

The Language of Rape: Margaret Mitchell's Defense of Spousal Rape in *Gone With the Wind*

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Abstract: Rape as a mechanism of power asserts the mental, physical, and sexual dominance of one individual over another. In the instances of male-perpetrated rape of women, the female victim loses her autonomy as an individual because she becomes a mode of sexual expression and release for her assaulter. In her novel *Gone With the Wind*, Margaret Mitchell specifically negotiates marital rape, among other types. Though only allusive, she depicts this rape through the diction used to describe the relationship between Rhett Butler and Scarlett O'Hara. These representations convey the author's reaffirmation of both established gender norms during the Civil War era and her own lingering anxieties during the 1920s. Mitchell establishes her traditional beliefs regarding male-female relationships in a system of male domination. She argues that, despite the detrimental effects of an abusive relationship, the woman will want to end up with the man who removed her agency.

Rape as a mechanism of power asserts the mental, physical, and sexual dominance of one individual over another. In the instances of male-perpetrated rape of women, the female victim loses her autonomy as an individual because she becomes a mode of sexual expression and release for her assaulter. Modern society deems discussions of rape necessary in courtrooms and areas of legal influence. However, fiction writers also often utilize rape to work through certain ideologies regarding the interactions between men and women. In her novel *Gone with the Wind*, Margaret Mitchell specifically negotiates marital rape, among other types. Though only allusive, she depicts this rape through the language and diction used to describe the relationship between a husband and wife. These representations convey the author's reaffirmation of both established gender norms during the Civil War era and her own lingering anxieties during the 1920s. Mitchell depicts her most devastating affirmation of rape as it relates to power and gender roles in her portrayal of the rape of Scarlett O'Hara at the hands of her husband, Rhett Butler. The language employed by Mitchell to discuss Scarlett's thoughts and feelings the morning after her rape confirms the author's traditional views regarding marital rape as well as her celebration of male dominance in sexual interactions.

Scholars have debated when the rape actually begins and have carefully assessed Mitchell's descriptions and diction. In "Rape and Persuasive Definition," Keith Burgess-Jackson surveys a dialogue between Christina Sommers and Marilyn Friedman, who argue about when specifically Rhett rapes Scarlett. Burgess-Jackson establishes this argument between the two female critics as a background for his broader argument concerning the modes of defining rape and the ways that different definitions account for various reactions. He summarizes the argument between Sommers and Friedman by asserting his position concerning their debate: "What concerns me are the meaning and logical statuses of not the answer, but the question to 'Did Butler rape O'Hara?'" (Burgess-Jackson 418). Drawing upon legal theorist Charles L. Stevenson, Burgess-Jackson then defines "persuasive definition to mean one which gives a new conceptual meaning to a familiar word without substantially changing its emotive meaning, and which is used with the conscious or unconscious purpose of changing, by its means, the direction of people's interests" (438). Ultimately, Burgess-Jackson conveys three competing modes of defining rape, essentially leaving the debate between Sommers and Friedman unresolved.

These three specific modes of rape theory discussed by Burgess-Jackson clarify the rape in *Gone With the Wind*. First, he analyzes the conservative model of rape, which has led to the development of laws and legality that respond to rape. This view looks at rape as "an intrusion on a woman's sexuality, specifically her virginity" (444). In this definition, women transform into the property of the men in their lives, such as fathers, brothers, and husbands and, "rape is the appropriation and use of a man's property without his consent or permission. Raping a man's wife, daughter, or sister harms him [...] and is an affront to his personal dignity" (444). Second, Burgess-Jackson examines the liberal definition of rape, which developed as a reaction to the conservative definition and asserts that "rape is a form of battery or unlawful touching" (446). Essentially, this view states that everyone has a right to bodily integrity and that laws protect the integrity of each citizen of a society. Significantly, this view includes the possibility of men being raped. Third, Burgess-Jackson presents the radical definition, which further developed as a reaction to the conservative and liberal views and suggests that rape is "an insult" (448). This view holds that "rape lowers a woman's social status, not saying that rapist lowers women or causes degradation, but rather, it is that rape in virtue of being rape, degrades women" (449).

