

# Analysis of Contradiction and Characters in *Gone With the Wind*

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**Abstract:** The novel *Gone With the Wind* has attracted much attention since its publication in 1936. Scarlett, the heroine, has always been a controversial figure because of her contradictory character. The portrayal of different characters in the works has its distinctive contradictory characteristics. This paper attempts to interpret the deep connotation reflected behind the novel by analyzing the characteristics of different characters.

**Keywords:** Scarlett; Contradiction analysis; Trait

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After the independence of the United States, the North and South developed along two different paths. In the north, the capitalist economy developed rapidly. In the South, plantation slavery was practiced. The American Civil War was a conflict between two economic systems. The economic development of black slavery in the South needed a large number of slaves, while the economic development of capitalism in the north needed a huge number of free labors. The seizure of labor force and free market caused irreconcilable contradictions between the two parts, so the outbreak of the American Civil War has its historical inevitability.

The analysis of contradiction refers to the use of contradictory viewpoints to observe and analyze the internal aspects of things and their movements in order to understand objective things. The article elaborates from two aspects: on the one hand is the contradictory analysis method of character. The author uses contradictory writing techniques to break through the perfect image of the characters in the previous novels, making the characters more vivid, more amiable and more real, just like feeling the characters in the novel appear on the paper. On the other hand, the conflict between the two economic systems in the North and South of the United States broke all kinds of prejudices against southern plantation owners in the past. Highlight the humanistic spirit and humanistic care between slave owners and slaves.

## 1. Analysis of Scarlett's contradictory personality

Scarlett is a bundle of contradictions: stubborn and indecisive; committed and treacherous; ideal and realistic. Her mother Ellen is her idol. She always wants to be an elegant, honorable and respected lady like her mother. Every time after violating the various constraints and dogmas of society on women, the first reaction in her mind is what her mother will think. She wants to be ethical, but she did whatever she wants. This contradictory character is especially reflected in Scarlett's love and marriage.

### 1.1 The longing of love and the breakdown of dreams

When Ashley rode into her maiden life on a white horse, his tall, handsome gentleman image was Scarlett's interpretation of perfect love. Ashley, a typical representative of the southern aristocracy, has a noble temperament and an appreciation of art. These were just what Scarlett missed. It is the reason why they attracted her. Almost all the boys fell in love with her, but she only had a crush on Ashley. When Scarlett learns that Ashley is about to get engaged to his cousin Melanie, she wakes up and must confess her love to Ashley in person. When the confession was rejected by Ashley, she quickly got marriage with another man.

### 1.2 Choice and helplessness of marriage

Scarlett's first husband was Charles. When Ashley rejected her, she was jealous and quickly married Melanie's brother-- Charles, an introverted and shy boy. In order to pay the high taxes on Tara's estate, Scarlett's second marriage is forced to choose her sister's fiancé-- Frank, an older man she isn't willing to have a look. Her third marriage was with Rhett, to whom she used to hate most. He

seemed to know all her secrets. Scarlett's three marriages seem to be their own initiative, but actually in some helpless situation.

## **2. Character characteristics and comparative analysis**

### **2.1 Scarlett vs. Melanie**

Scarlett and Melanie depend on each other, support each other, and grow together. Seemingly strong, brave, bold, decisive and responsible, Scarlett is deeply dependent on Melanie subconsciously. From Melanie's first appearance to her final death, she was an invisible giant beside Scarlett. Melanie seems soft, considerate, kind and timid, but she has a strong will. Melanie has been acting as Scarlett's defender since the beginning of her appearance. And Scarlett is Melanie's most loyal company. Scarlett and Melanie are a pair of contradictions, both unified and opposite. Scarlett is the object of hate, maverick, daredevil, practical, and always hopeful about life; Melanie was a beloved character and the last epitome of the old South. She is kind-hearted, virtuous and gentle, and independent, did not go with the flow, neither complaining nor arrogant, seriously lived every day. Seemingly contradictory character of the two people is the strongest "sister flower", do not abandon, do not give up. Seemingly weak Melanie is Scarlett's strongest backing. Scarlett, on the other hand, tries her best to keep Melanie safe and keep her promises.

