep Ashley there until party time, a rare opportunity for Scarlett to see Ashley alone. When she sees him, she feels "sixteen again, a little breathless and excited."[57] Ashley tells her how pretty she looks, and they reminisce about the days when they were young and talk about their lives now. Suddenly Scarlett's eyes fill with tears and Ashley holds her head against his chest. Then in the doorway of the office Ashley sees standing his sister, India Wilkes. Before the party has even begun rumors of an adulterous relationship between Ashley and Scarlett have started, and Rhett and Melanie have heard the gossip. Melanie refuses to accept any criticism of her sister in-law and India Wilkes is banished from the Wilkeses' home for it, causing a rift in the family.

Rhett, more drunk than Scarlett has ever seen him, returns home the evening of the party long after Scarlett. His eyes are bloodshot and his mood is dark and violent. He enjoins Scarlett to drink with him. Not wanting Rhett to know she is fearful of him, Scarlett throws back a drink and gets up from her chair to go back to her bedroom. But Rhett stops her and pins her shoulders to the wall. Scarlett tells Rhett he is jealous of Ashley and Rhett accuses Scarlett of "crying for the moon"[58] over Ashley. He tells Scarlett they could have been happy together saying, "for I loved you and I know you."[58] Rhett then takes Scarlett in his arms and carries her up the stairs to her bedroom where passion envelops them.

The following morning Rhett leaves town with Bonnie and Prissy and stays away for three months. Scarlett finds herself missing him, but she is still unsure if Rhett loves her, having told her so when he was drunk. She learns she is pregnant with her fourth child.

On the day Rhett arrives home, Scarlett waits for him at the top of the stairs. She wonders if Rhett will kiss her, but to Scarlett's irritation, he does not. He tells her she looks pale. Scarlett tells him she is pale because she is pregnant. Rhett sarcastically asks her if the father is Ashley. She calls Rhett a cad and tells him no woman would want a baby of his. To which Rhett responds, "cheer up, maybe you'll have a miscarriage."[59] At that comment, Scarlett lunges at Rhett, but he side steps and she tumbles backwards down the stairs. She is seriously ill for the first time in her life, having lost her child and broken her ribs. Rhett is remorseful, believing he has killed her. Sobbing and drunk, Rhett buries his head in Melanie's lap and confesses he had been a jealous cad.

Scarlett, who is thin and pale, goes to Tara taking Wade and Ella with her, to regain her strength and vitality from "the green cotton fields of home."[60] When she returns a healthy woman to Atlanta, she sells the mills to Ashley. She finds Rhett's attitude has noticeably changed. He is sober, kinder, polite and seemingly disinterested. Though she misses the old Rhett at times, Scarlett is content to leave well enough alone.

Now Bonnie is four years old in 1873. A spirited and willful child, she has her father wrapped around her finger and giving into her every demand. Even Scarlett is jealous of the attention she gets from him. Rhett rides his horse around town with Bonnie in front of him, but the household mammy, "Mammy," insists it is not fitting for a girl to ride a horse with her dress flying up. Rhett heeds Mammy's words and buys Bonnie a Shetland pony, whom she names "Mr. Butler," and teaches her to ride sidesaddle. Then Rhett pays a boy named Wash twenty-five cents to teach Mr. Butler to jump over wood bars. When Mr. Butler is able to get his fat legs over a one foot high bar, Rhett puts Bonnie on the pony, and soon Mr. Butler is leaping bars and Aunt Melly's rose bushes.

Wearing her blue velvet riding habit with a red feather in her black hat, Bonnie pleads with her father to raise the bar to one and a half feet. He gives in and raises the bar, warning her not to come crying to him if she falls. Bonnie yells to her Mother, "Watch me take this one!"[61] The pony gallops towards the wood bar, but trips over it splintering the wood. Mr. Butler tumbles to the ground then scrambles to his feet and trots off with an empty saddle. Little Miss "Bonnie Blue" Butler is dead.