Within these three categories, the rape in *Gone with the Wind* falls into the conservative category because Rhett uses sex as a means of power over his wife. His jealousy at the thought

of Scarlett being with Ashley in an intimate manner prompts Rhett to assert his dominance through the use of sexual violence. Given Burgess-Jackson's explanation of the conservative theory, it becomes evident that Scarlett's rape does not include the constituent elements present in the liberal or radical schools of thought. Unlike in the radical definition, Rhett does not want to merely insult the status of his wife; rather, the moments leading up to the rape assert his desire to humiliate and to overpower his wife.

The drunken Rhett whisking Scarlett to bed emerges as one of the most heavily discussed and described scenes of the novel and its adaption into film. In her book *Scarlett's Women: Gone with the Wind and Its Female Fans*, Helen Taylor suggests the impact of the rape on novel's film adaptation. She states, "The dominant image of Rhett and a very *déshabillée* Scarlett *en route* to bed [...] confirms Rhett's dominant role in the film, a sexually overpowering star making an erotically intense hero" (Taylor 126). Taylor's critique suggests the author-tailored sex scene allows no interpretation other than a moment of marital rape. The portrayals of the supposedly passionate scene between Rhett and Scarlett in the movie and book illustrate a woman overpowered by the rage of a man who lifts her up and carries her to bed. While critics argue whether Rhett in fact rapes Scarlett or if his actions and speech depict a passionate love scene, the language employed in Mitchell's own writing permits an alternative reading. Rhett rapes his wife in an attempt to bolster his own masculinity and dominate a woman whom he cannot control in the manner that post-war Atlanta urges him.

Scarlett's anxieties about her marriage consume the second section of the novel, and Mitchell positions the implied rape towards the end of the narrative. By arranging this moment of aggression near the end of the plot, Mitchell allows readers to assess the escalating tension between Rhett and Scarlett. The main strain on the newlywed couple emerges as another male character, Ashley Wilkes, who does not exhibit the alpha male characteristics of Rhett. The entire novel builds up to this altercation between Scarlett and Rhett, who, through their own faults as a married couple, move further and further apart from each other. By employing a linear narrative structure, Mitchell effectively allows the rape to act as the focal point that leads to the ultimate separation of Rhett and Scarlett. The plot develops in such a way that after the rape, readers gain awareness that the couple will not reach a positive resolution.

Scarlett's rape includes her mental, physical, and sexual loss of power, and each step works together with the next to lead to Rhett's achieved dominance. Mitchell amplifies the rape by creating a dramatic moment in the story that incorporates all four of the major characters: Scarlett, Rhett, Ashley, and Melanie. Mitchell establishes the setting of the first step of Rhett's aggression in the intimacy of Scarlett's bedroom, at the point when she stands naked in front of her angry husband. By illustrating the scene as such, Mitchell conveys the unequal distribution of power in the situation from the beginning because Rhett decides what Scarlett will wear: "'Wear that,' he said, tossing it on the bed and coming toward her. 'No modesty, matronly dove grays and lilacs tonight'" (862). Rhett articulates his desire to present Scarlett as a whore to society in his attempts to rationalize for himself the social effects of losing control over his wife. Given that he cannot expel Ashley from Scarlett's mind, Rhett pushes her into a social setting dressed as an immodest woman. He achieves a sense of power from forcing his wife to play the role of a whore or prostitute, given that he believes her to be emotionally unfaithful to him.

Mitchell not only portrays the power dynamic between Rhett and Scarlett based on Scarlett's naked body but also further asserts Rhett's dominance and control of the room by having him roughly dress Scarlett. He physically hurts her as he jerks the stays, forcing her to cry out in pain and humiliation: "He took the stays in his hands and jerked them so hard that she

cried out, frightened, humiliated, embarrassed at such an untouchable performance” (Mitchell 862). As their name denotes, the stays further force Scarlett to stand in one place as Rhett humiliates her, thereby restricting her mobility. This language draws on diction describing a moment of physical abuse, given that the aggressor’s deliberate actions lead to the victim’s pain. Mitchell’s depiction of this scene continues to develop into a more specific conviction of Rhett’s anger and subsequent hostility as his language becomes more detrimental towards Scarlett’s safety: “‘Hurts, does it?’ he laughed shortly and she could not see his face. ‘Pity it isn’t around your neck’” (862). Rhett’s laughter as he observes uncomfortable, frightened, and partially dressed Scarlett further indicates his desires to assert his dominance over her by humiliating her.

