

A Brief Study of Malgudi and Yoknapatawpha

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Abstract

R. K. Narayan and William Faulkner have written 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. R. K. Narayan is a versatile novelist as well as a prolific writer of short stories, dealing with simple life of ordinary people, the life and dreams of middle class people. William Faulkner is one of the most influential writers in modern American literature. He created a large number of characters in his novels and stories in which he wrote about his land and his people.

Keywords: Fictional Worlds, R. K. Narayan's Malgudi, William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha

Introduction

The present paper describes the works of both the writers, R. K. Narayan and William Faulkner, especially in their short stories that have the power to impress and attract more and more people. It focuses on two different fictional worlds to explore what distinguishes a literary work of one writer from another highlighting many important aspects. The works of both the writers have been investigated over decades, but this study will concentrate only on the fictional worlds, observing the town of Malgudi and Yoknapatawpha County.

This paper analyzes one of the major aspects of Comparative Literature Studies: similar themes and ideas arising in countries independently of each other, so that the short stories of English Indian writer R.K. Narayan (1906 - 2001) and American writer William Faulkner (1897 - 1962)

are selected. It also explores and examines the fictional worlds of both the creative writers: R. K. Narayan's "Malgudi and William Faulkner's "Yoknapatawpha."

Narayan and Faulkner are considered to be regional writers, novelists and story-tellers in the true sense. 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.

On the other hand, 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.

Narayan's Malgudi, an Imaginary Town

The creation of an imaginary town Malgudi was the greatest achievement in Narayan's career and he has been called the prince of Malgudi town. He is fascinated with the lives of common people. So his characters are common men and women of Malgudi. He portrayed their joy, sorrow, problems and difficulties of life with little irony and knots of satire. Keeping Malgudi as the constant frame he gave continuity and connectivity to his stories. He himself likes to be known as a story teller.

Besides being a versatile novelist, R. K. Narayan is also a prolific writer of short stories. He wrote more than hundred short stories from the locale of Malgudi. The theme he selected is vivid. The stories deal with children, with animals, with the super natural, with human relationship in its all dimensions, with different trades, vocations, professions etc. He deals with simple life of ordinary people, the life and dreams of middle class people. He portrayed

artistically a new world before his readers, the world of Malgudi. Everything is there, a complete and perfect harmony of events and life of the people of Malgudi. His close observation of life enabled him to create life in his stories. He presented it with subtle humour and knots of satire. Narayan used the old narrative tradition, third person narrative to tell the stories. In his childhood he was an active listener of tales told by his grandmother.

However, while creating Malgudi, Narayan draws on his surrounding world in many ways: adopting its components, varieties and the structural models; utilizing actual location to create a fictional place; borrowing social issues, facts, cultural aspects; sharing frames of reference or discursive features anchoring the fictional story to a historical event, and so on. These materials undergone through the process of transformation by Narayan's methodology of imaginative reconstruction techniques of narrative fiction lead to the creation of Malgudi.

Malgudi is mentally constructed by Narayan as a world that serves as a habitat for people created by him. Thus, the Malgudi world is constituted and governed by its laws, its poetics—the poetics of narrative imagination. Malgudi's topography expands from one novel to another in subsequence according to the needs of the characters and the times.

Yoknapatawpha, Faulkner's Imaginary town

William Faulkner is one of the most influential writers in modern American literature. Specifically his works reflect the distinct heritage of the American South. The Northern region of Mississippi where Faulkner lived all his life provided the geographical and cultural background for the county of his novels and short stories. The great Southern writer of the Yoknapatawpha County, he is identified with the American South and it is quite natural that his fiction is filled with references to history, geography, customs, and his prose often employs its special idiom. American South has become the rich setting for his novels and short stories.

Similarly, William Faulkner has excelled in inventing the fictional and imaginary land, which became the solid basis for his literary work. Experimentation and imagination laid Faulkner to find the Yoknapatawpha County. His major concern is to reflect his County in the form of

fiction. He is also a writer with technical excellence. He used it to the extreme to give the readers the best fiction of his times.

Yoknapatawpha County, William Faulkner's imaginary town 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, 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.

Yoknapatawpha resembles R.K.Narayan's Malgudi and Thomas Hardy's Wessex. Malgudi is a fictitious town in India created by R.K.Narayan in his novels and short stories. It forms the setting for most of Narayan's works. While William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha is moulded in Lafayette County, R. K. Narayan's Malgudi does not exist anywhere in India. There is no place in India that is the prototype of Malgudi. The Malgudi town cannot be located anywhere in the map of India. It is an imaginary creation, a figment of Narayan's narrative imagination. The vivid picture of Malgudi makes one think that it is a terrestrial place in a physical land where one can go by train.

Conclusion

However, no one has visited Malgudi. It is a fictional world that lacks material and physical specificities. Meanwhile, this does not mean that the fictional world of Yoknapatawpha is isomorphic as the Lafayette County. Yoknapatawpha is never the real physical county of Lafayette County. There is a mechanism of the narrative fiction that transforms the reality of Lafayette County into a literary text, i.e. fictional Yoknapatawpha. The term "mechanism" is

used here to refer to the writer's ability to use his gamut of methodology of narrative imagination-techniques. In other words, the materials coming from the actual world along with the writer's perception of literature have to undergo a substantial transformation at the world boundary. However, both the writers draw on their surrounding worlds in many ways: adopting components, varieties and the structural models; utilizing actual locations to create fictional places; borrowing social issues, facts, cultural aspects; sharing frames of references or discursive features anchoring the fictional story into a historical event, and so on. Though there are some differences in methodology between the two writers, these materials subjected to the process of transformation by the writers' imaginative reconstruction techniques of narrative fiction lead to the creation of their somewhat similar and yet different fictional worlds.

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