
R K Narayan and William Faulkner: Prolific Regional Writers

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Abstract

R. K. Narayan and William Faulkner write stories in time, place and milieu with their specificities. R.K. Narayan's Malgudi and Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha have some common recognizable features of the localities of South Indian cities Mysore and Chennai and the Faulkner's home County Lafayette in the Southern Mississippi respectively. Narayan's stories belong to the native Indian soil and are reminiscent of its culture. Narayan's imaginary world of Malgudi is a microcosm of India or Indian society with Indianness and Indian sensibility. Faulkner was greatly influenced by the history of his family and the region, Mississippi, showing his sense of humor, his sense of the tragic position of black and White Americans. Faulkner emphasized the regional flavour of his books and, paradoxically, presented them with significance, transcending the regional limitations.

Introduction

The present paper aims to write about the regional writers, R. K. Narayan and William Faulkner who write stories in time, place and milieu with their specificities. It also states that R.K. Narayan's Malgudi and Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha have some common recognizable features of the localities of South Indian cities Mysore and Chennai and the Faulkner's home County Lafayette in the Southern Mississippi respectively. R. K. Narayan is an Indian and William Faulkner is an American. But, both of them write in the same language, English. Immersed in everyday life, their respective societies, they have acquired a proper view and unique perspective of visualizing people, their lives and culture in the respective countries.

Narayan is a prolific and successful writer and he wrote novels, short stories, articles, and memoirs. Narayan's stories belong to the native Indian soil and are reminiscent of its culture.

They mainly depict the Indian life and clearly express his view of the world and those who live in it, simple but a fascinating plot, lively characterization, strict economy of narration and subtle simplicity of language are some of the most outstanding features of these stories. He also wrote modern versions of two classic Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Narayan won numerous writing awards and earned honorary doctorates. He was well-known and respected in India, Britain, Australia, and the United States. When he died at age 94, his obituary touted him as 'India's greatest writer of English of the twentieth century.'

Faulkner is well known and highly praised for his novels and short stories, many of which, setting in the fictional Yoknapatawpha county that Faulkner created resembled to his own native Lafayette County. The Old South, Mississippi is his native town where the racism is deep rooted. Racism is embedded in every white man of the South and naturally the literary giant Faulkner is no exception. In 1950 Faulkner was awarded the *Nobel Prize* for Literature, the aspiration of every writer and he became an internationally known public figure. The federal government invited him to attend the international conferences and the cultural events. Federal government assumed that Faulkner grew more liberal on the subject of race relations in the last fifteen years of his life and requested him to make several good will trips to Japan, Philippines, Italy, and Iceland. He became an effective presenter and was well received everywhere. Faulkner was honored by the government of France making him a *Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur* in 1951. On August 3, 1987, in Faulkner's honor The United States Postal Service issued a 22-cent postage stamp.

Narayan is considered to be a regional writer, novelist and story-teller in the true sense. All his stories take place in Malgudi, an imaginary world, a small South Indian town providing the setting for almost all of Narayan's novels and short stories. The themes of Narayan's stories find a vivid life from historical observation of common place incidents and humdrum life. The basic themes of Narayan's stories and novels present the place of man in this universe and its predicament. Narayan is the first and foremost an artist in his presentation of Indian life, culture and tradition. He covers the wide gamut of human experience from the innocent pranks of children to serious communal riots, misery of common man to filial relationship, superstitions and orthodox social traditions to the supernatural elements.

On the other hand, Faulkner has also come out with various themes in his short stories. His imaginary town, Yoknapatawpha County, is the perfect and pertinent land to create and write his novels and stories, reflecting the American South and an impression of the area or region penetrating deep into the Psychology of its people, both individually and collectively. Faulkner is highlighted for his writings and particularly interested in exploring the moral implications of history. Faulkner's themes seem as gestures to broader ideas, including the tensions between the North and the South, complexities of changing world order, disappearing realms of gentility and aristocracy and rigid social constraints placed on women. In his stories, compassion is more personal and spontaneous, less conventional and formalized.

Writing Style of R. K. Narayan and William Faulkner

Style is the manner of linguistic expression either in prose or poetry. It denotes how a writer says whatever he says. The typical style of an author can be analyzed in terms of 'diction'. Style includes choice of words, syntax, sentence structure, figurative language, the rhythmic pattern and rhetorical devices. To be more specific it refers to the tone, diction and imagery in writing.