Rhett’s use of force on Scarlett’s body continues as the couple rides to Melanie’s house where he wants to “see the lions eat” (863) his wife. While Scarlett begs Rhett for an opportunity to explain her actions in an effort to convince him that she has not in fact committed adultery, Rhett grows more aggressive. Mitchell deliberately shifts her diction to words focused on physical damage to a body, which illustrates Rhett’s control over the situation: “As though he read her mind, Rhett’s hand closed upon her arm in a grip that would leave a bruise, the rough grip of a careless stranger” (862). The command Rhett exhibits over his wife physically further denotes a scene saturated with tense violence. Mitchell employs such words as “closed,” “grip,” “bruise,” “rough,” and “careless stranger” to illustrate the shift in Rhett’s mannerisms from a man who acts upon rough passion to an individual who obeys his untamed anger. In addition to exerting physical force, Rhett intrudes upon Scarlett’s thoughts, thereby placing him in a position of power where he not only controls her physically but also emotionally and mentally as well. This violation occurs not at the hands of a passionate husband but of a “careless stranger,” which creates further tension for the already anxious narration.

Rhett’s physical interactions with Scarlett’s body as he dresses her strips her of her comfort and places him in a position of control that she only escapes because she goes to meet the lions. Once the social gathering at Melanie’s house ends and Scarlett returns to her room alone, her thoughts turn towards Belle Watling’s brothel because, “For the first time, Scarlett was glad there was such a person as Belle Watling. Glad there was some other place than this house to shelter Rhett until his glittering, murderous mood had passed” (864). An irony in Scarlett’s thinking thus emerges, given that the entire drama of the evening is Rhett’s suspicions and rage that Scarlett has been emotionally unfaithful to him during their marriage. Although Rhett’s anger is said to stem from his suspicions that Scarlett has been unfaithful to him, Mitchell never provides Rhett with the opportunity for him to explain what exactly constitutes ‘unfaithfulness.’ As a man who routinely spends time with a prostitute, does Rhett view emotional infidelity equal to physical disloyalty? While he unleashes his fury based on a lack of emotional connection with his wife, Scarlett hopes that he will not return home and that a prostitute will calm and dissipate his “murderous mood.” Mitchell portrays the disconnect between Rhett and Scarlett by highlighting both the emotional and the physical isolation each feels with regards to the other: “That was wrong, being glad a husband was at the house of a prostitute, but she could not help it. She would be almost glad if he were dead, if it meant she would not have to see him tonight” (864).

Mitchell’s language further suggests an atmosphere of humiliation and unequal power distribution, when the plot progresses to the point of physical altercation – the rape – between Rhett and Scarlett. Mitchell describes him from Scarlett’s shaking perspective, “‘I must never let him know I’m afraid to face him’” (865), and, in contrast to Scarlett’s terrified mentality, Mitchell juxtaposes Rhett as “huge, larger than [Scarlett] had ever seen him, a terrifying faceless

black bulk” (865). The dissimilarity between the sheer sizes of the two individuals illustrates the first step building towards the approaching rape. The focalization of this specific moment through Scarlett allows readers to become aware of Rhett’s dominance over the situation, as his “arm went up in a gesture of command,” and he roughly yells, “Come here, damn you!” (865). Mitchell places Rhett in control of Scarlett’s feelings and movement, allowing the author to impose traditional gender roles in which the woman loses a sense of power in the presence of an irate man.

Referring to Rhett as the “terrifying faceless black bulk” (865) further promotes the imposition of traditional ideas concerning rape because Mitchell separates him from Scarlett racially as well. By suggesting that Rhett does not possess a recognizable white face, Mitchell romanticizes rape further. Specifically, she falls trap to creating a monstrous ‘other’ out of Rhett, who then has the agency to hide beneath a racial cloak. In this manner, Mitchell not only discusses her traditional considerations about spousal rape but also presents her ideas regarding race and rape. Specifically, this racialization of rape reference allows the author to present sexual violence as an incident that occurs between racially different men and white women. Essentially, Mitchell writes the narration about the anxieties of white women, who feared rape at the hands of black men and romanticized sexual domination at the white hands of their racially white husbands.