In the dark days and months following Bonnie's death, Rhett is often drunk and disheveled, while Scarlett, though deeply grieved also, seems to hold up under the strain. With the untimely death of Melanie Wilkes a short time later, Rhett decides he only wants the calm dignity of the genial South he once knew in his youth and he leaves Atlanta to find it. Meanwhile, Scarlett dreams of love that has eluded her for so long, but she still has Tara, and "tomorrow is another day."[62]

[edit] Characters

[edit] Main characters

> I made up Tara, just as I made up every character in the book. But nobody will believe me.
>
> —Margaret Mitchell[63]

- **Katie Scarlett (O'Hara) Hamilton Kennedy Butler:** The protagonist of the novel, Scarlett's forthright Irish blood is always at variance with the French teachings of

style from her mother, Ellen O'Hara. Scarlett marries Charles Hamilton, Frank Kennedy, and Rhett Butler, all the time wishing she is married to Ashley Wilkes instead. She has three children, one from each husband: Wade Hampton Hamilton (son to Charles Hamilton), Ella Lorena Kennedy (daughter to Frank Kennedy) and Eugenie Victoria "Bonnie Blue" Butler (daughter to Rhett Butler). She miscarries a fourth child, the only one she wanted, during a quarrel with Rhett when she accidentally falls down the stairs.[59] Scarlett is secretly scornful of Melanie Wilkes,[7] wife to Ashley, who shows nothing but love and devotion towards Scarlett, and considers her a sister throughout her life because Scarlett married Melanie's brother Charles.[50] Scarlett is unaware of the extent of Rhett's love for her or that she might love him.[47]

- **Captain Rhett K. Butler:** Scarlett's admirer and third husband, Rhett is often publicly shunned for his scandalous behavior[48] and sometimes accepted for his charm. Rhett declares he is not a marrying man and propositions Scarlett to be his mistress,[64] but marries her after the death of Frank Kennedy, explaining that he won't take a chance on losing her to someone else, since it is unlikely she will ever need money again after Frank's death.[19] Rhett only tells Scarlett he loves her after they are married, during an argument with her when he is drunk.[58] Later, at the end of the novel, Rhett confesses to Scarlett, "I loved you but I couldn't let you know it. You're so brutal to those who love you, Scarlett."[62]

- **Major George Ashley Wilkes:** The gallant Ashley married his cousin, Melanie, because "Like must marry like or there'll be no happiness."[48] A man of honor, Ashley became a soldier in grey in the Confederate States Army though he says he would have freed his slaves after his father's death, if the war hadn't done it first.[60] Although many of his friends and relations were killed in the Civil War, Ashley survived to see its brutal aftermath. Ashley was "the Perfect Knight"[65] in the mind of Scarlett, even throughout her three marriages. "She loved him and wanted him and did not understand him."[66]

- **Melanie (Hamilton) Wilkes:** Ashley's wife and cousin, Melanie is a genuinely humble, serene and gracious Southern woman.[67] As the story unfolds, Melanie becomes progressively physically weaker, first by childbirth, then "the hard work she had done at Tara,"[67] and she ultimately dies after a miscarriage.[68] As Rhett Butler said, "She never had any strength. She's never had anything but heart."[68]

[edit] Minor characters

- **Archie:** An ex-convict and former Confederate soldier who is imprisoned for the murder of his adulterous wife, he is taken in by Melanie and then later became Scarlett's coach driver.[55]

- **Will Benteen:** "South Georgia Cracker,"[69] Confederate soldier and patient listener to the troubles of all. Will lost part of his leg in the war and walks with the aid of a wooden stump. He is taken in by the O'Haras on his journey home from the war and after his recovery stays on to manage the farm at Tara.[69] Fond of Carreen O'Hara, he cannot pursue that relationship as she decides to enter a convent.[70] Not wanting to leave Tara, the land he has come to love, he later marries Suellen and has at least one child with her.[67]

- **Eugenie Victoria "Bonnie Blue" Butler:** Scarlett and Rhett's beloved, pretty, strong-willed daughter, as Irish in looks and temper as Gerald O'Hara, with the same blue eyes.[56]

- **Calvert Children: Raiford, Cade and Cathleen:** The O'Haras' County neighbors from another plantation. Cathleen Calvert was young Scarlett's friend.[71]

- **Dilcey:** Pork's wife, a slave woman of mixed Indian and African descent.[72] Scarlett pushes her father into buying Dilcey and her daughter Prissy from John Wilkes, the latter as a favor to Dilcey that she never forgets.[66]

- **Fontaine Boys: Joe, Tony and Alex:** are known for their hot tempers. Joe is killed at Gettysburg,[39] while Tony eventually murders Jonas Wilkerson in a barroom and flees to Texas, leaving Alex to tend to their plantation lands.[73]

- **Charles Hamilton:** Melanie Wilkes' brother and Scarlett's first husband, Charles is a shy and loving boy.[48]

- **Aunt Pittypat Hamilton:** Her real name is Sarah Jane Hamilton, but she acquired the nickname "Pittypat" in childhood because of the way she walked on her tiny feet. Aunt Pittypat is a spinster who lives in the red-brick house at the quiet end of Peachtree Street in Atlanta. The house is half-owned by Scarlett (after the death of Charles Hamilton). Pittypat's financial affairs are managed by her brother, Henry, whom she doesn't especially care for. Aunt Pittypat raised Melanie and Charles Hamilton after the death of their father, with considerable help from her slave, Uncle Peter.[74]

- **Wade Hampton Hamilton:** Son of Scarlett and Charles, born in early 1862. He was named for his father's commanding officer, Wade Hampton III.

