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The Southern Woman: A History of Rebellion, Passion, and Betrayal in *Gone With The Wind* and *Caballero: A Historical Novel*

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THE SOUTHERN WOMAN: A HISTORY OF REBELLION, PASSION AND BETRAYAL IN
GONE WITH THE WIND AND CABALLERO: A HISTORICAL NOVEL

A Thesis

by

JESSICA BANDA VELA

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Texas-Pan American
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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December 2012

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THE SOUTHERN WOMAN: A HISTORY OF REBELLION, PASSION AND BETRAYAL IN
GONE WITH THE WIND AND CABALLERO: A HISTORICAL NOVEL

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December 2012

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis closely reads, Margaret Mitchell's, *Gone with the Wind* and *Caballero*, co-authored by Jovita González and Eve Raleigh, to illustrate how women in two separate regions of the Southern United States were transformed by the effects of a historical war setting. While these two literary texts deal with distinctive social, political, and historical contexts, they both highlight factors that contributed to the Southern woman's alteration: colonization, gender roles and a historical war--setting that ironically liberated women. As a result, the female characters of each story become progressive by the events that take place with and during their respective wars. I argue that these two novels illustrate how the Civil War and the U.S./ Mexican War functioned as catalysts for liberating Southern women.

DEDICATION

The completion of my master's thesis would not have been possible without the love and support of my husband Jorge, who assisted and enlightened me on the male perspective. Thank you for pushing me when I wanted to give up and always believing in me. This is as much your thesis as it is mine. My parents, Jesse and Janie Banda, who babysat all those times I was working on the project. For my children: Jory, Jorja and Jesse this is a little piece of your mother that you can always keep with you. Thank you all for your love, support and patience. We did it

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When I originally assembled my committee my goal was to assemble a group of professors that were knowledgeable and strong educators. I had no idea that this entire experience would change me as a writer and a woman. Hence, my committee became my literary “dream team.” Thank you all for instilling in me a new hunger for knowledge and creativity.

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CHAPTER I

WOMEN OF THE SOUTH: DEFINED

Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* and Jovita González' and Eve Raleigh's co-authored *Caballero* are two novels that represent two specific kinds of Southern women in the United States: the Confederate woman and the Spanish--Mexican Texas woman. I argue that in these two novels women who resided in separate regions of the Southern United States were transformed by the effects of a historical war setting. While African American women made up a large percentage of Southern women the focus of my argument will be on the aristocratic Southern women. The novel *Gone with the Wind* focuses mostly on the white female struggles of survival in a white male dominated Southern society. Scarlett O'Hara parallels the nation's struggle to move forward against a South steeped in tradition and preserving the past. The South adamantly resisted the forward progressive movement of the nation that had the potential to liberate women. Ironically, by condoning war with the nation the South was unknowingly welcoming female liberation. *Cabellero: A Historical novel* is an allegory that has a very strong connection with *Gone with the Wind*. On the surface the story discusses the demise of the Patriarchal Hidalgo Don Santiago de Mendoza y Soría against the forced invasion of *Americanos* into Mexico. But the story's underlying theme blatantly discusses the yearning of the main female characters Don Santiago's two daughters, Angela and Susanita, and his independent sister Dolores, desire to break free from the constraints of a Mexican male dominated existence through moving into U.S. culture

The two historical novels depict a 19th century Southern society where women are used as political pawns to further the needs and wants of men: dealing with territory, wealth and status. The U.S. Civil War in *Gone with the Wind* and the Mexican American War in *Caballero* create an opportunity for women to resist societal and cultural standards that dictated their lives. The novels imply that a historical war setting allowed women to escape oppression and tradition by exposing women to different cultures and ideas. In both texts before the war women were confined to a strict set of unwritten, universal gender laws. Women were expected to exist in the identities men created for them: mother, daughter, and wife. The Southern Belle in *Gone with the Wind* and Spanish Maiden in *Caballero* were sold through marriage into wealthy families in their adolescence and were expected to instantaneously set up a household to raise children. The war, in both novels, distorted a structured society by forcing National identity onto the citizens of the Southern United States. The men of both Southern regions wanted to preserve their way of life with their customs, traditions and especially roles of women. Their struggles to maintain regional identity made war inevitable and pre-existing infrastructures could not carry on in the same manner. These novels suggest that two Southern regions believed war would be a temporary situation that would favor their side. The Confederates in *Gone with the Wind* believed they would destroy Northern forces within a few weeks of battle. In *Caballero* the *Hidalgos* assume that the United States will concede to the powerful forces of Santa Ana and Mexico. However, as a result in both storylines, inevitable political conflicts revolutionized social and cultural roles of women. The social changes that transpired during these traumatic years of war, in both *Gone with the Wind* and *Caballero*, cast women as social outcasts, but at the same time granted them civil liberties. These two pieces of literature reveal how war created a dynamic shift in culture and liberated female characters.

By closely reading both *Gone with the Wind* and Jovita González's *Caballero*, I seek to illustrate how these two novels represent how women in two separate regions of the Southern United States were emancipated by the effects of war. These two texts both deal with distinctive social, political, and historical contexts, which highlight factors that contributed to the Southern woman's alteration. As a result, the female characters of each story become enlightened by the events that take place during the war. I argue that these two novels depict the Civil War and the U.S./ Mexican War as the catalysts for liberating the white women in *Gone with the Wind* and the elite classes of Spanish-Mexican women in *Caballero*.

Jovita González and Margaret Eimer—pen name Eve Raleigh, co wrote the historical romance *Caballero* in the 1930s. Gonzalez worked as a teacher and at the time was working in Del Rio where she met Eimer. The two young writers began drafting *All This Is Mine*, later to be renamed *Caballero*. Despite their racial differences the women became friends and were able to co-write a novel together. However, due to different circumstances the women both had to relocate: González to Corpus Christi and Eimer to Joplin, Missouri. Although they were separated by thousands of miles the women would finally complete *Caballero* after a decade of long distance writing together. After numerous rejections, the completed manuscript eventually became forgotten amidst González's personal items (Cotera 199-200). Over time the co-authored text was lost, but then recovered with immediate publication following. *Caballero*, much like its authors, illustrates Mexican and Anglo women can coexist despite the racial boundaries encountered. Interestingly, the form of this novel is the collaborative result of an Anglo woman and a Mexican woman which parallels the thematic content of the novel that bases the necessity for Mexican women to collaborate with and assimilate into Anglo culture.

Margaret Mitchell, a native of Atlanta, also wrote, *Gone with the Wind*, in the 1930s. Mitchell briefly attended college to study nursing and went by the nickname of Peggy. After a year of college she returned home to live her life as a flaunty debutante. Mitchell was married twice; it was during her first marriage that she worked for the *Atlanta Journal Sunday Magazine* using the byline name of Peggy Mitchell. In 1926 out of sheer boredom from a physical injury that Mitchell began writing *Gone with the Wind*. After a decade of writing the book was finally published as a great success for Mitchell and the Southern United States (PBS Masters).

It is important to recognize how war transformed each region's cultural identity. I have provided two maps of the areas being disputed in *Gone with the Wind* and *Caballero*. Figure 1 is a map of the land Texas and Mexico were fighting for. Mexico was once a strong nation that ruled aggressively with Spanish influence. The country upheld in its people strong beliefs in religion, family, and culture. When Texas declared Mexico as a part of its territory, Spanish-Mexican lineage and influence were to soon be changed. The identities of Spanish-Mexican citizens were stripped away overnight and replaced with the new American identities.



Figure 2 Map of Confederate and Union states (Source: Maps101.com)

When Margaret Mitchell wrote *Gone with the Wind* she wrote it as a tribute to her Southern roots (PBS Masters). Her novel became a vehicle for the genre of the plantation romance, which became synonymous with the identity of the South. Mitchell said in a 1936 radio interview, “The sorrow and hardships and poverty of the Civil War changed Scarlett O’Hara from a spoiled and selfish but otherwise normal Southern girl into a hardened adventuress.” (American Masters, PBS). However, at the time her novel was published in the 1930’s society

had formed a different opinion of the Southern United States. Lee Anne Duck authored the book, *The Nation's Region: Southern Modernism, Segregation, and U.S. Nationalism*. Duck suggests the South, “represented conflict between U.S. democratic rhetoric and discriminatory practice as a difference between national and regional cultures” (Duck 6). The negative associations of slavery and confederacy were the general public’s perception of the Old South. When *Gone with the Wind* was made into a major motion picture American society immediately adopted its perception of the Old South.

It was not until 1996 when González and Raleigh’s actual manuscript was published. Leticia Garza-Falcón’s *Gente Decente* discusses a history of literature from the U.S. Southwestern regions and dedicates a chapter to the life and works of Jovita González. Garza-Falcón explains how- *Caballero*, “presents an account of the oppression of women under the old regime and their emerging liberation-their breaking away from the old ways that bind them to men they do not love and who restrict their ability to think for themselves and to plan their own lives” (Garza-Falcón 123). Raleigh and González’ novel illustrates the transformation Texas Mexican women underwent as they were forced to interact with the elements of war by having to coexist with Anglo intrusion and a newly imposed government. Benjamin Johnson in his article, “Engendering Nations and Race in the Borderlands” also discusses how:

Caballero examines the struggles of ethnic Mexican ranchers during and after the U.S. military occupation of south Texas from 1845 to 1848. In this novel, the male rancheros vow to resist Anglo intruders to the death, but their daughters and sisters find much to admire about arriving Anglo men. Several of the main female characters defy their menfolk by betrothing themselves to Anglo newcomers. These unions become the glue for a new society in which both elite Anglos and

ethnic Mexicans, thanks to the initiative of women, will fuse their economic and political power (Johnson 269).

As a result of female defiance, the Mexican women of *Caballero* chose to create and harbor a new identity--Americans. The Mexican woman produced a new culture that challenged the authority of the Mexican caballero, but liberated her.

Although the authors are of different lineage their novels share unique similarities. Both historical romances are widely recognized, yet, they have never been compared before. They were each written by women that resided in the Southern United States during the 1930s. Each text presents the ideas of women's liberation in societies that did not want to change. The novels discuss a Southern region that upheld rigid values in family tradition and did not want to conform to more liberated ideas of the nation. The societies' the authors portrayed, Spanish-Mexican patriarchy in *Caballero* and a male-dominated South in *Gone with the Wind*, were unyielding in customs and tradition. It was the men, in both novels, who feared the change of their culture, government and women. In each society women adhered to patriarchal standards in some form. As the wars progressed the male-dominated traditions and standards of the Confederates and Hídalgos would become obsolete. Social classes that had been separated by hierarchy, race and region would merge through marriage. The introduction of racial conflict and violence between whites and Mexicana/os in *Caballero* and whites and blacks in *Gone with the Wind* would influence and change Southern society. Most importantly the act of war provides a small space of freedom for both the Spanish-Mexican Elite women and Anglo women.