Another key element involved in the scene building up to the rape is the presence of alcohol and Rhett’s drunken state. Throughout the entire conversation in which he asserts his male dominance over Scarlett, Mitchell depicts a constant repetition of him pouring or drinking alcohol. The presence of alcohol leads to several alarming conclusions. First, even though Rhett is drunk, he is still capable of controlling Scarlett mentally and physically. Second, while he continues to drink slowly and deliberately, he maintains command over his diction, language use, and physical coordination. These conclusions result in a further problematic assessment of the rape because Mitchell’s reaffirmation of male-dominated sexual encounters incorporates alcohol, which typically results in a deviation from an individual’s sober behavior. This line of reasoning produces the conclusion not only that women, like Scarlett, enjoy being sexually controlled by their male counterparts, but also that men’s free use of alcohol, which causes them to lose their sober faculties, leads to positive sexual domination in marriage.

Rhett’s drunken control over the physical setting of the conversation implies his power, given that he remains close to the one candle lit in the room and does not move into the darkness surrounding Scarlett. He stands and sits with ease while controlling Scarlett’s mobility around the room, and he navigates the conversation to where he deems it necessary. Rhett does not permit her to move freely to suit her comfort, nor does he allow her to leave the room and argument. Scarlett does not have the authority to shift the path of the conversation, though she attempts to do so:

“Please.”

“I don’t please. Not tonight. It’s too amusing and the lover looking like a damned fool and wishing he were dead. How does it feel, my dear, to have the woman you hate stand by you and cloak your sins for you? Sit down.” (867)

Yet, Rhett wishes neither to listen to nor to allow Scarlett to act as an equal participant in the conversation. When she tries to establish her equal involvement by stating, “I will not listen—” (867), Rhett interjects and does not permit her to finish her statement. His ability to control the audience of his drunken rant indicates his ability to process logical thoughts while intoxicated:

“He drank slowly, watching her over the glass and she tightened her nerves, trying to keep from trembling. For a time his face did not change its expression but finally he laughed” (867). However, the presence of alcohol in this section of *Gone With the Wind* also demonstrates that the rising tension in the room will lead to uncontrollable behavior because of the effects of alcohol on the cognitive process.

With her movement restricted by Rhett’s force and “brown hands” (868) during their “pleasant domestic discussion” (866), Scarlett panics as she realizes the gravity of the situation in which she has become an unwilling participant. The tension between Rhett’s dominance and Scarlett’s recognition of her lack of power and security in the room in his presence continues to rise: “Beneath the words she could feel violence fighting its way to the surface, violence as cruel as the crack of a whip” (867). Scarlett’s awareness of the violence in Rhett’s voice and mannerisms increases as he continues to speak, and she fully realizes that “she was afraid, more afraid than she had ever been in her life” (867).

The second step utilized by Mitchell to script the escalating encounter between husband and wife occurs when Rhett uses physical force upon Scarlett’s body: “She wavered irresolutely and he was at her side, his hand on her arm in a grip that hurt. He gave it a slight wrench and she hastily sat down with a little cry of pain” (867). Mitchell’s diction clearly casts Rhett as the dominant individual, controlling the atmosphere and physicality of the room. Scarlett “wavered,” which implies a lack of command over one’s body as it shakes in a quivering or trembling movement, while Rhett “grip[s]” and has such deliberate charge over his bodily movements that even a “slight wrench” forces Scarlett to sit and cry out in pain.

Mitchell amplifies Scarlett’s emotions after this exertion of force by focalizing the moment through her: “now, she was afraid [...] his eyes still held their frightening glitter. There was something in their depths she did not recognize, could not understand, something deeper than anger, stronger than pain, something driving him until his eyes glowed redly like twin coals” (867). Even though the focalization of the moment occurs through Scarlett’s perception, her immediate attention remains on Rhett. Such a focus on him further removes Scarlett’s agency because, instead of trying to think of a way in which to remove herself from the situation, she can only consider Rhett’s terrifying features. Not only does Mitchell place Rhett at the center of Scarlett’s thoughts during the scene, but Mitchell also describes Scarlett’s lack of understanding about the entire ordeal: “For a moment, Scarlett stood rooted, thoughts tearing in and out of her mind so swiftly that she could seize none of them long enough to examine them” (868). By illustrating Scarlett as the person in the conversation who does not comprehend the statements or actions made, Mitchell further exemplifies Rhett’s dominance and control of the setting. The word and phrase used to label Rhett’s state of mind leading up to the rape are “anger” and “stronger than pain,” which are both powerful and violent words.