- **Ella Lorena Kennedy:** Homely, simple daughter of Scarlett and Frank.[55]

- **Frank Kennedy:** Suellen O'Hara's former fiancé and Scarlett's second husband, Frank is an unattractive older man. He originally asks for Suellen's hand in marriage, but Scarlett steals him for herself in order to have enough money to pay the taxes on Tara.[75] Frank is unable to comprehend Scarlett's fears and her desperate struggle for survival after the war. He is unwilling to be as ruthless in business as Scarlett would like him to be.[75] Unknown to Scarlett, Frank is secretly involved in the Ku Klux Klan. He is "shot through the head",[76] according to Rhett Butler, while attempting to defend Scarlett's honor after she is attacked.

- **Mammy:** Scarlett's nurse from birth, Mammy is a slave who originally belonged to Scarlett's grandmother, and raised her mother, Ellen O'Hara.[66] Mammy is "head woman of the plantation".[71]

- **Dr. Meade:** A doctor in Atlanta, he looks after injured soldiers during the siege, with assistance from Melanie and Scarlett.[77] His two sons are killed in the war; the older Darcy at Gettysburg,[39] and the younger Phil as a member of the Confederate Home Guard during the Battle of Atlanta.[77]

- **Mrs. Merriwether:** is in Aunt Pittypat's social circle along with Mrs. Elsing and Mrs. Meade.[74] Post-war she sells homemade pies to survive, eventually opening her own bakery.[67]

- **Caroline Irene ("Carreen") O'Hara:** Scarlett's youngest sister, who also became sickened by typhoid during the Battle of Atlanta.[64] She is infatuated with the rowdy red-headed Brent Tarleton, who is killed in the war after becoming engaged to her. Broken-hearted by Brent's death, Carreen never truly gets over it and years later joins a convent.[70]

- **Ellen (Robillard) O'Hara:** Scarlett's gracious mother of French ancestry, Ellen married Gerald O'Hara, who was 28 years her senior, after her true love, Phillipe Robillard, was killed in a bar fight. Ellen ran all aspects of the household and nursed negro slaves as well as poor white trash.[78] She dies from typhoid in August 1864 after nursing Emmie Slattery.[7]

- **Gerald O'Hara:** Scarlett's Irish father and an excellent horseman,[66] Gerald is sometimes seen leaping fences on his horse while intoxicated, which eventually leads to his death.[70] Gerald's mind becomes addled after the death of his wife, Ellen.[53]

- **Susan Elinor ("Suellen") O'Hara:** Scarlett's middle sister, who became sickened by typhoid during the Battle of Atlanta.[64] After the war, Scarlett steals and marries her beau, Frank Kennedy.[54] Later, Suellen marries Will Benteen and has at least one child with him.[67]

- **O'Hara Boys:** Three boys of Ellen and Gerald O'Hara who died in infancy and are buried 100 yards from the house at Tara under twisted cedars. The headstone of each boy is inscribed "Gerald O'Hara, Jr."[78]

- **Uncle Peter:** an older man and slave. Uncle Peter is Aunt Pittypat's coach driver. He always keeps her smelling salts handy. Uncle Peter looked after Melanie and Charles Hamilton when they were young.[74]

- **Pork:** Gerald O'Hara's valet and the first slave he owned. Pork was won in a game of poker (as was the plantation Tara, in a separate poker game).[78] When Gerald died, Scarlett gave his pocket watch to Pork. She wanted to have the watch engraved with the words, "To Pork from the O'Hara's—Well done good and faithful servant,"[67] but Pork declined the offer.