My thesis also discusses how these novels represent the strained relationships between nation and region, specifically the relationships between the United States and two of its Southern regions plays out in a battle over women's roles and identities. In *Gone with the Wind*

the Southern community is outraged by the Northern forces invading their land, killing their men, and eradicating Southern identity. In *Caballero* Mexican culture and identity is threatened when Mexico loses its land to the United States. In *Gone with the Wind* Southerners lose their regional identity when the Union forces victoriously defeat the Confederate South. The specific circumstances that promised to release the female characters from social constraints were ones that opposed the desires and agendas of men. At the same time war contributed to the emancipation of the antebellum woman in both literature texts. By showing how war altered a woman's role in society, *Gone with the Wind* restored the identity of the United States by discarding the reputation of the "backward South." In *Caballero*, Mexico loses its identity to a progressive America that liberates Spanish-Mexican women and yet one maintains racial purity while the other introduces a racial hybrid identity.

The Spanish-Mexican Maiden

The first chapter will discuss how the Mexican-American War played a critical role in redefining the roles and lives of Mexican women in the novel *Caballero*. By analyzing *Caballero* women of Spanish-Mexican descent can be viewed as allegorical representations of their country dominated by the caballero, Spanish gentleman, and his struggles to accept and coexist with the United States. In *Caballero* land was a highly coveted asset. Spanish-Mexican women were regarded as valuable commodities in their culture because the men believed they represented an untainted lineage to Spanish descent. Marci McMahon states, "*Caballero* demonstrates how the Spanish-Mexican code of honor that configures women as objects of "Spanish" property leads men to use the female body as a site of resistance to Anglo-American settlers" (McMahon 241). This concept illustrates why Don Santiago wants to sequester his

daughters. The idea of Spanish-Mexican women regarded as property by the *Hidalgos* is evident throughout *Caballero*. The *Americanos* view the Spanish-Mexican women as potential land conquests. *Caballero* shows the idea that Spanish-Mexican women were not allowed to act or think independently within their community. A woman did not have an identity nor was she expected to have one. The women of *Caballero* are sought after as conquests for land and wealth. A woman's value was based on her lineage and namesake. Ultimately, it was the main character, Don Santiago, who believed the United States threatened to steal Mexico's land and women which were both inseparable in the conflict with the U.S.

Caballero discusses the connection between woman and nation: Mexican women as the face of a country, México, which lost its battle and was given over to the United States-Americanos. On the surface the story discusses the downfall of the Patriarchal Hidalgo Don Santiago de Mendoza y Soria against the forced invasion of *Americanos* into Mexico. But, the emerging narrative speaks dominantly of the, "female power, malinchismo, representing betrayal and conquest" (Chabram-Dernersesian p 167). Spanish-Mexican women must defy ancient traditions and customs in order to survive. By betraying Spanish-Mexican gender norms the Spanish-Mexican woman is rejected by the central figure in her life, the patriarch. Whether it is her father-- the patriarch, or her husband-- the patriarch defiance equals exile from family and society.

Mexican women who did not follow social customs were subjected to an inevitable fate of being black listed and condemned to social death. However, at the same time these women were also liberated from aggressive customs. Each woman in this story is altered emotionally, physically, and intellectually by the effects of war. In *Caballero*, political strife is perceived as temporary by men, while it is a social enlightenment for women.

The Southern Belle

The third chapter will discuss how the U.S. Civil War stripped away the traditions and customs of the old South and transformed this antiquated region by force. As a result of the Civil War Southern women were mandated to change and become a part of a new transforming South. This idea is evident in the main female character, Scarlett O'Hara. Scarlett represents the true spirit of the South through her strength and gentility. The main focus of my argument will center on Scarlett, because it is her character that is affected the most by political transformation. Scarlett O'Hara represents the new emerging South and her sister in law, Melanie Wilkes, represents the dying antiquated South. Throughout the novel Scarlett is faced with political and personal obstacles that reshape her identity, such as death, political strife, and poverty. *Gone with the Wind* is segregated into three historic settings: the old South, the Burning of Atlanta, and the period of Reconstruction. The female characters of this novel each symbolize a different part of the South and also show how women were unintentionally liberated.

Traditionally, Southern women were cultivated to purposely capture the wealthiest man for a marital conquest. This concept of subjugation shaped women's roles and the identity they strived for. Women were married for their beauty and place in society. But Scarlett O'Hara is different. Scarlett manipulates men and women using both her feminine charms and mental strength, to persuade and conquer anyone that gets in her way. Yet, she faces obstacles that challenge her identity as a woman and as a southerner, such as rebuilding Tara and fighting the Yankees to prevent them from taking her family's land. The invasion by the North calls her cultural identity into question by seeing if she will remain true to her Southern roots or assimilate to Yankee culture and beliefs.

Melanie Wilkes, Scarlett's sister in law, is the antithesis of the new emerging south. Her beliefs, customs, ideas, and traditions are deeply rooted in the ways of the Old South. It is because of her stringent Southern upbringing, that she only knows how to perform as the genteel Southern woman. She is the epitome of what the true Southern Belle should be. It is because of Melanie's traditional character and non aggressive demeanor that Scarlett opposes her. Melanie represents traditional Southern values and submissiveness, elements Scarlett openly rejects. Ultimately, the New South destroys Melanie, and what she stands for, while embracing and liberating Scarlett.

In *Gone with the Wind* Scarlett despises the changes in her society. The infiltration of Yankees and carpetbaggers reshapes Scarlett's identity by forcing her to interact with Northerners, whom she was taught to loathe. Despite her hate for Northern conformity, Scarlett assimilates into Northern culture and practices. Even though she does not love Rhett Butler she marries him as an alliance to wealth, power, and defiance to old Southern traditions. She refuses to accept poverty and despair at all costs, even if it means selling herself to a man she does not love. To Scarlett and society, Rhett Butler embodies the spirit of the New South, the definitive social outcast, with his rejection of traditional Southern social customs. His association with prostitutes and Yankees as well as his disobedience to conventional Southern rule make him a symbol of the new South. The relationship he has with Scarlett signifies the emergence of a new South which creates new customs and social standards—working outside the home and more independence for women who no longer have a man at their side. These new values impact the nation by allowing an acceptance for change within the culture. The Southern Belle evolves, over the course of the Civil war, from socialite to working woman.

Scarlett also believes by adhering to convention and marrying Ashley Wilkes she will find true happiness. In reality Ashley represents the traditions and customs Scarlett is desperately trying to escape from. Her desperation to maintain an association with Ashley is Scarlett's way of attempting to preserve a Confederate South that can no longer survive. Her endurance through the decimation of the Confederate South inevitably makes Scarlett a part of the new South. Scarlett, through what might be seen as ruthless actions, unknowingly creates new social principles for Southern women out of strength and independence.

CHAPTER II

SPANISH MAIDEN: DEFYING BORDERS

Numerous boundaries are crossed in this novel: defying the patriarch, socializing with the enemy, disregarding sacred traditions, betraying family and honor. It is these types of behaviors exhibited throughout the novel that result in negative stigmas for the female characters.

Caballero embodies the ideas of the patriarch and the subservient Mexican woman. Yet, the novel also illustrates how the patriarchal rules created a backlash for Don Santiago by destroying his authoritative position as head of the household.

In order to analyze this story it is necessary to provide a brief synopsis of the novel. The story takes place in the events leading up to and during 1846 with the Mexican-American War as the historical background. The story's main character is the wealthy Don Santiago de Mendoza y Soria whose prize possession is his treasured Rancho La Palma where ten decades of his family's bloodline have lived. The problem begins when the United States annexes northern Mexican territory as part of Texas. Don Santiago's ranch, originally in Mexico, suddenly became United States territory.

Don Santiago is opposed to the colonization of *Americanos* and the influence of Americans who want the Mexicanos to assimilate into a Mexican society. He desperately attempts to try and shield his family from the influence and acknowledgement of the new

Americano invaders. However, unable to shelter his children from the American's and their capitalist society, one by one, Don Santiago loses his children to the United States.

Prisoners of Tradition: Mexican Women Before the War

In order to form an elite social order it was a necessity to maintain the Spanish bloodline because it preserved the stratification system Spain created when it captured Mexico. McMahon discusses this ideology and explains, "After the Spanish conquest, the Spanish-Mexican woman has been perceived as the most highly valued commodity because biologically speaking *she* carries the purity of the Spanish bloodline" (McMahon 240). Maintaining a pure Spanish bloodline was important in the Mexican culture, because it exemplified to society the magnitude of ostracizing the indigenous people of Mexico from the Spanish upper classes. The Mexican people were demeaned, because of their physical traits of dark skin, brown eyes, and black hair. The Spaniards regarded themselves as nobility, because their physical traits exemplified purity and cleanliness- white skin, blonde hair and blue or green eyes.

In the foreword of the novel the narrator stresses how the Spanish were regarded as nobility- because of their European lineage. The epilogue also reveals how the Spanish viewed the importance of maintaining and preserving the pureness of the Spanish bloodlines in order to keep the Spanish traits of: light skin, green eyes and blonde hair. Don Santiago's youngest daughter, Susanita, is the only child to display these Spanish inherited features:

As she stopped to squeeze his hand and return his tender smile, he twisted the end of a braid round his finger, marveling anew at the spun –gold fineness and sheen of this heritage from his Asturian ancestors-already so rare among his people that it seemed a gift from heaven. Lovely was the cream skin, delicate the molding of

red lips. And her eyes were like limpid green water upon which a vagrant cloud had left a remembrance of gray. Susanita, beautiful one. Susanita, beloved one (González 5).

Susanita's whiteness, is perceived as a representation of pure Spaniard blood, is valued by Don Santiago and his Spanish Mexican culture. Her whiteness separates her from the common featured Mexican women in her village. It is her physical appearance-the whiteness of her skin that makes her a valuable commodity to Don Santiago and his pristine culture. Her character represents the Spanish-Mexican woman of leisure because her life revolves around what she has been taught to perceive as correct and incorrect behavior. Don Santiago perceives Susanita as a representation of Spaniard lineage in a new world that allows and accepts communities of mixed race. Social classes shaped how Spanish-Mexican women were viewed as inferior.

