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Talkative Man: R.K. Narayan's Consummate Performance of Narayan

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It is indeed a matter of great pride to announce that we will publish three issues of the journal in 2003: the special topic issue to be guest edited by Professor John Hawley of Santa Clara University, the regular issue and the Conference issue. I sincerely hope that this plan of publishing three issues a year will make the journal truly representative of the scholarly interests of South Asianists.

Professor Amritjit Singh, President, South Asian Literary Association, has been immensely helpful at various stages of planning and Lopamudra Basu, the Secretary-Treasurer, SALA, has been very cooperative. I have always counted on Dr. Satya Pachori for help and guidance. The journal is housed at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. To President Albert L. Etheridge, I remain gratefully obliged for extending professional and scholarly encouragement and for providing financial support and other institutional facilities for the successful growth of the journal. Martin Coffee and Priscilla Stump are rightly credited for the successful production of the journal. My students Jennifer Shuler, Michael Karbowsky and Sara Payne have done admirable work in assisting me in my editorial responsibilities.

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There is evidence that after publication of *The Dark Room* (1938) R.K. Narayan planned a literary excursion in another direction, but the novel set outside of Malgudi was simply never written.[1] The return to Malgudi in his second novel, *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), which he originally had titled *Chandran*, involves the re-introduction of various places highlighted in *Swami and Friends* (1935): The River Sarayu, Lawley Extension, Nallappa's Grove, Market Road, Kabir Street are the place names that are repeated and that become mantra-like in their familiarity in novel after novel over the years. Narayan repeatedly reorients his reader to the familiar, as he engages new, and occasionally old, characters in new situations in subsequent narratives.

Reading all fourteen novels in sequence reveals a variety of patterns in the Narayan tapestry, motifs which do not recommend themselves as "patterns" to be returned *to*, really, until at least the publication of *Mr. Sampath* (1949). With *Sampath* it seems that Narayan realizes he has not only accepted settling down in his fictional home, but also has become conscious of who R.K. Narayan the novelist of Malgudi is and just what makes a Narayan/Malgudi novel, as it is not merely a matter of style. Narayan's voice is consistent from beginning to end and, although there are

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several syntactical devices that find their way into the later novels that are not apparent in the earlier novels, the style is largely constant over the decades. One may safely conjecture that Narayan's personal style could or would likely have expressed itself just as consistently through various novels and short stories set in places outside Malgudi, treating of disparate subjects in various times, but that is not what happens; Narayan remains true to the novel of Malgudi. An aspect of this fidelity, of this discovery of what the "Malgudi novel" is, requires the construction of the "story teller of Malgudi," and this story teller develops a narrative signature that depends upon several devices; these devices themselves become part of the Malgudi landscape. Discovering and crafting this narrative role leads Narayan over the years to a clearly conscious, self-confident recognition of foundational motifs that define both the Malgudi tale and the Malgudi tale teller so that, in the end, we appreciate seeing the last novels in the context of the entire Narayan corpus, recognizing in them the author's playful self-awareness, his willing and coy performance of his own crafted persona.

One could settle on the more cynical and superficial vantage point that Narayan's novels simply become formulaic and therefore quite predictable after, say, the appearance of *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* (1961), but it is more plausible and more intellectually gratifying to assume that for Narayan Malgudi becomes not only a place to return to, where familiar locations yield familiar-yet-new experiences in the way of all places, but a rhetorical construct that is bound to the geographic locale and reinforces a set of plot devices and even particular phrases that become an artistic construct to return to, just as the Mempi Hills and Albert Mission school are there "waiting" for the reader from text to text. As he returns to these elements or structures, he invests them with heightened qualities. He intensifies certain features of them, and in the process creates that distinctive amplified quality that says

"Narayan" just as clearly as Dickens says "Dickens"; or, using an analogy from American film, Narayan eventually performs Narayan in the way that Humphrey Bogart came to play Bogart, or James Stewart came to understand what it meant to play Jimmy Stewart. The ways in which Narayan first settles on these rhetorical elements in his early career and then begins to inflate them in the later novels suggests a level of self-consciousness and playful performance by the time he delivers *Talkative Man* (1986) that aspires to what might rightly be considered a metatextual reflexiveness. The metatextual is where Narayan ends his long career in both *Talkative Man* and *The World of Nagaraj*, while *Talkative Man* might more precisely be considered as meta-authorial and *Nagaraj* more purely metatextual.[2] Precisely because of his self-performance, *Talkative Man* suitably and ironically becomes one of Narayan's most intellectually intriguing novels.