Rhett’s brutality towards Scarlett escalates as she struggles to confirm her position in the dialogue he continues to control. As she attempts to increase her influence in the discussion, he grows progressively more angry and belligerent. Mitchell shifts Rhett’s diction from abusive words with the use of minimal force, as when he slightly wrenches her arm, to the utilization of what many would term a deliberate verbal rape: “‘Observe my hands, my dear,’ he said, flexing them before her eyes. ‘I could tear you to pieces with them with no trouble whatsoever...I’ll put my hands, so, on each side of your head and I’ll smash your skull between them like a walnut’” (868). Rhett’s verbal rape further complicates Mitchell’s reaffirmation of established gender roles because she does not condemn a scene in which a woman is physically, mentally, and emotionally being harassed by her husband. Rhett’s language presents several modes of his

dominance over Scarlett and the situation, including encoding phallic symbolism in the hands, which furthers the notion of Rhett's verbal rape of Scarlett. First, he stands behind Scarlett, which places him in a position of power to restrict her movement. Second, as he remains behind the seated Scarlett, he directs her attention to his hands, which have the ability to exert force and inflict pain upon her body as he flexes his muscles. Third, Rhett compares Scarlett's head to a walnut to depict the ease with which he can cause her pain. A walnut also responds to the phallic image of Rhett's flexing arm as a vaginal shell in need of protecting, yet one that may be easily destroyed or defiled.

As the tension between Rhett and Scarlett increases, Mitchell once again juxtaposes the racial differences between the couple, which reaffirm the anxieties of white women who fear rape by a non-white man. The language shifts back to a focalized narrative through Scarlett, as she "flee[s] as though demons were upon her. Oh, if only she could reach her room! Rhett, running lightly as an Indian, was beside her in the dark. His breath was hot on her face and his hands went round her roughly, under the wrapper, against her bare skin" (Mitchell 870-71). Scarlett rushes away from Rhett's violence, attempting to gain access to security and safety in her room. Her inability to escape the swift movements of her husband illustrates her lack of strength against his consuming roughness. In contrast to Rhett's fluid mobility, Scarlett runs with incoherent and choppy thoughts racing through her mind, stopping frantically to kick off her slippers. "Rhett had said he loved her. Did he mean it? Or was he merely drunk? Or was this one of his horrible jokes? And Ashley—the moon—crying for the moon" (870). She is incapable of even thinking one of the many thoughts running through her mind completely before jumping to the next thought, which parallels her movements as she tries to leave the room with Rhett. Mitchell describes Rhett's motion towards Scarlett similar to the diction employed to describe the progression of a predator stalking its prey. Rhett runs "lightly" in the dark with "hot breath" and touches Scarlett's "bare skin." Once he captures his prey and indulges his desires by roughly feeling Scarlett's bare skin beneath her wrapper, he transforms from angry husband to aggressor to rapist: "By God, this is one night when there are going to be two in my bed" (871). Rhett's language concerning Scarlett at this point depicts his total control of property and ownership over Scarlett. By saying "there are going to be two in my bed," Rhett asserts his domination of the situation, his control over what will happen once there are two in *his* bed, as opposed to his and Scarlett's marriage bed, and thus his sexual power over Scarlett.

The language describing the rape creates anxiety because of the mixture of violent and passionate words employed. Despite the verbal and physical forcefulness present in the passages before Rhett carries Scarlett to the bedroom, many scholars, including David Finkelhor and Kersti Yllo argue that Rhett only presents his uncensored desire for his wife: "It would be a travesty of the highest order if Rhett Butler ended up facing a five-year jail term for his excess of passion" (qtd. in Eskow 690). The idea that men should not have their passionate desires of dominating their female counterparts in sexual instances tailored to gender-equal decencies is the driving force behind reaffirming established gender stereotypes. This statement suggests that men can act in the stereotypical manner of masculinity and escape punishment for crimes of passion against his wife. Essentially, a man, by virtue of being a man, deserves to act in a masculine manner, which includes sexually ravaging his wife, whether she wants to be carried off or not. Along with the verbal and physical forcefulness illustrated in the scene, Mitchell also employs specific words to add to the overall diction of a rape. Mitchell incorporates sensory perceptions of panic, including screaming and darkness, to create Scarlett's sense of terror and powerlessness: "He was like death, carrying her away in arms that hurt. She screamed, stifled