The Spanish-Mexican men made fictive claims of maintaining a pure ancestry that was traced back to Spaniard lineage. Despite the aristocratic class elite Spanish-Mexican women of the 1800's were still viewed as inferior to all male social classes, whether they are landowners or servants. The job of the Mexican woman was to serve her husband, God and her family.

To this day, the Mexican woman is still considered to be a successor of the fictitious creation of La Malinche. Patty Harrington Delaney addresses this idea,

“In postindependence Mexico, the view [of the Malinche] shifted considerably. Mexicans felt that the constant political turmoil in the country arose from foreign influences and La Malinche became the perfect scapegoat. The term malinchista--one who devalues national identity and sells out to foreign interests--became part of the Mexican vocabulary... [As a result] we see La Malinche as the embodiment of the subjugated role of women in Mexican society” (Delaney 281).

The Mexican men in *Caballero* believed that their women, whether autonomous or submissive, ruined the purity of the Spanish-Mexican bloodline by subjecting and punishing their culture through interracial marriage and socialization. It is important to identify the power Spanish-Mexicans maintained in society because of their bloodline, “Spanish colonization was based on male-patriarchal authority over both “Mexican” servants and Indian peones, as well as women within a complex gendered and racial hierarchy” (McMahon 239). Spanish colonization in Mexico is an important part of *Caballero*’s story line because it defines the Mexican male and his counterpart.

The Mexican Caballeros, who maintained the Spanish-Mexican bloodline, believed a New Spain could be resurrected with the altering of Mexico through Spanish imperialism. As indigenous citizens of Mexico, the Mexican natives were regarded as foreigners with no rights. In *Caballero*, the Mexican natives that are of mixed blood are placed in the lowest social standing. They are regarded as unrefined peasants with no social rights, because of their mixed blood. As indigenous Mexican citizens they are denied political rights and taken advantage of by the Spanish Mexican society.

I am using the concept of La Malinche to justify the independent and defiant actions of the female characters. As believed by Mexican men, the folklore of the Malinche is, “the Mexican Eve who delivered her people to Cortez” and ruined the purities of the Spanish bloodline (Chabram-Dernersesian 167). By categorizing rebellious women under the Malinche term men were able to justify the negative stigma they gave to independent and aggressive women. The Spanish-Mexican women that defied the strict rules of society were disowned. Defiance and independence made women a disgrace to their family name and a pariah to their social class. Women who disobeyed man’s law or were rebellious became traitors to their

society. The male dominated society gave Spanish-Mexican women two choices in identity: rebellious trouble maker or subservient woman of leisure.

A woman during the 1800's, either Mexican or Anglo, would not defy social order, because "despite certain liberating tendencies of the frontier, which might have enhanced or modified women's economic and social status, both Anglo and Hispanic cultures remained basically masculine in orientation" (Dysart 366). *Caballero* illustrates the Elite classes of Spanish-Mexican women as women of leisure throughout the entire text. The female characters were educated to either be housewives or housemaids, based on their social status. This is evident in a scene where Don Santiago explains to his daughter her role in the domestic sphere:

Susanita, to be a good wife and mother living in virtue and obedience is the destiny given to women by God; it is better that your life be not further complicated by emotions that are unseemly. I do not want to hear the word love mentioned again (Gonzalez 254).

The macho perspective Don Santiago displays applied to the beliefs of his peers-traditional Spanish-Mexican men. Spanish-Mexican women were only allowed to obtain a higher social status through marriage. However, marriage denied women the rights to an individual identity. Women were homemakers and men were Patriarchs. The Patriarch ruled his family with an iron fist and to dispute the decision of a patriarch meant defying years of Spanish-Mexican tradition. Throughout this novel the role of the patriarch plays a significant role in the identity of the Mexican women in *Caballero*.

Before the disruption of the Texas-Mexican war the sole intention of the patriarch was to seek a husband for his daughter that could contribute land, money and power to the family and its name. Women were desired as conquests and once captured, disregarded as property.

Marriages were negotiated by the patriarch and rarely did love exist in any of these nuptials. This is evident in a secret conversation between mother and daughter upon the eve of a prearranged marriage:

Mamá, what are those spots on your old wedding dress? Here, all along the hem. They look like tear stains, mamá... They were tears, daughter. That is why you have never seen me cry, I shed all my tears before I married your father... Then why did you marry papá, why didn't you run away?... Because I was not brave, daughter. All I could do was sit in the patio and sew on this dress, and cry, and cry (González 259).

Maria Petronilla's, the mother in *Caballero*, obedience to forego a negotiated marriage despite anger and fear shows the treatment women were subjected to. The novel suggests that by Maria Petronilla acknowledging her mistakes and regret she is encouraging her daughter to choose a different path in life.

In *Caballero* women are specifically used by men, as political pawns, in order to maintain authority. Matrimonial unions assisted power hungry men with political gains. Women were married for the value their last name carried in society. It was the sole intention of the patriarch to seek a husband for his daughter that could contribute something of value to the family and its name. In Gloria Anzaldua's book, *Borderlands La Frontera the New Mestiza* she discusses how the Mexican cultural influence shapes a woman's identity and her attitude towards being a woman: "The culture and the church insist that women are subservient to males. If a woman rebels she is a *mujer mala*. If a woman doesn't renounce herself in favor of the male, she is selfish" (Anzaldua p 39). It is this mentality that is reflected at the beginning of *Caballero* but is slowly overthrown as the novel progresses. These unspoken rules dictated the way women

were to lead their lives. There were no choices for women. Independence was only an option if one was a social recluse.

Daughters and wives respected and feared the patriarchal system. Disobeying a patriarch was a definite means of banishment from the family. Fernando Peñalosa analyzes the dynamics of the Mexican family roles, with particular focus to the submission of women. Peñalosa states “the Mexican family roles exist with a woman's place always maintaining the home. The Mexican woman will progress from daughter to wife and wife to mother. As she evolves to the position of a wife she will fall under the new rule of a new patriarch--husband.” (Peñalosa 685). The idea of the Mexican woman as the submissive wife is an important concept to reflect on, because it focuses on the Mexican woman’s position in the social and regional context. Maria Petronilla is a prime example of the submissive wife:

In the twenty five-years of marriage to this man, she had fashioned only the armor of meekness to meet his dominance, and it gave her no protection. For she still shrank under the lash of his words even when, as now, she was the handy recipient and the target of them. She did not resent it. Such was the law according to her mother’s teaching and example, and , implanted into a nature innately timid, it could not make her other than she was—an obedient, dutiful wife (González 26).

This example also clarifies the comprehension of the father daughter relationships in this story, because the Spanish-Mexican men expected their women, daughters and wives, to behave in this manner. Before the outbreak of war Spanish-Mexican women were cultivated for the domestic sphere. However, with the outbreak of war and the introduction to the *Americanos* the preconceived attitude and beliefs of the old ways began to unravel.

The Patriarch is a representation of outdated customs that hinder the progression of the Spanish-Mexican women in this novel. The Mexican woman's choice was the choice made by the patriarch of her family. When the woman no longer had a father to answer to it was her husband that made her decisions for her. Illustrating that the women were never allowed to act or think for themselves. McMahon discusses the patriarch and his role in *Caballero*. McMahon states, "*Caballero* explicitly reveals how patriarchal values position women as symbols of chastity and purity necessary to define a man's honor" (McMahon p 243). The values McMahon discusses are particularly critical to the role of the Mexican female, because of the large influence the patriarchal values play in her life.

Despite the differences in race, both Anglo and Mexican women were under the rule and influence of a patriarch figure. Anglo women were perceived to have civil liberties, because they created an identity with their spouse. The Mexican women were constantly chaperoned and unable to make their own decisions. Mexican women lacked an identity, because their men, fathers and husbands, treated them as helpless children:

The high-class Mexican families raised their daughters, beset with inhibitions and all independence snuffed out before it could grow. Duenna-ed and chaperoned, until aloneness left them both bewildered and oppressed with guilt. The few that braved the iron-bound conventions brought swift punishment and even death upon themselves unless a twist of circumstance saved them (González 274).

Although the patriarchal system tried to maintain a structure of femininity for women it eventually created a backlash with the women; thus rebelling and rejecting the patriarchal ideology. Mexican women were disregarded by their society prior to the war. They were not allotted civil liberties, nor were they allowed to work outside the domestic sphere. The Spanish-

Mexican society regarded its women as the sole property of Spanish-Mexican men. The novel implies that Spanish-Mexican women before the war were cultivated to serve only the heroic strong caballero.

Crossing the Barrier: Defying Family Honor and Tradition

War created strife and chaos while women were becoming defiant to tradition. The traditions of Spanish-Mexican culture were gradually deteriorating with the introduction of the war. *Caballero* depicts how government intervention, through war, created discord in the Mexican family unit, particularly with the woman. By befriending and socializing with the Americans, men specifically, the Mexican woman was exposed to life outside of the domestic sphere, while at the same time disgracing her family.

This idea is evident when one of the upper class Hidalgo's daughters, Inez, disgraces her family by ignoring her father's wishes of an arranged marriage. She scandalously sneaks out at night and secretly socializes in the evenings with a Texas Ranger. The segregation between the races creates a, "mistrust of the Anglo-Texans who assumed social, cultural, and economic dominance in the area through the brutal activities of the Texas Rangers" (Flores 170). In *Caballero* Mexican citizens were tormented by the Texas Rangers. The text suggests the Texas Rangers were regarded, by Mexicans, as outlaws with authoritative freedom. Instead of being viewed as Texas heroes they were branded as murderous fiends whose only job was to decimate troublesome Mexicans. However, *Caballero's* storyline suggests otherwise. The Texas Rangers seek peace between the two conflicting nations at war.

Inez, Susanita's childhood friend, defiantly disobeys the patriarchal system. She believes that it is more important to marry for love and by her own choice. When her family discovers her

secret affair they become infuriated, because of the potential dangers their daughter may incur. Similar to many other naive young Mexican girl's she is shielded from the harsh realities of the cruel ways of the Texas Rangers. Americo Paredes has written and studied border stereotypes dealing with Mexicans. In his dissertation, *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and its Hero* he states, "The Texas Ranger always carries a rusty old gun in his saddlebags. This is for when he kills an unarmed Mexican. He drops the gun beside the body and then claims he killed the Mexican in self-defense and after a furious battle" (Paredes 24). This ideology of mistrust against the Texas Rangers is what most Mexicans who lived along the border identify with. Stories of great grandfathers being innocently gunned down by calloused Americans that were suppose to bring order and law into their newly acquired land have transpired from generation to generation.