- **Prissy:** A child slave girl, Dilcey's daughter.[72] Prissy is given to Scarlett as a handmaid when Scarlett goes to Atlanta to live with Aunt Pittypat.[50]

- **Eulalie and Pauline Robillard:** The married sisters of Ellen O'Hara who live in Charleston.[50]

- **Philippe Robillard:** The cousin of Ellen O'Hara and her first love. Philippe died in a bar fight in New Orleans around 1844.[66]

- **Pierre Robillard:** The father of Ellen O'Hara. He was staunchly Presbyterian, even though his family was Roman Catholic. The thought of his daughter becoming a nun was even worse than that of her marrying Gerald O'Hara.[78]

- **Big Sam:** A strong, husky, hardworking field slave who in post-war lawlessness comes to Scarlett's rescue from would-be merciless thieves.[79]

- **Emmie Slattery:** The daughter of Tom Slattery, Emmie was poor white trash whose family lived on three meager acres along the swamp bottoms.[78] Emmie gave birth to an illegitimate child fathered by Jonas Wilkerson, a Yankee and the overseer at Tara.[72] The child died. Emmie later married Jonas, and after the war, flush with carpetbagger cash, they try to buy Tara, but Scarlett is insulted and refuses the offer.[80]

- **Beatrice Tarleton:** was a busy woman, having on her hands not only a large cotton plantation, a hundred negroes and eight children, but the largest horse-breeding farm in Georgia. She was hot-tempered. No one was permitted to whip a horse or a slave, but she felt that a lick every now and then did her boys no harm.[49]

- **Tarleton Boys: Boyd, Tom, and the twins, Brent and Stuart:** The red-headed Tarleton boys were in frequent scrapes, loved practical jokes and gossip, and "were worse than the plagues of Egypt,"[49] according to their mother. Mrs. Tarleton laid her riding crop on their backs if the occasion seem warranted, though Boyd, the oldest and the runt, never got hit much. The inseparable twins, Brent and Stuart, at 19 years old were six feet two inches tall.[49] All four boys were killed in the war, the twins just moments apart at the Battle of Gettysburg.[81] Boyd was buried in Virginia, but only God knew where.[39]

- **Tarleton Girls: Hetty, Camilla, 'Randa and Betsy:** The stunning Tarleton girls have varying shades of red hair.[71]

- **Belle Watling:** A prostitute[44] and brothel madam,[73] Belle is portrayed as a loyal confederate.[44] Melanie declares she will acknowledge Belle when she passes her in the street, but Belle tells her not to.[76]

- **Jonas Wilkerson:** The Yankee overseer of Tara before the Civil War.[72]

- **Beauregard Wilkes:** Melanie and Ashley's son. Born in Atlanta when the siege begins, and then hastily transported to Tara after birth.[82]

- **Honey Wilkes:** Sister of India and Ashley Wilkes, Honey is described as having the "odd lashless look of a rabbit."[48] Honey is so called because she indiscriminately addresses everyone, from her father to the field hands, by that endearment.[71]

- **India Wilkes:** Sister of Honey and Ashley Wilkes. India is plain.[49]

- **John Wilkes:** Owner of "Twelve Oaks" and patriarch of the Wilkes family, John Wilkes is educated, gracious and loving.[48] He is killed during the Battle of Atlanta.[64]

[edit] Themes

[edit] Survival

> If *Gone With the Wind* has a theme it is that of survival. What makes some people come through catastrophes and others, apparently just as able, strong, and brave, go under? It happens in every upheaval. Some people survive; others don't. What qualities are in those who fight their way through triumphantly that are lacking in those that go under? I only know that survivors used to call that quality 'gumption.' So I wrote about people who had gumption and people who didn't.
>
> — Margaret Mitchell,1936[83]

Scarlett and Rhett are survivors because they adapt to the changes brought about by the war and Reconstruction.

[edit] Love and honor

Scarlett fails to understand what love is until the novel's end.

[edit] War and its scars

Gone with the Wind expresses the true horrors of war.

[edit] Reception

[edit] Reviews

The sales of Margaret Mitchell's novel in the summer of 1936, at the virtually unprecedented price of three dollars, reached about one million by the end of December.[11] The book was a best-seller by the time reviews began to appear in national magazines.[3]

Herschel Brickell, a critic for the *New York Evening Post*, lauded Mitchell for the way she, "tosses out the window all the thousands of technical tricks our novelists have been playing with for the past twenty years."[84]

Ralph Thompson, a book reviewer for *The New York Times*, was critical of the length of the novel, and wrote in June 1936:

I happen to feel that the book would have been infinitely better had it been edited down to say, 500 pages, but there speaks the harassed daily reviewer as well as the would-be judicious critic. Very nearly every reader will agree, no doubt, that a more disciplined and less prodigal piece of work would have more nearly done justice to the subject-matter.[85]