Narayan's ability to distance himself from his narratives has long been remarked as central to his distinctive narrative approach. In some cases, this authorial distancing has moved some of his readers to censure. For example, Kirpal Singh has remarked that Narayan's work "charms, often it lulls, but it does not satisfy" (80) primarily because it centers on what Singh calls the "trap" of a distanced, satiric treatment of the average and the ordinary. Despite its technical excellence, Singh argues, Narayan's work lacks the depth and commitment of either Raja Rao or Mulk Raj Anand. He concludes his discussion by noting that:

> we know that Narayan came to writing novels from the world of journalism. It may be that his main limitation is finally the limitation of the journalist. For all his imagination, for all his craftsmanship, the journalist is primarily and ultimately a voyeur, a professional onlooker, never a participant. (86)

It can be countered, however, that Narayan cannot be judged as having come up short in areas where he has not intended

to excel; since neither depth or length nor socio-political commitment have ever been serious targets for him, he cannot be criticized for having missed them. Narayan has long combined traditions or methods such as journalistic observation (as Singh notes), oral folk tradition, and the short story writer's knack for compression. His ability to offer comic narratives that betray melancholic undercurrents is a Narayan standard.[3] Narayan's ability to distance himself from his narratives, to efface himself effectively behind the events of his constructions, has proved to be not only one of his stylistic characteristics, but also one of his notable strengths as an author, rather than a liability.

Narayan's authorial distancing in *Talkative Man* is achieved or enhanced not only by the approach to character and situation as suggested by Singh—that is, by speaking as a disinterested onlooker—but also via a multi-layered removal of self from the narrative, first by adopting the pose or persona of the "author of Malgudi," and then by providing a first-person narration from the viewpoint of Talkative Man who retells for us a story he claims to have told in the manner he has told it to one of his more devoted listeners, a man named Varma who frequents the Boardless Café. As Talkative Man admits, audience response is what matters most to him, and he is a compulsive story-teller: "I cannot contain myself [and] I only try to interest my listener or listeners" (1). In the same way that Narayan "plays up" several features of his repertoire for which he comes to be best known, it seems quite plausible that, all too well aware of the critical claims made about his habit of narrative distancing, the author delivers narrative distancing such as his readers had not seen with him before as they arrive at *Talkative Man*.

One of the elements that has typified the Narayan novel over the years, at least after *The English Teacher*, is the surprisingly sudden or abbreviated conclusion. Narayan has proven a deft creator of complication and a skillful craftsman when it comes to heightening suspense in anticipation of a

climax whose possible resolutions will prove inevitably interesting to his audience. He has occasionally disappointed in his willingness and ability to work through the anticipated climaxes and to pursue the implications of resolution in ways that would reflect the substance of character more deeply and that would leave his readers (Kirpal Singh is not alone in this) more intellectually nourished, and more fully satisfied. This would be expected of the "longer novel," but it is not to be found in Narayan. His light touch, his shorthand method, and his alliance with the folk/oral tradition are well understood and widely appreciated.[4] Nevertheless, wry elusiveness when it comes to concluding his novels may sometimes smack of escapism, particularly in the bulk of the novels from *The Guide* (1958) on through to *The World of Nagaraj* (1990). However, the author's trademark playfulness and general enjoyment of humor also seem to be at work in the various aborted narratives. He simply seems to delight in heightening reader expectation, then in either denying the expectation or simply tapering off in order to leave the reader speculating about possible outcomes, as in *The Guide*, or being left with a lingering sense of anticipation, as in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* or *Talkative Man*.