This text, at times, does portray the Texas Ranger as a malicious figure. However, *Caballero* attempts to censor the negative realities that existed during this time period. Instead the novel attempts to depict the relationships of both countries as friendly and able to coexist. In reality, it was very common for white men to marry Mexican women in order to acquire land. The actions established by Inez' character signify the beginning of social change in regards to a region that has already lost its identity. Inez is unaware that she has crossed cultural and social boundaries by secretly meeting and falling in love with a Ranger. Her rejection of primitive customs illustrates the onset of a progressive shift in women's rights. The mentality of the men in *Caballero* is "women were the property of the man in the house- be it father or husband" (Apodaca p 74). As a result of this ideology Inez is labeled, by her community, as a used woman. Due to her disobedient actions the Mexican woman is unjustly punished. On the

contrary Inez illustrates her liberation by making her choice to marry the Ranger and defy tradition. She no longer cares how she is viewed by society, because she says,

He says I must learn English, and already I can say ‘geeve me a kees.’ We are going to San Antonio, Senor McLane is going to make a paper with news and Yon-nay is going to work for him. He says we will be poor, but we will have enough to eat, and I tell him then that I would rather have only half enough to eat and be with him than have everything with someone else” (González 273).

The fact that Inez is willing to assimilate to a culture she is unfamiliar with by learning a new language and moving to a foreign country demonstrates her liberation from Mexico. The novel creates the assumption that had the Mexican American War not been a part of Inez’ situation she would have been forced to marry a man her father designated for her. The idea of eloping with an Anglo male would have been an inconceivable idea in her community. The Mexican American War was creating change for Mexican women by displacing archaic gendered and social rules.

Doña Dolores is a strong defiant character who appears to be the most critical in this novel because she embodies the idea of feminism in a male dominated society. In one scene Doña Dolores displays her curiosity by asking questions about the *Americanos*. Attempting to humiliate her, her brother is caught off guard when she defends herself:

I feel certain that the indecency of a second marriage would be of small account when weighed with the position of subservience I must of necessity hold in your household, Santiago my brother. At the moment I can imagine that even an Americano husband would be less insulting to me. I hear that they make very indulgent husbands (González 64).

Dolores insults her brother's status as a Mexican Hidalgo by insinuating that she, a Spanish-Mexican widow, could marry an *Americano*. Mexican men could marry at any age while Spanish-Mexican women were not allowed to even consider the idea.

It is the death of her husband and her strict Spanish/Mexican heritage that make Doña Dolores' character a powerful force in the story line; "whose strident questioning of patriarchal values is a constant source of conflict within Rancho La Palma" (Cotera 341). Dolores' vast differences alienate her from the traditional woman. She is a wealthy widow who is accustomed to the finer things in life. But, due to stringent social codes she is forced to live with her brother, "Why, why, he asked Fate for the thousandth time, had this sister of his been widowed young and dropped back into her brother's household, a special cross for him to bear" (González 5) The fact that Doña Dolores no longer has a husband dictating her life she is forced to live under the rule of the next male in charge- her brother. Dolores must follow her brother's patriarchal code of honor in order to maintain her status in society. There are times when she must appear submissive and obedient, because if she truly defied Santiago she would be cast out with no way to survive.

Yet, Dolores is not like other dominated women in her society. Doña Dolores can be identified as a symbol of change emerging from a region that rejects progression. The strict Spanish social codes will attempt to keep Dolores in a stagnant existence of mourning for the rest of her life. This custom, as well as the region, will change and assimilate through Northern influence. This is evident when she discusses the topic of marriage with her long time acquaintance Gabriel Del Lago. Gabriel says:

Shocking, Dolores? We are in a shocking and different world now. Look at us, guests in the house of an *Americano*. You must have defied Santiago to come

here, can you not defy convention and listen to me ask you to marry me directly?

We have wasted so much time, why waste more” (González 324).

Gabriel justifies breaking traditions by acknowledging: how his environment has changed, how conventions have been defied, and how men and women no longer need the approval of a patriarch. If the war had not been present during Dolores’ widowhood she would have endured a different set of consequences. Tradition would not allow Dolores to remarry or have male relationships. By doing so she would destroy the identity of her prestigious family name. Her reputation would become associated with promiscuity and would be permanently compromised.

Dolores is rebellious and refutes the identity of the subservient Mexican woman. The fact that she does not let hardship stand in her way makes Doña Dolores a strong and noble character. Her tendencies are to be dominant and aggressive like a man. She is the only woman in this story who argues with Don Santiago. But, Doña Dolores does not see her brother as her ruler. She regards him as a sibling, with no respect. Her actions make it evident that she answers to no man. In a conversation with her nieces she illustrates this when she says, “I suppose it is my tragedy that I fail to feel inferior to men. Certainly it is a peculiar fate that thrust me into my brother’s household to eternally quarrel with him” (González 172). Dolores regards her confidence among men as tragic. Her character does not exhibit the typical characteristics of the subservient homemaker. She differs because she regards men as her equal and not her master.

The relationship between Don Santiago and Doña Dolores represents a power struggle between the two opposing nations of Mexico and the United States. Don Santiago’s character represents Mexico with his stringent ideals to maintain an archaic existence by his unwillingness to accept change. The Mexican men would reject American authority and control. Doña Dolores

believes in the idea of transformation through her actions of welcoming foreigners and their values into her social sphere:

Doña Dolores blushed with pleasure. Quite a personable man. Really. The attire of a gentleman, the courtesy of one, alien or no. Don Santiago should realize that there were exceptions to everything, and quite possible that there were a few good *Americanos* (González 208).

Although, Dolores must still adhere to the social codes she is one of the few women who are accepting of the Americans. Doña Dolores' acceptance of change in her environment is what makes her a progressive woman and a valuable asset to the United States. By accepting an American identity she is showing the Mexican community change is acceptable. Doña Dolores is the product of a Spanish Mexican society which condemned its women if they were autonomous and intellectual. Her defiant actions in *Caballero* suggest political strife and warfare in her community allowed Dolores and other Spanish-Mexican women to evolve into brave heroines.

Heroines: A New Class of Spanish-Mexican Women

As the war progresses the Spanish-Mexican women slowly transformed from meek subservient girls to defiant strong women. By challenging Spanish male codes of honor women were becoming heroic. The threat of betrayal created male insecurities within the authoritative *Hidalgos*. Mexican women would be considered traitors to their men and their country if they accepted Northerners.

The text depicts how, “the dominant Mexican caballero believed that the enforced colonization of Americans is the fault of the Southern Mexican woman because of the acceptance they provided the American invaders. By betraying their Mexican men and accepting

the gringos, a struggle between “the equation of male power with machismo and female betrayal with the malinchismo” was created (Chabram-Dernersesian p167). The women of *Caballero* are placed in a position where they are forced to make their own decision in accepting or refuting the *Americanos*. When Susanita’s brother, Alvaro, is scheduled to be executed by the Texas Rangers, the novel illustrates how women were forced to change through the example of Susanita liberating herself by making the decision to save her brother:

She would have to go herself, and at once; she could not even go back to the hacienda. It would mean riding all night with a peon, unattended by a woman; going to a soldier camp and pleading with strange men—things a lady would die before doing, almost impossible for one like her who had always been sheltered and protected (González 261).

By committing this heinous act Susanita demonstrates knowingly that she will never regain her social stature and reputation by her choice of actions. She does not care that her community will banish her. She believes her father will be proud of her for committing a courageous act to maintain the family’s Spanish honor. However, in the norm of the Mexican family roles, “the attitude of the father toward the daughter is rather a protective and possessive one. He wishes to feel secure in the knowledge that the females in his household will not challenge his dominance” (Peñalosa p 686). Clearly, Santiago’s dominance is challenged when his favored daughter ignores all social rules in order to be valiant.

Caballero portrays Susanita as a heroine through her loyalty to her family and the social structure that cultivated her. She risked her life despite losing all ties with her family and community. However, it is this same social structure that rejects her because of her rebellious

actions. But instead of quietly cowering away from her disgraceful action she addresses her father. Susanita angrily challenges Don Santiago's authority when she says:

You have wronged and insulted me and for what? To keep it hard for other girls. It is hard, to be watched and watched every minute and never have anything to say about what one likes or wants. It looks right to you, but it is not always right. Your door is closed against me, you say. But mine, papa, will always be open to you (González 283).

By confronting her father, Susanita's character has acknowledged the double standards set for women by men. Her words reveal the complexity of her struggle to survive in a society that rejects her for being a woman.

Susanita's character reflects the innocence of the Mexican woman believing that forgiveness will prevail and set forth a new precedent. In the end the Mexican woman is rejected from her culture, because of her innocent actions. Susanita is a perfect example of being rejected from her own culture because her father disowns her; "I myself will never see you or speak to you again. You may leave the hacienda and go where you will, but the doors are forever closed to you" (González p 282). The novel implies that because of the inconvenience of war Susanita's character evolved out of necessity from customary Spanish Mexican to American citizen. As the Spanish Mexican culture was faced with strained racial relations and political relations what resulted for their women was a transformed and stronger nation that allowed independence. Cotera also points out the irony of the patriarch/caballero's reaction to Susanita's bravery, "Her punishment reveals the contradictions inherent in a patriarchal code of honor which "protects" women, yet banishes them from the sphere of protection when they transgress its narrow limits" (Cotera 346). When her brother, Alvaro, realizes his sister ruined the family

identity/reputation to save his life he becomes disgusted with her for destroying the family name. His reaction, like his father's, exhibits how:

The Mexican *Caballero* gave stern codes of honor to his women-waiting the chance to dishonor them. He made an inflexible law of chaperonage, to protect them from himself. No woman exposed herself alone to the public, that was the law, and when she did expose herself she announced to the world that she belonged to men (González 280).

Willingly risking her life and reputation Susanita comes to the realization that her noble deed has cost her the love of her father and home.

The *Hidalgos* desperately tried to shield their daughters from socializing with the *Americanos*. The idea of their children running away and becoming American citizens created a social strife and panic among the Mexican men. Maria Cotera wrote "Hombres Necios: A Critical Epilogue," to the novel *Caballero*. Don Santiago and the, "Hidalgos do not realize that prolonged exposure to *Americano* men and *Americano* values will have a profound effect on those people in their culture who are not insulated by power, and who are not included in their planning process; their wives, children, and peons" (Cotera p341). As a result of this exposure to *Americanos* Mexican women that were friendly and socialized with Americans were punished severely by their men and rejected by their culture. The women of Mexico are eventually forced to leave their country for a new one. In essence the Mexican man is left by his woman for the American man, emasculating his status as an authority figure and a patriarch.