The friendship between Scarlett and Melanie all shows its noble personality charm. From the moment she promised Ashley to take care of Melanie, Scarlett kept her promise. Leading Melanie and her newborn baby to a successful escape from the imminent fall of Atlanta to Tara. Melanie's trust in Scarlett comes from Scarlett's personality. No matter what the rumors are out there, Melanie will defend Scarlett's reputation to the death. On her deathbed, she entrusted her husband and children to Scarlett. She knows Scarlett is the perfect person to do what she says and trust her, and this is the perfect ending to their friendship. And laid the foundation for Scarlett's future in Atlanta.

### **2.2 Rhett vs. Ashley**

Rhett loves Scarlett at first sight, but he treats her like a child: cold on the outside, soft on the inside. Her insight into society and human nature and her unpredictability to Scarlett, from her cynicism before marriage to her perfect father to Bonnie after marriage. It shows us a man with both strength and tenderness. Ashley is loyal to his wife Melanie, but he appreciates Scarlett's courage of life. An obsession with the old South and the free market; Abhorrence of war but success in it; The image of a declining aristocrat in the south was born. Ashley and Rhett's contradictory characters represent, respectively, an old-fashioned Southern slave owner and a money-driven businessman who can adapt to The Times. The two complement and condition each other. In Ashley, we can find the remnants of southern aristocratic life, piano, chess, calligraphy, horseback riding, archery, etc., all of which were built on the basis of slavery. When the system of the South was destroyed, those old-guard could not find the meaning and value of their own survival, and could only be mercilessly abandoned by The Times. But the new generation, led by Rhett, have caught the pulse of The Times and used every opportunity to accumulate wealth, even risking their lives to make war money. They use the accumulation of wealth to prove the value of survival, but also in the later years to become beneficiaries and winners in life.

### **2.3 Allen vs. Geronld**

Scarlett's parents are legendary characters. Her father--Gerald, an Irishman with a passion for land, won his plantation--Tara by gambling, and married 16-year-old Ellen when he was 40. Gerald has a short temper, but he does everything his wife says. Her mother Ellen was born noble, kind-hearted, good at management, praised by almost everyone, established a good wife and mother image. After the marriage Tara under Ellen's management in good order, thriving, for Gerald's foothold and reputation laid a solid foundation. The couples seem to be far apart are really a perfect match. Gerald is gentle and considerate to his wife. Ellen treats her husband with respect and courtesy. On the surface, Gerald is the head of the family, but Ellen is the heart of the family. When Ellen died in the war from a cold, Gerald's life was divided. The first half of life is dependent on his wife; The second half of my life is a memory of my late wife. He never believed the news that his wife was dead. It can be seen that Ellen's influence on Gerald was profound. He couldn't live without his wife Ellen. He wouldn't be himself without her. I can't find who I was. And it's all unconscious. He did not realize the fact that his wife Ellen was no longer alive. This contradictory expression allows us to see the tenderness and kindness of the southern slaveholders, and the authenticity of their feelings. Ellen was also dutiful to the slaves, and the black Mammy accompanied Ellen from a young girl to a young woman, and remained dutiful to the O'Hara family even after Ellen's death. Mammy's position in the family was the highest authority besides Gerald and his wife, and even the mighty Scarlett obeyed Mammy. Gerald treats his personal servant, black Sam, like family, and has his wife and daughter redeemed and reunited with them. After Gerald's death, despite the scarcity of food and clothing in the war, Scarlett did not hesitate to give Sam her father's only pocket watch. These seemingly contradictory people of two different skin colors and status live together in the red land of Tara Manor. They never abandon and rely on each other, forming a warm and harmonious picture.

## Conclusion:

The author uses the analysis of contradiction to highlight the characteristics of the characters and vividly shows the personality characteristics of different characters. Scarlett wasn't a perfect person, and neither was Ashley. The contrast between Scarlett and Melanie, Ashley and Rhett highlights the authenticity of the author's characters. Scarlett's selfishness, cunning and capriciousness reveal Melanie's magnanimity, wisdom and tolerance; Through Ashley's vanity, cowardice and cowardice, let's describe Rhett's truth, courage and wit. The nobility and education of his wife Ellen contrasted with the roughness and brute strength of his husband Gerald.

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