against him and he stopped suddenly on the landing and, turning her swiftly in his arms, bent over and kissed her with a savagery and completeness that wiped everything from her mind but the dark into which she was sinking” (Mitchell 871). Mitchell’s language asserts that Rhett completely consumes Scarlett’s being with his “savagery,” and the reader becomes aware of Scarlett’s thrill of being overpowered. The use of the word “savage” denotes a lack of refinement and an instinctual connection with the untamed, which connects to Scarlett’s thrilling emotion of her marriage progressing in a way that deviates from the norm.

Taming one’s sexual desires often results in refusing to allow the savage in each person to emerge and dominate another individual. At its core, rape asserts the dominance of the untamed because it encompasses one individual pursuing to take the dignity of another based on wanton desire. Lisa R. Eskow argues that Rhett strives to use his sexual dominance over Scarlett to reinstall his authority as a man in their married life. Eskow contends that society treats male sexual supremacy as a source of pride and measure of self-worth. Given such a definition regarding the role of male sexuality, Eskow contends that when a woman challenges male supremacy, men need to reassert their dominant position in the gender hierarchy. Essentially, some men use “rape as a weapon to reassert his sexual dominance and bolster [their] waning self-worth” (Eskow 691-92). She further asserts that such an ideology regarding the position of sexuality on a power structure induces detrimental effects on the overall development of society; society teaches men that any exhibition of force and aggression portrays their masculinity. Eskow concludes that the worst possible condition regarding the rape in *Gone With the Wind* would be for readers to assume and think that “Scarlett liked rape” (693).

In fact, Mitchell’s descriptions of Scarlett during and after her rape are extremely problematic because the once dominant and headstrong protagonist suddenly lavishes in the idea that “for the first time in her life she had met someone, something stronger than she, someone she could neither bully nor break, someone who was bullying and breaking her” (Mitchell 871). Scarlett dehumanizes Rhett from a “someone” to a “something” that had dominated her, which destabilizes her contentment the morning after her rape because she requires her assaulter’s dehumanization to rationalize the night before. Mitchell’s diction further problematizes the illustration of spousal rape because she shows Scarlett as enjoying the humiliation of having no sexual control: “He had humbled her, hurt her, used her brutally through a wild mad night and she had gloried in it” (871).

If Scarlett “gloried” in her humiliation and the brutality of her husband’s ostensible passion, then Mitchell not only describes spousal rape but actually promotes a romantic notion of masculine domination. Unlike Eskow, who agrees with this interpretation of the rape, critic Blanche H. Gelfant states, “Every reader responds with erotic pleasure when he [Rhett Butler] drives Ashley out of Scarlett’s dream” (10), which exalts the moment of complete male sexual domination. Gelfant fails to realize the negative cultural and social norms established within the context of her article. She suggests that “every reader,” regardless of time, gender, or sex, responds in the same manner of “erotic pleasure” when reading the rape. Gelfant further glorifies the culture of rape by asserting that individuals would react in the same manner, which removes the entire purpose of the victim feeling differently from the assaulter. If everyone feels the same about Scarlett’s rape, then Gelfant argues that no one will have a problem with being sexually dominated, which is a false statement. In fact, if Gelfant’s interpretation of spousal rape encompasses the definition of marital rape, the meaning of rape as a whole must change because in the case of marital rape, as stated by Gelfant, there is no assaulter or victim. If there is no

victim, then what occurs is not seen as a violent attack by any of the parties involved, because the assaulter may only develop into an aggressor based on the reaction of the victim.

The manner in which Mitchell describes the violent interaction between Rhett and Scarlett as the intoxicated husband carries his screaming and terrified wife to the bedroom confirms the author's traditional views regarding marital rape as well as her celebration of male dominance in sexual interactions. Mitchell identifies Rhett as a man who has the ability to exert brute force, be it mentally, emotionally, or physically. Throughout the development of the scenes leading up to the rape, Mitchell illustrates Rhett's escalating anger and overall strength in controlling Scarlett both emotionally and physically. Yet it becomes apparent that Rhett's dominance over Scarlett lasts well beyond the bodily rape: "Oh, she should be ashamed, should shrink from the very memory of the hot swirling darkness!" (Mitchell 872). The morning after her rape, Scarlett lies in bed, blushing to herself about the "hot swirling darkness" that has surrounded her as Rhett encloses her within his rough arms. Mitchell's language in reporting Scarlett's feelings the morning after conveys no sense of anger, fear, or regret.