Don Santiago's two daughters, Angela and Susanita, were affected by the American invasion because it made them courageous and independent. Even though, Santiago desperately

attempted to keep his daughters in line with rigid Spanish-Mexican traditions his inability to accept change pushes his daughters away forcing them to create their own persona the:

War and the border conflicts that followed left few eligible Mexicano men, the liberation that the women characters experience is unfortunately limited to one form other than the convent, and that is intermarriage with the Anglo American, who presumable “treats his woman as his equal” and gives her more freedom within the domestic as well as the social world.” (Garza-Falcón 123).

The American man set the tone by treating his wife as his equal. This created an escape for the Spanish-Mexican women who were tired of being inferior. The Spanish-Mexican women realized they no longer had to follow the Spanish-Mexican rules.

The war provided women with the option of leaving their social sphere to inhabit a space of personal freedoms. The Mexican culture would now reject women that betrayed their country for their own freedoms. American colonization granted, “the upper-class Mexican woman, [through] marriage to an Anglo a process of assimilation and acculturation which in the vast majority of cases led to the Americanization of their children” (Dysart 372). Americanization would allow Mexican women to transition and represent the nation through diversity. The effects of war allow the two Mendoza daughters to examine life without their mandated social constraints. By socializing with Americans and disobeying their father both girls are banished from their lives in Mexico. Don Santiago consumed with hatred towards all *Americanos* forbids his daughters from any type of interaction with American culture.

Angela and Susanita fully embrace the identity of American woman. At the beginning of the novel Angela wanted to be a nun, but patriarchal social codes forbade this. Angela would have a prearranged marriage. As an act of vengeance towards her father and culture Angela

boldly marries an American politician in order to be free from the constraints of her father.

Angela's marriage is important because of the political affiliation it involves. The unification of two opposing forces provides the idea that:

Given the romantic impulse to unite oppositions, the marriage between Maria and Red McLane might be the most ideal, most perfectly realized, because she moves to San Antonio to join the new merchant class and, also, inaugurates a life of helping the Mexican Texan poor in that city. She submits to a new political reality, but does not lose her traditional relationship to her gente" (Rodriguez 125).

The novel implies that because Angela was so tired of being confined to strict rules she chose to dismiss her Spanish-Mexican identity.

The reader can identify the change in Angela's character. With the introduction of *Americanos* she has become more defiant and aggressive. She no longer respects her father's authority, but openly challenges it. The changes in society created by the war allowed her the choice to create her own life. Without the presence of the war Don Santiago would have alienated his daughter. However, because of the changes in her social realm she refuses her father's decision to disown her. Angela openly scolds him:

No, papa, you cannot do that to me. In the convent I would have been safe all my life, perhaps I would never have even seen an Americano, and I would have been happy and certainly no discredit to you. By your refusal you brought this other destiny to me, and you have no right to drive me out as you did Susanita (González p 313).

The fact that Angela no longer cares about: what her father says, her society or her reputation illustrates how the war has affected her.

Doña Dolores, defiantly, goes with her niece, Angela, to San Antonio to help her set up her household, knowing she will be punished for her actions. But as Dolores witnesses the changes brought about by the Americans she realizes that the stern Mexican/Spanish archaic traditions do not have to continue to be upheld. She is exhausted with traditions and ready for transformation. Doña Dolores is the perfect example of women who relinquished their ties with Mexico and assimilated to Northern culture. At the age of 42, she defies all of her cultural traditions knowing she will be gossiped about and socially scorned. But she no longer cares because she has become influenced by the ways of the Americans and their values towards women. González makes this apparent:

Dolores would not have departed from custom and laid herself open to ridicule by marrying at her age. Not before the coming of the *Americanos*; not unless, as it happened, she had been in the house of one who put custom second if it served him better so, as McLane did. She wondered if Don Gabriel would have dared to propose as he had if the old ways were still with them--would have done so now, had not Dolores lifted a barrier" (González 329)

However, Dolores change is inevitable because the society she knows is forced to change. She witnesses her beloved Mexico fall to defeat to the hands of the *Americanos*. A land that she once knew as Mexico has evolved over night into a new country-- America. Instead of rejecting her new country Doña Dolores fully embraces the change and accepts her new identity as an American woman. Once this shift in national authority began to take place Mexico could no longer confine its women.

Based on incidents in this novel, I firmly believe that circumstances dealing with the U.S./Mexican War were a major factor in liberating the women in this novel, because they were exposed to non-traditional beliefs. With the immigration of *Americanos* Spanish-Mexican women witnessed how American men treated their women. They no longer wanted to be “dutiful wives who always wore black, got fat and never had any fun” (González 40). The women were placed into situations where they had to make their own decisions. The Mexican American war placed Mexican men in the midst of chaos defending their country and at the same time leaving their women alone and unsupervised. War allowed women to behave in an unorthodox manner, but also stripped the identity and country of the Mexican man. By allowing this type of behavior Mexico was inadvertently surrendering its women to the United States.

It was during the onset and outbreak of war that these women were thrust into the medium of change. The Mexican woman became the new face of Texas, overnight her identity was stripped away from her. *Caballero* illustrates how Spanish-Mexican women were ready to break free from their iron cast mold and create their own persona. Yet they were constrained by tradition and fear in a domestic cage. *Caballero* is a novel that speaks strongly on the ideas of feminism at a time in history when the mere ideology of feminism was in its infancy.

CHAPTER III

SOUTHERN BELLE: GONE WITH THE WAR

Scarlett O'Hara lived in a male dominated Southern region. As a result of this culture she established a persona she believed was vital for her female existence. Greed, deception, and betrayal were all characteristics this Southern Belle embodied. Traditionally, the disposition of the Southern woman was developed by men, fathers and husbands, to become the definitive wife. The majority of antebellum women upheld values of obedience, family and morality.

The Southern region desperately sought to preserve a hierarchy that stratified the social classes. Southern men assumed a minor battle with Northern forces would clarify the “nonsense” of political change and put an end to Northern interference. However, what was thought to be a four week battle at Fort Sumter became a tumultuous four year war that decimated the South. The result of this historic war redesigned Southern culture and unintentionally liberated Southern women. Historically, a power struggle between the region and the nation became the catalyst for an inevitable confrontation between Northern and Southern political disputes. The Confederate states, much like their men, were unruly and lacked discipline. It was the belief of the Confederacy that they could control the Union in the same manner that they controlled their women, through dominance. The Confederacy was adamant in attempting to preserve a traditional South, but the Civil War was the platform to the beginning of a national transformation, of the South.

The war and its aftermath had marred what was left of a Southern civilization. A decade of reconstruction and forced Northern colonization created a South that was bitter and scorned. The invasion of the carpetbagger in post Civil War South created an awkward and tense South. Antebellum Southerners that were at one time treated as Southern royalty were now regarded as peasants. However, the nation as a whole was unwilling to be sympathetic to an unruly and disrespectful South. As history moved forward the southern region of the U.S. was inevitably identified as, “savage or backward, thus creating the trope of the backward South” (Duck 6). The novel captures the essence of the old South and what it truly meant to be Southern. This story chronicles the transformation of the Southern United States through the perspective of a woman during the U.S. Civil War. Despite its controversial subjects of slavery, infidelity, and an autonomous woman, *Gone with the Wind* was a triumph and won the 1937 Pulitzer Prize. Scarlett O’Hara was a heroine because of her strong convictions and ability to survive in complex situations. Mitchell’s novel illustrated the emergence of a New South and along with it came a new identity for the Southern woman. The Civil War unintentionally introduced the South to the self-sufficient woman and the Southern lady would soon be gone with the wind.

The Old South’s Containment of the Southern Woman

Traditionally, the Southern Confederacy declared itself as an independent coalition that could survive secession from the United States. The South believed it would thrive and evolve as an entity once it was segregated from all obligation of U.S. authority. As a region, the South was mandated to change by orders of the nation. Scarlett O’Hara is opposed the ideas of tradition and convention. The war gave her a space in which to exercise this. With the commencement of war

the region and Scarlett were compelled to transform. Defiant to social norms and standards of the old South Scarlett could not exist within the boundaries of a domestic sphere. The fact that Scarlett O'Hara was an aggressive and autonomous woman who wanted her own identity created strife within her community. Her actions throughout the novel parallel the changes the South was forced to undergo. Scarlett is confined within the realms of the old South at the beginning of the novel but by the end represents a changed South. Her adaption to a changing society creates a rift in the Southern structure and with gender domains. Scarlett has a need to maintain her Southern identity but at the same time she covets the civil liberties that Northern women have which creates a hybrid identity- the new South. This hybrid identity becomes the catalyst for the discontinuity of Southern tradition.

Scarlett masquerades as the prim and proper young lady she was trained to be, but she is restless and discontent with the identity that has been chosen for her. Scarlett does not fully embrace the role of the Southern Belle because it limits her by eliminating her true identity. She tries to please society and her parents by presenting herself as a lady, but is only able to do so aesthetically. This idea manifests with the manner in which the narrator portrays Scarlett for what she really is.

At sixteen, thanks to Mammy and Ellen, she looked sweet, charming and giddy; but she was, in reality self-willed, vain and obstinate. She had the easily stirred passions of her Irish father and nothing except the thinnest veneer of her mother's unselfish and forbearing nature. Ellen never fully realized that it was only a veneer, for Scarlett always showed her best face to her mother, concealing her escapades, curbing her temper and appearing as sweet-natured as she could in Ellen's presence (Mitchell 76).

Scarlett's true self is submerged in order to appease her mother, her environment and the social standards that were expected of women in this particular day and age. In reality, she conceals her true persona to suppress her egocentric nature. It is when the Southern empire begins to crumble that her autonomous nature begins to emerge.

The Twelve Oaks barbeque is where Scarlett is introduced to the two characters that will have the greatest effect on her life: Melanie Wilkes and Rhett Butler. Melanie Wilkes is a representation of the traditional South because she embodies its customs and beliefs. Melanie is charming, graceful and kind. The standards women were to uphold that were created by men. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese discusses the role of the Southern woman, "to be a lady was to have a public presence, to accept a public responsibility" (Genovese 399). She whole heartedly represents the ideals of the true Southern woman. Scarlett resents Melanie's virtuous character because she cannot be her. At the same time, Scarlett assumes she is superior to Melanie because she refutes the standards and social codes Melly lives by. In reality, Melanie is the woman of a higher social class, because she emulates the traditional Southern lady. Scarlett had neither of these qualities. She refused to follow the principles created for women:

I'm tired of everlastingly being unnatural and never doing anything I want to do. I'm tired of acting like I don't eat more than a bird, and walking when I want to run and saying I feel faint after a waltz, when I could dance for two days and never get tired. I'm tired of saying 'How wonderful you are!' to fool men who haven't got one-half the sense I've got, and I'm tired of pretending I don't know anything, so men can tell me things and feel important while they're doing it (Mitchell 94).