R. K. Narayan: As an Indian writer in English, Narayan is unique. His education has been completely native. Narayan's English is pure, sensitive but simple, yet without the distinctive colour and idiom of its native England. Most of the writings of Narayan were published in England and have drawn much appreciation from renowned authors and critics such as Graham Greene, Walter Allen, E.M.Forster, Pearl S. Buck, V.S. Naipaul, Ved Mehta etc., Many of his followers in America consider him to be one of the World's three giant modern writers, the other two being William Faulkner and Earnest Hemingway (Trimurthy, E.S.).

Narayan's style of writing is in fact, unpretentious and simple with an element of humour. It focused on lay men and women comprising the readers of next-door neighbors providing a greater ability to relate the topic. Unlike his contemporaries, he could write about the intricacies of Indian society without modifications of his characteristic simplicity to conform to trends in fiction writing. Critics say that Narayan's writings are likely to be more descriptive and less analytical. His style is objective, rooted in a detached spirit, and his narration is more authentic and realistic. His attitude, coupled with his perception of life, with a unique ability to blend

characters and actions, and an ability to use ordinary events to create a connection in the mind of the reader.

“Narayan's writing style was often compared to that of William Faulkner since both their works brought out the humour and energy of ordinary life while displaying compassionate humanism. The similarities also extended to their juxtaposing of the demands of society against the confusions of individuality. Although their approach to subjects was similar, their methods were different; Faulkner was rhetorical and illustrated his points with immense prose while Narayan was very simple and realistic, capturing the elements all the same.”- From Wikipedia.

William Faulkner: William Faulkner used the narrative style, the stream-of-consciousness that is well-known for his experiments. This style is characterized by a use of language imitating thought, often eliminating conventional grammar and formal sentence structure in favor of more “organic” and creative modes. The language of the text contains a variety of stylistic features that may affect the readers' understanding of Faulkner's themes, characters and setting leading to a better appreciation of the story. His innovations in the structure of the novel are well known and deserve at least a brief discussion before turning to the topic. Faulkner was widely liked by the critics for his distinctive writing style and they called him, “master of rhetoric, highly symbolic style”. Warren Beck in *Man in Motion: Faulkner’s Trilogy* states: “Faulkner has grappled with the experimental in all its complexity and yet has contained it within a dramatic storytelling.” The most easily identified trait of Faulkner’s writing is his preference for over elaborate and complex sentence structure, marathon sentences with trailing clauses, and parentheses within parentheses. He is well known for his lofty and bombastic words. He also repeats words in order to represent the significance and tone of the story. Faulkner’s characters are often engaged in dramatic actions, the dream like effect creates quietness, a stillness which generates a sense of the relaxed, slow moving south.

Prolific Regional Writers

Narayan: Narayan is considered to be a regional writer, novelist and story-teller in the true sense. All his stories take place in Malgudi, an imaginary world, a small South Indian town providing the setting for almost all of Narayan’s novels and short stories. Narayan lived in a

spacious house built in the orchard garden in the charming and scenic town of Mysore, in which he spent most of his successful years. The city that located at the foot of the Chamundi Hill might have inspired Narayan to create his famous Malgudi which is for him what Yoknapatawpha was for Faulkner, and Wessex was for Thomas Hardy. Malgudi, an imaginary landscape inhabited by the unique characters of his stories. Almost all the Narayan's novels and short stories of Narayan took place in Malgudi which is the symbol of the multiple mirrors of Indian life in its complex social makeup. Narayan presented the panoramic setting of Indian life and an immense variety of themes and experiences of life in his stories.

Narayan explains: "I seek life wherever I go. I seek people, their interest, their aspirations and predicaments." He observed the essence of common man's daily life and created many characters and themes in the vast mosaic of the Indian society. Narayan's imaginary world of Malgudi is a microcosm of India or Indian society with Indianness and Indian sensibility. As a regional writer, in his fictional town, Malgudi Narayan was able to create a number of people, their life style, places, situations, incidents and themes that appeared everywhere in India. In Narayan's fiction one can easily recognize it and expect at any minute to go out into those loved and shabby streets and see with excitement and certainty of pleasure a stranger approaching past the bank, the cinema, the haircutting saloon, a stranger who will greet us, we know, with some unexpected and revealing phrase that will open a door to yet another human existence.