Mitchell's diction even promotes Scarlett's desire to repeat the incident, given that "the memory of rapture, of the ecstasy of surrender" (872) is stronger than shame, as critic Betina Entzminger discusses. In *The Belle Gone Bad: White Southern Writers and the Dark Seductress*, she argues that the "bad belle," or the woman who incorporates the "decorous deviousness" characteristics of a southern belle in her behavior and mannerisms, will survive. Entzminger states, "The bad belle survives by manipulating the men who would control her" (110). Mitchell's text directly parallels these conclusions by presenting Scarlett as a "bad belle" who thinks of ways to use her rape as mechanism to impose power and control over Rhett: "For one night, he had had her at his mercy but now she knew the weakness of his armor. From now on she had him where she wanted him. She had smarted under his jeers for a long time, but now she had him where she could make him jump through any hoops she cared to hold" (Mitchell 872). The language deployed to discuss Scarlett's thinking after the rape affirms Mitchell's beliefs in celebrating male dominance. Specifically, Scarlett feels powerful after losing her body to another person's rough desires even though Mitchell uses the word "mercy" to describe how Scarlett lives through the night. She does not survive rape based on her own wit or character but rather on the mercy of the assaulter, which further diminishes her sense of agency.

The notion that an independent woman feels powerful after unwillingly submitting her body to the desires of a man produces questions about what Mitchell wants readers to consider in terms of Scarlett's character development. Although some scholars, including Anne Goodwyn Jones, argue for Scarlett's domineering personality and charisma, no scholars discuss her power *after* the rape. Instead, Jones and other critics focus their most compelling arguments around the idea that, without the onset of the Civil War, Scarlett would have continued to live within the boundaries established for her by her southern culture. In fact, according to Jones, the only reason Scarlett emerges as such a distinct female character is because "the opportunity to express the 'masculine' side of herself" (343). While these assertions concerning Scarlett's character are reliable throughout the novel's development during the sections concerned with the Civil War, the rape crushes Scarlett. The diction used to describe her in bed thinking to herself about her newly gained influence over Rhett because of the rape vanishes as soon as she realizes that her body did not mean anything to him. She "giggles foolishly" (Mitchell 872) when she realizes that she is "as nervous as a bride...and for Rhett!" (872), but once Scarlett becomes aware of her sexual position relative to Belle and Rhett's relationship, her diction disassembles into a collection of fragments. Scarlett becomes conscious of the fact that even though Rhett unleashes

his passion for her, he went to Belle's brothel first and then returns to her after he and Scarlett spend the night together.

The use of language and diction parallels the power struggle occurring in *Gone With the Wind* between Rhett and Scarlett. In the span of a few pages the reader becomes aware of an approaching fear of violence, degradation, and dehumanization. Mitchell conveys an intimate rape between a violent, drunk man and his proud wife, thereby conveying traditional values concerning spousal rape. Readers might be shocked and appalled at the debates concerning whether Rhett actually rapes Scarlett, or whether she deserved to be raped because she turned him out of her bedroom, but Mitchell composes this specific portion of the text in a coded manner. It become apparent that Mitchell celebrates male dominance and chastises female independence and pride because, after all, the famous last lines of the novel reflect just this dichotomy. Rhett has the agency to leave Scarlett while she remains without any means but to think: "Tomorrow, I'll think of some way to get him back" (959).

By ending the novel with Scarlett's words, Mitchell establishes her beliefs regarding male-female relationships in a system of male domination. She argues that, regardless of what the man does, the woman will want to be with him, and if she loses him, she will do what she can to bring the relationship back together, despite its detrimental effects. For Scarlett, rape emerges as a moment of misunderstood passion, and after that point in the novel she loses the fire Mitchell creates throughout the first two-thirds of the narrative. Rape, with both its physical and verbal elements, breaks Scarlett from an independent woman who lives life with her own rules in spite of societal dictations to a woman who cannot think of tomorrow without her rapist.

I pledge, on my honor, that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this assignment.

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