Her unruly behavior and short temper would never allow her the credential as a proper Southern woman. She defiantly rejected the traditions of the old ways and embraced ideas that were rebellious.

Rhett Butler is an important character in Scarlett's life because he is the only person that can truly understand Scarlett. Rhett was rebellious and self centered like Scarlett. He became the substitute patriarch she needed after her father's death. Butler was Scarlett's equal, yet Scarlett only viewed him as a nuisance. It isn't until Scarlett is widowed by Frank Kennedy that she agrees to marry Rhett. In the novel she appears to despise the man, but secretly loves him. Butler caters to Scarlett's needs by indulging her every whim, much like Gerald O'Hara. Scarlett and Rhett shared such strong similarities. Neither one supported the idea of war, yet both Rhett and Scarlett capitalized off the ruin of the South. "Rhett profited by illegally selling Southern goods to the Northern states and Europe, while Scarlett profited off the lumber needs of a booming in Atlanta during reconstruction" (Mitchell). Scarlett and Rhett exhibited charm and sophistication that allowed them to coexist with Southerners and Northerners, which allowed them to profit from both regions. Rhett and Scarlett were drawn to each other because they both exemplified the ideals of the new South. Her marriage to Rhett Butler enabled Scarlett to become a woman with no boundaries. Rhett "encouraged her to speak her mind, to be flippant and daring. She picked up from him the gift of stinging words and sardonic phrases and learned to relish using them for the power they gave her over other people" (Mitchell 794) Scarlett's marriage to Rhett is different from her previous marriages because she and Rhett are both power-hungry characters that exemplify the goals of the new South.

On the contrary Ashley and Melanie Wilkes are the essence of the Old South because of their adherence to living by the standards of the traditional Southern ways. The awkward

relationship between Scarlett and Ashley imitated the struggling alliance between the old South-tradition and honor contesting the force of the newly emerging South- capitalism and colonization. Ashley Wilkes and Scarlett O'Hara were raised in two contradictory social spheres. Despite the fact that they both resided in the South they would never be able to marry, because of social status. Scarlett lacked the culture and bloodline his family maintained. She could not comprehend the importance of lineage in the Wilkes family and because of her obstinacy she forced herself on Ashley. Scarlett and Ashley's status as Southerners is the only common bond the two partake in. Scarlett is determined at any cost to make Ashley fall in love with her. However, bound to Southern tradition Ashley must marry within his lineage in order to maintain the original family bloodline. Enter Melanie Wilkes, Scarlett's newly acquired nemesis, Ashley's bride. Melanie is wholesome, pure and the traditional Southern woman in every way. Melanie personifies the last of the true Southern women by her humble and simple demeanor:

What Melanie did was no more than all Southern girls were taught to do—to make those about them feel at ease and pleased with themselves. It was this happy feminine conspiracy which made Southern society so pleasant. Women knew that a land where men were contented, uncontradicted and safe in possession of unpunctured vanity was likely to be a very pleasant place for women to live (Mitchell 163).

Scarlett believes Melanie to be a naive ignorant girl. Scarlett's predicament is the rejection from the one man she cannot have. It is because of Melanie's simplicity that Scarlett cannot fathom defeat. What Scarlett fails to comprehend is that a Southern stratification exists in her social sphere. Money and beauty cannot take precedence over lineage. Melanie was chosen specifically for Ashley because they share the same bloodline. Scarlett presumes that despite custom

sexuality can overcome tradition. No matter how hard she attempts to obtain Ashley Wilkes she can never win because he represents an obsolete South that obeys custom

The foundation of the old South in *Gone with the Wind* is based on the idea that if women have beauty then they have power over authority over men. Once a woman loses her beauty she no longer has any power in the social arena. Scarlett was intentionally cultured to manipulate men with her beauty by acting as if she could not think for herself. Marriage, Scarlett believes, is the only solution to liberating her true identity. Once Scarlett discovers that she is unable to marry Ashley, because he had been promised to Melanie, she becomes outraged. In her mindset Scarlett believes that by using her sex appeal she will attain her prize. She is confident that she will be the victor, because she is young and beautiful. This is apparent when she speaks to Mammy, “Don’t you suppose men get surprised after they’re married to find that their wives do have sense? Some day I’m going to do and say everything I want to do and say, and if people don’t like it I don’t care” (Mitchell p 95). Scarlett disagrees with the idea that she has to put on a charade in order to attain the affections of the ideal husband or the catch of the county. Naively, she believes that she can have the freedom to have her own identity without being chastised. Ironically, she assumes once she becomes married she will attain her independence. The reality is marriage will transform Scarlett into the ideal Southern woman: fertile, faithful and living to serve her husband.

Glinda Fountain Hall brings attention to an important aspect of why strong women were hidden beneath an attractive submissive demeanor:

One way that society could resolve its own discrepancies was to claim that if a female was overtly sexual, she was dangerous because of this seductive power.

Women, especially Southern belles and matrons, could not exhibit overt sexuality

or passion (a Southern belle's coquettishness was considered covert and as long as it happened within the strict rules of social decorum, it was allowable, especially considering that the goal was to acquire a suitable, i.e. wealthy, husband) (Hall 43).

Scarlett was dangerous, because she no longer cared what the rules of society specified. She could not accept the fact that she was not going to get her way. Scarlett ignores the rules and takes her fate into her own hands. It is clear that she will not surrender to a loss, because Scarlett's mentality holds to the belief that "life is pleasant and defeat is impossibility." Scarlett exhibits this strength and defiance throughout the novel. Scarlett knew her beauty was her source of power and at the same time inwardly raged against this reality. She believed that with her power of sexuality she was capable of defying any obstacles that stood in her way and her father's influence shaped her upbringing by instilling male tendencies in Scarlett. These tendencies produced a social rift for Scarlett, because she could not relate to other women. It was very difficult for her to maintain female friends, because she did not believe in their standards and values. Yet, she could not reveal her true identity to men, because she shared some of these male convictions. This social awkwardness creates an inadequacy in her character by making her a social misfit and generates a ten year obsession that drives Scarlett to pursue a man who represents what she renounces- the traditional South, Ashley Wilkes.

Disheartened by her father's disapproval of Ashley Wilkes, Scarlett is confronted with the realization of Ashley's soon to be marriage. But instead of comforting Scarlett Gerald lectures his daughter on the importance of what society values-land. Tara is her home, her land, her roots. Yet Scarlett does not comprehend the importance of land and the possibilities it offers. She is more consumed with being young, pretty, and spoiled by the men in her life- her father

and suitors. Gerald advises Scarlett on her future when he tells her, “Land is the only thing in the world that amounts to anything, he shouted. For ‘tis the only thing in this world that lasts, and don’t you be forgetting it! Tis the only thing worth working for, worth fighting for-worth dying for” (Mitchell 55). Gerald’s purpose in explaining the importance of land is to make her realize that the only power she will ever hold, as a woman, is as a landowner. In time her beauty and charms will begin to fade and she will no longer have a worth. Gerald’s idea is also reflected in Leigh Anne Duck’s book when she states, “affiliation with the region suggests commonality and rootedness – a connection with the land and its past” (Duck 28). Teaching Scarlett to connect herself to her homeland would instill in her the idea to create a legacy of her own values and traditions. Sustaining Tara would permanently affiliate Scarlett with the South- past and present. For Gerald to inspire these ideas in his daughter he was granting her the rights men had- power and freedom. Land was a commodity that was as valuable as gold. Ownership of property increased a man’s social status. Scarlett would become a powerful wealthy woman by listening to her father. Gerald’s beliefs would create a platform for his daughter’s independence.

The Fall of the Southern Empire and the Rise of an Independent Woman

Social codes were beginning to erode with war infiltrating the South. As a result of Ashley’s rejection, Scarlett spontaneously marries Melanie’s brother Charles in order to be closer to Ashley. Charles is summoned to war and is immediately killed. Scarlett becomes a widow at an early age, but shows no remorse or regret for the death of her husband. In Scarlett’s case she is more concerned about the death of her social life. She despises the fact that she is no longer the center of attention:

A widow had to wear hideous black dresses without even a touch of braid.

Widows could never chatter vivaciously or laugh aloud. And, most dreadful of all, they could in no way indicate an interest in the company of a gentleman. Marriage was bad enough, but to be widowed—oh, then life was over forever”(Mitchell 144).

Scarlett is enraged with the archaic social order she must follow. She did not realize that by marrying Charles she would have to give up her former carefree existence. Scarlett detested the responsibility of being the subservient matronly housewife. She enjoyed playing the role of the social butterfly and constantly being the talk of the town. Scarlett’s selfish ways are made evident by her reaction to the death of her husband. Instead of mourning the loss of her husband Scarlett mourns the loss of her social existence. Widows were confined to strict social codes. They were to wear black at all times. They would never be allowed to laugh, or flirt with men. Essentially they were to live in an isolated existence. Scarlett abhorred the idea of social isolation. She presumed that once Charles died her life would continue as in the past— the belle of five counties. She could not comprehend that marriage would eliminate her status from a Southern Beauty to a desolate widow.

As the war continued Southern society began to slowly change, “without the war, social structures and norms would have provided a corset for her [Scarlett’s] unruly impulses” (Genovese 399). Scarlett was uncontrollable and lived by her own rules. During an Atlanta fundraiser for a hospital the rules for Southern women begin to change. At this point in the novel Scarlett is a widow of not even a full year. However, because she is a widow social codes did not allow women in mourning to appear in public places. The fact that there is a national crisis in the midst allows the rules of society to be broken. This is first evident when Scarlett is allowed to attend the charity ball, because help is needed to raise funds for the war effort. As the

ball progresses Rhett Butler enters the scene as the defiant nonconformist of the South. It is announced that in order to raise funds the men would have to bid on the women of their choice. Single women were the only women that could be bid on. Defiant of the social standards Rhett causes a public uproar by bidding on Scarlett as his choice: “Everybody turned to look at her. She saw the doctor lean down from the platform and whisper something to Rhett Butler. Probably telling him she was in mourning and it was impossible for her to appear on the floor” (Mitchell 194). Scarlett enthusiastically agrees to dance with the smooth talking Butler. Despite the controversy this dance would cause, the hospital could not refute Butler’s hefty donation. Melanie does not condemn Scarlett for her actions because she truly believes Scarlett is attempting to help raise funds to assist the war effort. In reality, it is Scarlett putting her needs first but the war allows her to do so physically. This is the first indication of a change in social barriers. The war gave women like Scarlett a freedom they did not have before.

