

What a Woman!— The Rebellious Spirit of Scarlett in Gone with the Wind

Ziming Sun

Teacher Training School, Chongqing 402760, China.

Abstract: The novel *Gone with the Wind* is a great work by Margaret Mitchell. For a long time, it has been one of the bestsellers on novel shelves. This novel records the social situation during the American Civil War and the heroines' life experiences. It successfully portrays the classical image of females in literary history. Scarlett is a woman who has a rebellious spirit. This paper analyzes Scarlett's power against traditional gender prejudices, moral concepts, setbacks, and lifestyles.

Keywords: *Gone with the Wind*; Scarlett; Rebellious Spirit; Foreign Literature

Preface

"*Gone with the Wind*", written by Margaret Mitchell, describes how Scarlett survives during the harsh post-war period set in the American Civil War and the reconstruction of Georgia and Atlanta. Scarlett is a strong woman who has a rebellious spirit. She fights against traditional gender prejudices, moral concepts, and lifestyles at that time. She is full of vital power and energy, making her stronger and more special.

1. Brief introduction to *Gone with the Wind*:

The novel "*Gone with the Wind*" is set against the backdrop of the American Civil War. The heroine, Scarlett, was born in the middle of the 19th century into a wealthy family. Scarlett's father owns a large cotton plantation farm, and to some extent, her family has a tradition of supreme culture. However, the ethics of the South contributed to Scarlett's contradictory personality.

Scarlett fell in love with Ashley not long before the American Civil War. Ashley rejected Scarlett's confession of love and instead chose to marry her cousin, Melanie. This decision infuriated Scarlett, leading her to marry Melanie's brother, Charles, for revenge. Unfortunately, Charles died soon after joining the war, leaving Scarlett a young widow. Despite this, she continued to love Ashley.

Due to economic stagnation, Scarlett's family fell on hard times. In order to support them, she forced herself to marry Frank, who owned a store and a timber mill. One day, while passing through a slum district, Scarlett was attacked and Frank was killed seeking revenge. This was Scarlett's second failed marriage. During her third marriage, she did not realize her true love for Rhett until it was too late, and he had already left her due to a lack of trust.

Throughout the novel, Scarlett's experiences with love and marriage are ultimately failures. She struggles to know who she truly loves, and even when she finally figures it out, it is too late. Despite these hardships, Scarlett becomes stronger and learns that a woman must be independent and never give up on tomorrow.^[1]

2. Rebellion to traditional gender prejudice:

Rebellion against traditional gender prejudice has been ongoing for a long time. The concept that women are inferior to men has been held for too long. In western male-dominated societies, women are often treated as puppets of men. However, Scarlett challenges this notion. When Mammy tells her to "act like a lady," Scarlett responds, "Who cares? We've already endured enough insults from the Yankees." She believes that what a gentleman says and thinks are two different things. She questions why a girl has to be silly to catch a husband and declares that she will have a good time and eat at the barbecue. Scarlett's words sound like a declaration to challenge male-dominated society. She even looks down on men who have less experience or wisdom than herself.

Scarlett puts her words into practice by taking off her mourning and dancing with Rhett at Twelve Oaks, not caring about taboos or hiding her charm. She does what a man does, such as managing a timber mill, opening stores, and communicating with different kinds of people. In Scarlett's mind, women can do better than men, or at least they are equal. She tells Frank, "You wouldn't own a mill if I didn't take over...Are you running a charitable institution?" She believes that women can do everything without men's help. Women don't like Scarlett because they think she doesn't follow traditional women's morality, and men don't like her because they think she hurts their

dignity.

Focusing on the 39th paragraph of the actors' lines in "Gone with the Wind," learners have found that there are significant linguistic style and pragmatic concept differences between men and women. Women tend to use indirect linguistic methods to convey information, while men prefer direct ways of expressing their thoughts, such as imperative sentences. Men's communication styles are often defined as competitive, while women's are typically viewed as cooperative.^[2]

3. Rebellion against traditional moral concepts:

Scarlett is a young woman from Tara who is expected to adhere to strict moral criteria. However, she often follows her heart and does what she wants, leading her to rebel against traditional moral concepts. Her mammy always urges Scarlett to behave like a lady, catering to the male gaze, so that she can find a good husband. Words and clothing are essential for a lady in the South, but Scarlett betrays these moral concepts.

In the eyes of others, Scarlett is an immoral woman who arouses more and more blame. She fights against customs and manners instead of losing herself. For example, according to Southern customs, widows are not allowed to socialize after their husband's death, but Scarlett thinks it's unfair and tries hard to go against this custom. During her grieving period over Hamilton's death, Scarlett accepts Rhett's invitation to dance, ignoring strange looks.