[edit] Criticisms for racial issues

One criticism leveled at *Gone with the Wind* is for its portrayal of African Americans in the 19th century South.[86] For example, former field hands (during the early days of Reconstruction) are described behaving "as creatures of small intelligence might naturally be expected to do. Like monkeys or small children turned loose among treasured objects whose

value is beyond their comprehension, they ran wild—either from perverse pleasure in destruction or simply because of their ignorance."[73]

It has also been argued that Mitchell downplayed the violent role of the Ku Klux Klan. Bestselling author Pat Conroy, in his preface to the novel, describes Mitchell's portrayal of the Ku Klux Klan as having "the same romanticized role it had in *The Birth of a Nation* and appears to be a benign combination of the Elks Club and a men's equestrian society."[87]

Regarding the historical inaccuracies of the novel, historian Richard N. Current points out:

No doubt it is indeed unfortunate that *Gone with the Wind* perpetuates many myths about Reconstruction, particularly with respect to blacks. Margaret Mitchell did not originate them and a young novelist can scarcely be faulted for not knowing what the majority of mature, professional historians did not know until many years later.[88]

In *Gone with the Wind*, Mitchell is blind to racial oppression and "the inseparability of race and gender" that defines the southern belle character of Scarlett.[89]

[edit] Awards and recognition

In 1937, Margaret Mitchell received the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for *Gone with the Wind* and the second annual National Book Award from the American Booksellers Association.[90] It is the second favorite book by American readers, just behind the Bible, according to a 2008 Harris Poll.[91] The poll found the novel has its strongest following among women, those aged 44 or more, both Southerners and Midwesterners, both whites and Hispanics, and those who have not attended college. The novel is on the list of best-selling books, selling more than 30 million copies.[92] *TIME* magazine critics, Lev Grossman and Richard Lacayo, included the novel on their list of the 100 best English-Language novels from 1923 to the present (2005).[93][94]

On June 30, 1986, the 50th anniversary of the day *Gone with the Wind* went on sale, the U.S. Post Office issued a 1-cent stamp showing an image of Margaret Mitchell. The stamp was designed by Ronald Adair and was part of the U.S. Postal Service's Great Americans series.[95]

On September 10, 1998, the U.S. Post Office issued a 32-cents stamp as part of its Celebrate the Century series recalling various important events in the 20th century. The stamp, designed by Howard Paine, displays the book with its original dust jacket, a white Magnolia blossom, and a hilt placed against a background of green velvet.[95]

To commemorate the 75th anniversary (May 2011) of the publication of *Gone with the Wind* in 1936, Scribner published a paperback edition featuring the book's original jacket art.[96]

[edit] Adaptations

Gone with the Wind has been adapted several times for stage and screen. The novel is the basis of the Academy Award–winning 1939 film starring Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh. On the U.S. stage the book has been adapted into two musical versions, *Scarlett* and *Gone with the Wind*. The Japanese Takarazuka Revue produced a musical adaptation of the novel. There

has also been a French musical adaptation by Gérard Presgurvic, *Autant en Emporte le Vent*.[97]

[edit] Sequels

Although Mitchell refused to write a sequel to *Gone with the Wind*, Mitchell's estate authorized Alexandra Ripley to write a sequel, which was titled *Scarlett*.[98] The book was subsequently adapted into a television mini-series in 1994.[99] A second sequel was authorized by Mitchell's estate titled *Rhett Butler's People*, by Donald McCaig.[100] The novel parallels *Gone with the Wind* from Rhett Butler's perspective.

The copyright holders of *Gone with the Wind* attempted to suppress publication of *The Wind Done Gone* by Alice Randall,[101] which retold the story from the perspective of the slaves. A federal appeals court denied the plaintiffs an injunction (*Suntrust v. Houghton Mifflin*) against publication on the basis that the book was parody and therefore protected by the First Amendment. The parties subsequently settled out of court and the book went on to become a *New York Times* Best Seller.

A book sequel unauthorized by the copyright holders, *The Winds of Tara* by Katherine Pinotti,[102] was blocked from publication in the United States. The novel was republished in Australia, avoiding U.S. copyright restrictions.

Numerous unauthorized sequels to *Gone with the Wind* have been published in Russia, mostly under the pseudonym Yuliya Hilpatrik, a cover for a consortium of writers. *The New York Times* states that most of these have a "Slavic" flavor.[103]

[edit] See also

- *Lost Laysen*, a 1916 novella written by Mitchell
- *Rhett Butler's People*, an authorized sequel to *Gone with the Wind*
- *Scarlett*, an authorized sequel to *Gone with the Wind*
- Southern literature
- Southern Renaissance
- *Le Monde*'s 100 Books of the Century

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