The deterioration of society was not just with Scarlett; it could be seen throughout the South: “The ever-present war in the background lent a pleasant informality to social relations, and an informality which older people viewed with alarm...the South was heading for a complete moral collapse” (Mitchell 218). Southerners originally anticipated that the war would only last a few weeks. The battle for Southern independence was a continuous fight that never ended. Masses of Southern men were being summoned on a daily basis to combat. With the lack of men available Southern traditions of courting could not remain intact. Girls were marrying men immediately, because they knew their men would be taken away by the war or death. Men also defied the social rules by proposing instantaneously instead of waiting the proper amount of time, which was expected of them. The stringent standards of the South were now defied by the tainted attitudes of a youth that had now encountered the strains of war.

The old South only considered its women important as symbols of Southern civilization. These women of the South were not valued as individuals, and were treated as commodities and conquests. However, Scarlett illustrates how women could gain independence while the Confederacy was slowly disintegrating along with its rules of the old South:

The ever-present war in the background lent a pleasant informality to social relations, an informality which older people viewed with alarm. Mothers found strange men calling on their daughters, men who came without letters of introduction and whose antecedents were unknown. To their horror, mothers found their daughters holding hands with these men (Mitchell 218)

Scarlett would no longer be hindered by traditional social codes. She could now say what she thought and not worry as much about the backlash for her behavior from a stringent society.

The war also took women out of the domestic sphere and placed them in the workforce. This is evident when Scarlett works as a nurse: “The informality made the war a lot of fun for Scarlett. Except for the messy business of nursing and the bore of bandage rolling, she did not care if the war lasted forever. It was a perfect happy hunting ground” (Mitchell 218). Scarlett’s identity is allowed to emerge, because of the changes being forced upon Southern society. Her job was seen as a necessity to aid in the war relief, but in reality her job was what freed her from her social constraints. She no longer had to uphold a false identity because there were no longer consequences. Scarlett had a child from Charles Wilkes. Her son, Wade, was often left with relatives to be cared for, thus allowing Scarlett the freedom to do as she pleased:

A widow with a child was at a disadvantage with these pretty minxes, she thought. But in these exciting days her widowhood and her motherhood weighed

less heavily upon her than ever before. Between hospital duties in the daytime and parties at night, sometimes she actually forgot, for long stretches, that she had a child (Mitchell 307).

Prior to the war, Scarlett would have been crucified for this type of scandalous behavior. She did not care that the war was destroying her civilization nor did she care that her son was neglected. As a widow/single mother there were no longer social stipulations to restrain her from mischievous behavior. She was preoccupied with the independence her job at the hospital afforded her.

As the South began to slowly transform so did Scarlett O'Hara. The war allowed her small freedoms, but it also forced Scarlett to take on responsibility. Before the war her life was filled with numerous suitors and parties. When the war hits closer to home, with the burning of Atlanta, Scarlett is forced to do things outside of her comfort zone:

Melanie moaned whether she wanted to be brave or not, and sometimes she screamed. When she did, Scarlett dropped her head into her hands and covered her ears and twisted her body and wished that she herself were dead. Anything was preferable to being a helpless witness to such pain. Anything was better than being tied here waiting for a baby that took such a long time coming. Waiting, when for all she knew the Yankees were actually at Five Points. She fervently wished she had paid more attention to the whispered conversations of matrons on the subject of childbirth. If only she had (Michell 353).

One of the obstacles Scarlett must endure is delivering Melly's baby. Through Dr. Meade's insistence Scarlett is obligated to stay to watch over Melly. The raid on Atlanta forced

Southerners to flee for their lives. Despite Scarlett's fears of Yankee soldiers and facing death she is true to her word. Even though she has no knowledge of childbirth Scarlett takes care of Melly and delivers her baby. Scarlett did have the option to leave Atlanta with her aunt. However, she stays and by doing so shows that she is changing—from scared naïve girl to strong independent woman. Her ability to take on this difficult challenge makes Scarlett a heroine.

Another difficulty Scarlett must undergo is her escape from the Yankees. Traditionally Southern women were cared for by their men, but because the men are in battle the women are left to fend for themselves. Scarlett sets out on a quest to return home to Tara unaware that she will have to bear this alone. Abandoned by Rhett Butler Scarlett is removed from the security of her previous life before the war:

Here she was exposed to the sun in a broken-down wagon with a broken-down horse, dirty, sweaty, hungry, helpless to do anything but plod along at a snail's pace through a deserted land. What a few short weeks it had been since she was safe and secure (Mitchell 380).

Suddenly, Scarlett is tested by the possibilities of starvation, death or capture by the Yankees. Her strong will and autonomy is what allows her to survive.

Upon her return to Tara Scarlett must claim the role as the head of the household. Everyone that has survived the war and still lives in Tara is either weak or ill. With no one to take care of her Scarlett must rely on herself in order to survive the trials of poverty and hunger:

Hunger gnawed at her empty stomach again and she said aloud: "As God is my witness, as God is my witness, the Yankees aren't going to lick me. I'm going to live through this, and when it's over, I'm never going to be

hungry again. No, nor any of my folks. If I have to steal or kill—as God is my witness, I’m never going to be hungry again” (Mitchell 408).

This scene in the story highlights the turning point for Scarlett’s character. The hardships of the war made her evolve. The days of naïve innocence no longer exist for Scarlett O’Hara. The war hardened her with crucial problems that forced her to become resilient. She defies anyone that attempts to stand in her way. Scarlett’s ability to fend for herself confirms her self-determination as a progressive woman.

Reconstruction and Redefining Southern Womanhood

With the commencement of the Civil War many women lost their men to the grips of death. Those men that did not perish in the war came back injured and unable to work. Amidst the chaos of war it was Southern women that had to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives and rebuild a new South, with or without their men:

The women of the South became the only American women to know the hard truths of war firsthand. They went hungry just as their men did on the front lines in Virginia and Tennessee, they starved when these men failed to come home for four straight growing seasons, and hunger was an old story when the war finally ended. (Mitchell 13).

The antebellum fairy tale South no longer existed. The South was now faced with the fact that change was inevitable. Within this core of Southern devastation Scarlett O’Hara is faced with: the death of her mother, becoming destitute, and attempting to sell herself to Rhett Butler for money. The debacle of the South is what completely alters Scarlett. Out of desperation to save

her beloved Tara, Scarlett makes the decision to betray her sister and marry a man she does not love:

Frank Kennedy, at present, was her future. At least, he had the store and he had cash money. And if she could marry him and get her hands on that money, she could make ends meet at Tara for another year. And after that—Frank must buy the sawmill. She could see for herself how quickly the town was rebuilding and anyone who could establish a lumber business now, when there was so little competition, would have a gold mine. (571)

Out of desperation to save her father's land Scarlett marries her sister's betrothed—Frank Kennedy. Scarlett's objective is to save her connection to her past—Tara. By marrying Frank Kennedy she is saving Tara, but also securing her future. Scarlett makes shrewd business decisions in regards to the lumber business and the opportunity to create her own financial empire. Despite what gender roles state Scarlett makes it apparent to society that she is autonomous and relies only on herself. Scarlett's ruthless actions liberate her from traditional customs by demonstrating that she can take care of herself and her family at whatever cost.

As a result of the new woman relinquishing tradition, the South begins to reshape itself through the assistance of its women and the nation. The majority of confederate women had lost their men—husbands and sons, to war. The United States would engulf the two separate identities of North and South in order to allow only one national identity to remain:

During and after Reconstruction, as the United States consolidated its identity as a nation devoted to capitalist expansion, the role of regionalism in national culture shifted, serving less as a mode of contestation and more as a way of demonstrating the presence of binding traditions within the nation (Duck 30).

Scarlett's identity adheres to these new traditions, because she plans to save Tara through entrepreneurship, but also devises a way to maintain a wealthy lifestyle by capitalizing on the reconstruction process. But, because the war played such a critical focus on the region at that time she was able to marry her sister's betrothed, save Tara, and create financial stability for herself without being banished from her community.

In her marriage to Frank Kennedy, Scarlett openly rejects the rules of society even further by running her husband's store, and generating a financial empire. Frank's acceptance of Scarlett's decision to work was based on his, "mild and gentle nature, it was not in him to deny a wife much" (Mitchell 595). The idea of a woman working outside of the home was completely unacceptable, but because the South was forced to change, so could its women change. When Frank first heard Scarlett make the decision to work he was astonished:

That sawmill, for example. It was the shock of his life when she told him with a sweet smile, in answer to his questions, that she intended to run it herself. Go into business for herself! It was unthinkable. There were no women in business in Atlanta. In fact, Frank had never heard of a woman in business anywhere (Mitchell 595).

Scarlett defiantly takes control of her life and her business, while Frank watches helplessly. By running her own business and making her own money Scarlett illustrates the beginning of progression for Southern women.

Despite the fact that Scarlett is disloyal to her native Southern roots, she decides to cash in on the business boom by making her wealth off the newly acquired Southerners-Yankees. Had the war not been present Scarlett would have been exiled by her family and her society. Instead, she becomes the hot topic of Atlanta gossip:

And people were talking terribly about her. Probably about him too, for permitting her to behave in so unwomanly a fashion. It embarrassed him to face his customers over the counter and hear them say: "I saw Mrs. Kennedy a few minutes ago over at..." Everyone took pains to tell him what she did (Mitchell 596)

Scarlett knows that by taking responsibility for own life no one can control her. Her assertive actions break the taboos of women working and socializing outside of the home.

Being the talk of the town was a minor consequence for financial stability. Scarlett did not care if the public saw her behavior as unwomanly:

If women were so unfortunate as to be compelled to make a little money to assist their families in these hard times, they made it in quiet womanly ways—baking as Mrs. Merriwether was doing, or painting china and sewing and keeping boarders, like Mrs. Elsing and Fanny, or teaching school like Mrs. Meade or giving music lessons like Mrs. Bonell. These ladies made money but they kept themselves at home while they did it, as a woman should (Mitchell 596).