During the postwar reconstruction, Scarlett applauds Pork's stealing behavior instead of reporting him. She also challenges Frank's belief that women should focus solely on their families by operating a timber mill, hiring criminals, and doing business with black people. All of these actions demonstrate Scarlett's rebellion against traditional moral concepts.

4. Rebellion against traditional ways of survival:

During the American Civil War, the country was divided into two economic systems. One was the slavery-based economy in the South, while the other was the capitalist economy in the North. These two economic powers fought against each other. Unlike the flexible farming economy, slavery relied on simple and cheap factors such as large fertile farms. The capitalist economy in the North, on the other hand, focused on labor force, intelligence, and currency, rather than natural soil. This was quite different from the traditional slavery-based economy. The economic battle lasted because capitalism in the North aimed to spread capital throughout the entire country, while slaveholders wanted to maintain slavery in America.

War deprives Scarlett of everything. In the face of tough living conditions, she realizes that abandoning herself to the past will not solve any problems. She must seek a new way of life for herself and her family. To survive, Scarlett milks cows, picks cotton, and goes hunting. It's amazing how she transforms from a respected young lady to a hardworking bee.

Scarlett needs to adjust her survival strategy. During the post-war reconstruction, she chooses to run a store and a timber mill to make a living. Undoubtedly, this means betraying her ancestral way of farming. However, Scarlett has her own ideas to improve their lives.^[3]

5. Rebellion against setbacks:

The God of destiny gave Scarlett beauty and wisdom, but at the same time, she faced many setbacks. Frustration in love, baptism by fire, reconstruction of her home, loss of her children, and the death of her husband all tested Scarlett's faith. Despite this, she remained rebellious and refused to be destroyed by the storms of life. No matter how difficult things became, suicide never crossed her mind, which was quite unusual. Ashley admired her bravery and noted that he had never seen her shed a tear. Scarlett did not believe in obvious concepts of slavery. Instead, she relied on her independent personality and deep love for Tara to fight her battles. Even when faced with her mother's passing, her father's madness, and her sister's illness, Scarlett continued to work barefoot to plant food in the earth. She also fulfilled a promise by staying to care for Melanie, even after Melanie gave birth to her baby.

In order to provide for her family, she does not prioritize noble temperament or the pursuit of joy. Instead she works hard as a negro slave. When she is suffering from hunger and feels exhausted, about to collapse on the ground, she gathers her strength and says: "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." She always says: "Tomorrow is another day." Despite sinking into difficulties, Scarlett may feel sad or despairing, but she never becomes bitter. She recalls her ancestors who worked with their hands and stood with their willpower. This is the solution to problems in her mind. The rebellion within Scarlett's body is what defines her.^[4]

6. Rebellion against love:

When Scarlett receives news that Ashley is going to marry Melanie, she begs him to elope with her instead of keeping silent. However, Ashley refuses her request. Failing in her confession, Scarlett decides to marry a man whom she does not love at all. This is the

first clash in her love life. Despite this, nothing can stop her from loving Ashley. She leaves Tara and her mother for Atlanta, living with her rival in love. When her husband dies, she does not feel pain but instead insists on waiting for Ashley's return from the battlefield and worrying about his safety. Since Scarlett promised to look after Melanie, she puts this into practice. Yet, even when Ashley returns from the war, Scarlett does not give up on her desire to elope with him.

Scarlett's first marriage was led by impulsive behavior, while her second marriage was motivated by material satisfaction. In order to protect Tara, she even robbed the ranch from her sister. Despite this, she always achieves her goals. At the beginning of her third marriage, Scarlett still harbors a deep love for Ashley. It is not until Rhett leaves that Scarlett realizes who she truly loves is him. She says, "I'll go home and think of some way to get him back." Scarlett is smart and brave, and she never lets herself down.

Conclusion

Against the backdrop of the American Civil War and Reconstruction, Scarlett, a legendary woman, challenged political rules and moral concepts in a "man-dominated society." She fought with difficulties on her own and was never discouraged by the challenges she faced. Although she betrayed traditional moral concepts or ignored other people's prejudices, she was clear about what she wanted and her responsibilities, putting her mind into action. Whether she gained or lost, she remained independent, brave, rebellious, confident, self-sacrificing, and accepted the reality of life and fought against difficulties. Scarlett sets a great example for modern women, inspiring us with many lessons. Her rebellious spirit conforms to the changing times, as Rhett said, "What a woman!" Scarlett is a great woman who stays true to herself and fights against the rules to survive.

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