

Novelist Margaret Mitchell's Role as Reporter: A Case Study

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Abstract- The veteran novelist Margaret Mitchell, who made history with her only novel, *Gone With The Wind*, had been a reporter earlier, which is known to very few. She had been reporting for Atlanta Journal Sunday Magazine in her hometown Atlanta for four and a half years. The current study has been carried out to find out whether the people, who know her, are aware about her reporting career. It also tried to explore whether she can be a role model for female journalists and if any of her messages hold relevance at present. The study found out that a very few people knew that Margaret Mitchell had been a reporter before writing the historic novel. It also concluded that she can be an inspiration for female journalists and writers and that most of her messages, particularly women-centric, hold relevance even today, when women, though empowered to some extent, face similar problems as were faced during Margaret Mitchell's time.

Index Terms- Atlanta Journal, Female Reporter, *Gone With The Wind*, Margaret Mitchell

I. INTRODUCTION

The word 'journalism' has frequently been associated with men. It is generally deemed to be a masculine field. However, time has witnessed the rise of some courageous and competent female journalists, who forced the humankind to change the notion.

One of such spirited journalists was Margaret Mitchell. She was the most successful historical novelist of the mid-20th century, though her work was confined to a single book '*Gone With the Wind*'. It was the most talked about novel in American popular culture right from the time of its publication, while its screen adaptation turned into the biggest event movie of the 20th century.

Not just her only novel has inspired readers for over sixty years, her own pleasing personality has left a mark through her creation. Mitchell was a strong lady, never ready to let societal rules dictate her behavior or control her life. She lived to the fullest, looking for passion and love. She never stopped to ask permission or submit to anyone's will, but whatever she did was what came from her heart. She was certainly ahead of her time. Although she entered the society in 1920, Mitchell was too free-spirited and intelligent to be satisfied with life as a debutante.

Mitchell was an ideal feminist. Long before modern feminism was even thought of, Mitchell and the awareness she brought through her book helped to push two generations of upper-middle-class and middle-class Southern women into the 20th century. She has worked hard enough in describing the conflict between their proper upbringings and their need for

independence. In a broader context, she played the role of a popular cultural heroine in the city of Atlanta, a status that lingered long after her death.

On its contrary, literary scholars never treated Mitchell kindly, in part because she never published a large body of work open to analysis. Her popularity sustained her reputation, but Mitchell was never treated as seriously as others, say, Erskine Caldwell, who wrote some 50 books, most of them about the South and many of them presenting a very different vision of the subject. Some people believe, *Gone With the Wind* is just an 'emotional' love story. To them, Margaret Mitchell was simply a Southern beauty, who got lucky writing about love and war. But this doesn't seem to be true. Margaret was not only beautiful, but intelligent and curious as well. She may have written only one major novel in her career, but she created a master-piece.

Mitchell never published or even tried to publish another novel. Besides her lack of inclination to do so, various personal and family constraints and the distraction of the Second World War, in which she was heavily involved in the support of troops' morale, made it impossible for her to author any other fiction. On a personal level, she grew more conservative in the decade after the book's publication and subsequently took on various reactionary political positions. Although she was known for her polite relations with the black Americans she was in contact with, she was an opponent of the early Civil Rights Movement.

A. Life Sketch

Margaret Munnerlyn Mitchell was born on November 8, 1900 in Atlanta, Georgia to a well-known lawyer and the president of the Atlanta Historical Society, Eugene Muse Mitchell, descended from Scotch-Irish and French Huguenots. Her father, himself a historian, taught her to love the history of the South. Her mother, Mary Isabelle 'May Belle' Stephens, a suffragist, was of Irish-Catholic ancestry.

According to the New Georgia Encyclopedia, the family included many soldiers, who had fought in the American Revolution, Irish uprisings and rebellions and the Civil War. Her great-great-great-grandfather Thomas Mitchell fought in the American Revolution, and his son William Mitchell took part in the War of 1812. Her great-grandfather Isaac Green Mitchell was a circuit-riding Methodist minister, who had settled in Marthasville, which later was named Atlanta. Hence, her childhood was spent in the laps of the Civil War veterans, and her maternal relatives, who lived through the war and the years to follow. They told her everything about the war except that the Confederates had lost it. She was ten years old before making this discovery. When she was 15, she wrote, "If I were a boy, I would try for West Point, if I could make it, or well I'd be a prize fighter - anything for the thrills."