Scarlett could not survive as a traditional Southern lady because she already had been exposed to the harsh side effects of war-- famine, poverty, and abandonment. Her alteration in character is what makes Scarlett fearless and ruthless. Scarlett is forced to grow up because of the obstacles the war created for her. Scarlett's existence is no longer a life of glamorous Twelve Oaks parties. Her courage and ability to survive make her a heroine of the South.

It is not until Melanie's death that Scarlett realizes her true feelings for her sister-in-law, "Melly is the only woman friend I ever had, she thought forlornly, the only woman except mother who really loved me. She's like Mother, too. Everyone who knew her has clung to her

skirts” (Mitchell 937). Melanie’s persona prompts Scarlett’s memories of her mother. Her characteristics and traits mimic the demeanor of Mrs. O’Hara, ultimately explaining the strained relationship the two women shared. It wasn’t that Scarlett was simply jealous over Ashley, it is the underlying idea that she did not want to adhere to her mother’s traditions of the Old South.

Melanie embodied all of Ellen O’Hara’s qualities:

Melanie was young but she had in her all the qualities this embattled remnant prized, poverty and pride in poverty, uncomplaining courage, gaiety, hospitality, kindness and, above all, loyalty to all the old traditions. Melanie refused to change, refused even to admit that there was any reason to change in a changing world. Under her roof the old days seemed to come back again and people took heart and felt even more contemptuous of the tide of wild life and high living that was sweeping the Carpetbaggers and newly rich Republicans along (Mitchell 684).

Melanie is the female, Southern side of Scarlett-- loyal, tied to the land and rooted in tradition. Ellen and Melanie were Scarlett’s last and only connection to the old South that she so desperately wanted to run away from. Scarlett’s rebellious nature pushed her away from the nurturing of Melanie and her mother.

Scarlett presumed that she would always have both of these women in her life. She believed her relationship with Melanie and Ellen could never be severed. It is after Melanie’s death that, “Scarlett realizes that she has depended on Melanie, who embodies loyalty to all the old traditions” (Duck 73). However, it is also important to realize that the two matriarchs would not have been able to exist in a society outside of the Traditional Southern hierarchy while Scarlett can survive the transition. Ellen O’Hara and Melanie Wilkes were defined by the rules of

the Southern region. A new South destroyed these characters, because they were cultivated by man for man. It is the presence of the war that allows small spaces of change to exist for women.

Rhett Butler is the man that allowed Scarlett O'Hara to totally be herself. He allowed her to do as she pleased and ignore the adversity of society. With this even greater sense of freedom, Scarlett grew a fondness and respect for Rhett. She loved him, because he was everything she wanted in a man. Yet she also, hated him, because he was the only man that could put her in her place. Even though they shared a tumultuous relationship, Scarlett and Rhett defined each other. They were both power hungry characters that exemplified the goals and ideals of the new South. The traditional South maintained, "an unwritten code. This code was simple. Reverence for the Confederacy, honor to the veterans, loyalty to old forms, pride in poverty, open hands to friends and undying hatred to Yankees. Between them, Scarlett and Rhett had outraged every tenet of this code" (Mitchell 780). Both Rhett and Scarlett purposely defied these unwritten laws and lived their lives as they pleased- reckless without regard to inevitable consequences. They loved each other, but could not be together because a power struggle dominated their relationship.

Rhett is the male, new progressive side of Scarlett: commercial, rapacious, mobile. He differs from the other men in Scarlett's life, because he "did not fear her and, she often thought, did not respect her very much either. What he wanted to do, he did, and if she did not like it, he laughed at her" (Mitchell 793). Rhett Butler embodied the characteristics of a strong dominant man, which Scarlett was not use to. The men that existed in her life usually fell under Scarlett's charms. Ironically, it is Scarlett that is charmed by Rhett:

Some mornings he dismissed the maid and brought her the
breakfast tray himself and fed her as though she were a child, took the
hairbrush from her hand and brushed her long dark hair until it snapped

and crackled. Yet other mornings she was torn rudely out of deep slumber when he snatched all the bed covers from her and tickled her bare feet (Mitchell 793).

Rhett's ability to lovingly spoil Scarlett allows her to fall in love with him. His contradictory ways of kindness and sarcasm appeal to Scarlett because he is unpredictable.

Rhett is an important aspect of Scarlett's life because his character symbolizes the strong father figure Scarlett lacked in her life. Scarlett's ability to flirt with men allowed her to always have her way when a man was involved. Rhett did not fall under Scarlett's flirtatious spells. He enticed her with his strength and ability to make her feel secure:

There, there, darling, he said softly. Don't cry. You shall go home, my brave little girl. You shall go home. Don't cry. She felt something brush her hair and wondered vaguely through her tumult if it were his lips. He was so tender, so infinitely soothing, she longed to stay in his arms forever. With such strong arms about her, surely nothing could harm her (Mitchell 364).

I believe his confidence and strength are what allowed her to discover her own persona. The qualities Scarlett valued in Rhett she displayed in herself—strength and assertiveness.

Sophistication and charm are also qualities Rhett Butler personified. He socialized with Northerners and Europeans. He enjoyed spending introducing Scarlett to new ideas and people. He allowed her to see a world beyond Southern borders.

The wives of Rhett's Scallawag and Carpetbagger friends called in droves and so did the "new people" she had met when she sold lumber for their homes. Rhett said that, having done business with them, she should

receive them and, having received them, she found them pleasant company. They wore lovely clothes and never talked about the war or hard times, but confined their conversation to fashions, scandals and whist (Mitchell 805).

Rhett regards Scarlett as his equal by exposing her to influences outside of the Southern boundaries. He allows Scarlett to see that she does not have to adhere to Southern tradition. Rhett nurtures Scarlett's desire to be liberated by allowing her to be her own person.

Gone with the Wind provided a story about a war that changed and reshaped Southern women's values. Scarlett O'Hara provided an escape for women who no longer accepted the rules of a traditional Old South. Scarlett is a Southern woman who disassociates herself from traditional social codes. She deliberately breaks Southern tradition to show her refusal to adhere to the norms and standards of convention. Her courageous and defiant actions make Scarlett a progressive Southern woman.

CHAPTER IV

A NATION DIVIDED – CONCLUSION

The nineteenth century brought about change for the Southern Regions of the United States through the effects of war. Southern women were grouped together as one entity: submissive and compliant. Yet, two types of Southern women existed-- Anglo women and elite Spanish-Mexican women. A correlation between Confederate women and Spanish-Mexican women existed in the South. Anglo women maintained their lineage while Spanish-Mexican women created a new hybrid identity by marrying Anglo men. Even though both groups coexisted in the Southern parts of the United States the women were trained by Patriarchs to reject external cultural influences. Both regions parallel each other through their social standards, subservient women, and male dominated societies. Each region wanted to stand alone and reject the identity of the United States. The Confederate regions fought U.S. authority in order to keep slavery. The Spanish-Mexican regions fought U.S. authority in order to keep their identity. Southern families were structured with traditional high morals and family standards. The war introduced diversity and new ideologies into Southern regions that had not been exposed to change.

Novels like *Caballero* and *Gone with the Wind* catered to audiences that could identify with regional displacement. The characteristics that made these novels appealing were that:

The plantation romance depicted couples from North and South as lovers who are naturally attracted and right for one another and valued these unions as sites of national unity and racial reproduction. Such representations modeled a form of cultural and political affiliation that maintained strict class and racial hierarchies during a period when the United States was experiencing expanded racial and ethnic diversity” (Duck 35).

Duck’s idea of “national unity and racial reproduction,” suggests a happily ever after for societies that blended Northern and Southern cultures. The Anglo women of the old South maintained their racial identity. However this idea isn’t true in regards to *Caballero*. The Spanish-Mexican women married Anglo men and created a new hybrid identity. The creation of a new hybrid identity resulted in ethnic variety in the United States.

The two Southern regions created new identities for the South-hybrids of mixed culture that posed a threat to the nation during this time period. David Jansson explores the idea, “American culture” is seen as the universal standard by which “southern culture” is judged. Even as the New South approaches the outstretched arms of modern America, its pace is slowed by the racial intolerance and economic backwardness that continues to bedevil the region” (Jansson 366). Unfortunately, the nation cannot forgive the South, either region, for unruly behavior and defiance. The nation wanted to use the South as a scapegoat in order to blame the South for racism. However, the identity of the Southern regions in both *Gone with the Wind* and *Caballero* changes through the actions of the women.

As a nation the United States wanted to unify the beliefs of all of its states. The original objectives of the United States were to unify Southern regions with Northern regions in order to create a unified nation. However, the Southern regions were unruly and defiant toward change. In order to maintain integrity the U.S. was forced to mandate stringent control by imposing war against its own citizens. The Confederate South opposed the abolition of slavery and was unwilling to submit to U.S. regulation, as seen in *Gone with the Wind*. In *Caballero*, the Spanish-Mexican south opposed being stripped of its country and history. Equally, both regions were faced with losing: identity and authority. The two Southern regions wanted to preserve: an unjust social hierarchy, the control of its population, and dominance over their submissive women. However, it is the women in both stories that change their perspectives and identities because of social strife within the domestic sphere. Tradition and culture upheld both of these societies and the war tainted this perspective.

Gone with the Wind and *Caballero* provided the perception of the South through the eyes of its women. First, the South, both Spanish-Mexican and Anglo, are portrayed as having idyllic and regal Southern values, despite what the nation perceives. Second, Southern regions are posed with political disputes that challenge the nation's values, which inevitably lead to war. Third, the elite classes of Southern women, both Spanish-Mexican and Anglo, begin to defy strict social codes that denied them civil rights. Lastly, the presence of war allowed Southern women to create roles outside of the domestic sphere which allowed the restructuring of gender roles.

The domestic women of an archaic South became obsolete after the war. In *Gone with the Wind*, Anglo Southern women, such as Scarlett O'Hara, experienced changes in social codes-- women working outside the home, earning wages and embracing independence. For the Spanish-Mexican women of *Caballero* the changes they encountered were transitions in cultural identity,

a new language and social codes that were more liberal. The novels suggest that the women were political entities that reshaped the South through their actions of defiance and bravery. These two historical novels exemplify how war created opportunities for women to transform their identities, perspectives, and standards. The war transformed Southern women by allowing them to leave behind a legacy of heroic defiant women that changed the face of a nation. In the end, the Southern regions in *Gone with the Wind* and *Caballero* were restructured by a war that divided a nation, but freed a gender.

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