Narayan limited himself to the small fictional town, Malgudi and presented all the topographical details like any other regional novelist, dealing with the physical features, the people's way of life, customs, beliefs and manners. He portrayed the social-cultural setting and the gradual changes occurred in the region over the time, and how the place and the people were interlinked and interdependent.

William Faulkner: Faulkner's imaginary town, Yoknapatawpha County, which is the perfect and pertinent land to create and write his novels and stories, reflects the American South and an impression of the area or region penetrating deep into the Psychology of its people, both individually and collectively, with a feel of living in and belonging to the south at many different

moments of its rich culture and social structure. Faulkner was greatly influenced by his home state of Mississippi, as well as by the history and culture of the American South altogether.

Faulkner created a large number of characters in his novels and stories. In this regard, he was unrivalled and he was influenced by Edgar Allan Poe, James Joyce and T. S. Eliot in creation of his themes and characterization. His main theme is ‘man and his surroundings’ so that he wrote about his land and about his people. In his popular novels and short stories Faulkner presented the South, the locale of most of his fiction.

When he was young, Faulkner was greatly influenced by the history of his family and the region, Mississippi, showing his sense of humor, his sense of the tragic position of black and White Americans, and his timeless themes, including fiercely intelligent people dwelling behind the facades of good old boys and simpletons. Faulkner’s important themes were time and the ownership of both land and people, and these themes are played out over and over again in his phenomenal literary production.

In his fictions, he created a number of characters, themes, plots, issues and incidents with local emphasis, and even insignificant details were managed to make universal. He spent most of his childhood and major part of his life he spent in a specific region. So, Faulkner is recognized as a “regional” writer of novels and stories.

Faulkner emphasized the regional flavour of his books and, paradoxically, presented them with significance, transcending the regional limitations. All this emphasis was taken place because of the fact that the feelings were strongly connected to a large network of influence that stemmed from the physical nature of the place, from its history and from its social organization.

As a regional novelist or writer, William Faulkner’s novels and stories concern all sensitive and feeling men. Though his novels are seldom easy to read or understand, they give immense satisfaction to the reader with a deep insight into the south and into the nature of mankind.

Conclusion

Narayan is considered to be a regional writer, novelist and story-teller in the true sense. The themes of Narayan's stories find a vivid life from historical observation of common place incidents and humdrum life. R. K. Narayan and William Faulkner write stories in time, place and milieu with their specificities. R.K. Narayan's Malgudi and Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha have some common recognizable features of the localities of South Indian cities Mysore and Chennai and the Faulkner's home County Lafayette in the Southern Mississippi respectively. Narayan's stories belong to the native Indian soil and are reminiscent of its culture. Narayan's imaginary world of Malgudi is a microcosm of India or Indian society with Indianness and Indian sensibility. Faulkner was greatly influenced by the history of his family and the region, Mississippi, showing his sense of humor, his sense of the tragic position of black and White Americans. Faulkner emphasized the regional flavour of his books and, paradoxically, presented them with significance, transcending the regional limitations. Thus, both the prolific writers are strongly influenced by the regional predicaments or embarrassing situations which led them to write stories in time, place and milieu with their specificities.

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R. K. Narayan (10 October 1906 – 13 May 2001), full name Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami, was an Indian writer, most famous for his works set in the fictional South Indian town of Malgudi. He is one of three leading figures of early Indian literature in English (alongside Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao), and is credited with bringing the genre to the rest of the world. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature several times, but never won the honor. William Cuthbert Faulkner was a Nobel Prize laureate, awarded the literature prize in 1949. He wrote novels, short stories, poetry, and screenplays. He is known mainly for his novels and short stories set in the fictional Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi. He was also a prolific writer of short stories. His first short story collection, *These 13* (1931), includes many of his most acclaimed stories, including *A Rose for Emily*, *Red Leaves*, *That Evening Sun* and *Dry September*. Faulkner was known for his experimental style meticulous attention to diction. Faulkner is a profoundly influential presence for novelists who wrote, and are writing, in the United States, South America, and throughout the world. Few other writers have exerted as profound an influence on literature as Faulkner.