Perhaps the ambiguous or open-ended conclusion of *The Guide* appealed to Narayan sufficiently that he made a conscious or semi-conscious decision to include it in his repertoire thereafter, but never again was he able to "tease" his reader quite so well with a clear lack of resolution: does it rain, or not? does Raju finally approach the status of holy man, or remain an impostor? In *The Man-eater of Malgudi* (1961), Narayan builds dramatic tension as the monstrous Vasu prepares for his attack on Kumar, the temple elephant; Nataraj, though far more timid and much less physically powerful than Vasu, becomes steadfastly determined to stop him. Enough has already been written to establish clearly the connection of *The Man-Eater* to the mythic *rakshasa* tradition, and of course the conclusion of the novel is consistent

with that tradition. But the reader, particularly the western reader not familiar with the mythic material, surely experiences a sense of anticlimax or befuddlement as, just at the moment of confrontation to which the narrative has been leading us, no confrontation occurs. Instead, Vasu has inadvertently killed himself, having swatted a mosquito on his forehead.

Following publication of *The Guide* and *The Man-Eater,* probably the author's best-loved works, Narayan returns to the precipitous denouement as surely as he revisits the Boardless Café or The Truth Printing Works. In *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967), Jagan retreats from the affairs of the world and from the deterioration of his relationship with his son. In *The Painter of Signs* (1976), the implausible marriage of Daisy to Raman is suddenly and quite inexplicably broken off, and the narrative ends almost immediately thereafter. On the very day before she is to move in with Raman, the "event" toward which the narrative moves, Daisy completely reverses herself. After the stage is set for their "true moment of consummation," as the couple embraces, we come to a break in the page. Then, a mere half-page later, Daisy is described as behaving next afternoon as a "business-like automaton" (175) while she curtly insists on her need to take her family planning crusade to the masses in the countryside. "'What about me?' [Raman] asks pathetically. . . . 'Well, it doesn't seem possible now,'" Daisy responds, and as Raman stares in disbelief, groping for a strategy somehow to keep her, she brushes past him and out the door.

In *A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983), Master's companionship with and guidance of the tiger Raja ends abruptly when Master's wife suddenly and surprisingly appears in order to haul him back home.[5] In something of a turn on his own device, though, Narayan has Master rebuff his wife, and she returns home from the jungle empty-handed. When Master pretends not to know her, asking why she insists on calling him "husband," she responds,

> Husband, husband, husband, I'll repeat it a thousand times and won't be stopped. . . . Others may take you for a hermit, but I know you intimately. I have borne your vagaries patiently for a lifetime: . . . my perpetual anxiety to see you satisfied, and my total surrender to you night or day when passion seized you and you displayed the indifference of a savage, never caring for my health or inclination . . . . keep your beard and loincloth, only let me have my husband at home. (170-71)

Despite her impassioned appeal, she fails and Master remains with his tiger Raja in the forest for a few more pages, at least, until another figure, a stranger, appears as suddenly as does his wife and takes Raja off to a zoo with Master's permission. No forewarning of either of these incidents, a swift denouement—so swift, in fact, that David Atkinson, in one of the rare comments on the sudden and anti-climactic conclusions to the later novels of Narayan, remarks that "the closure of the novel [*A Tiger for Malgudi*] might seem weak and contrived" (12).

It seems unlikely, perhaps because we would simply not want to believe it, that Narayan became less and less capable, after about 1960, of creating satisfying conclusions. It seems more likely that the truncated narrative became one of his hallmarks, part of his signature, an expression of the "author of Malgudi" persona. This is particularly suggested by the consummate realization of this motif, and a clear expression of the author's self-consciousness regarding it, in *Talkative Man.* Not only a compression of style, but a general brevity of narrative is typical of Narayan. None of the novels is so short nor ends quite so abruptly as *Talkative Man.* The author addresses this directly in his Postscript to the novel:

> I had planned *Talkative Man* as a full-length novel, and grandly titled it, "Novel No.14." While it progressed satisfactorily enough, it would not grow beyond 116 typewritten sheets, where it just came to a halt, like a motorcar run out of petrol. Talkative Man, the narrator, had

> nothing more to say. He seemed to feel, What more do you expect? (120)

The novel is brief, but the nature of its conclusion is more telling. Echoing the conclusion of *A Tiger for Malgudi,* Dr. Rann's wife, or one of his seemingly numerous wives, arrives suddenly and unexpectedly from Delhi, deus ex machina-like, stuffs him into a car, and drives him straight out of the narrative, averting the ominous pending conflict/climax in a way that is hauntingly reminiscent of *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, but without any clear mythic parallel. One cannot avoid the sense, especially when tracing the development of his increasingly (and increasingly odd or absurd) abrupt conclusions, that Narayan—playful, tongue-in-cheek, clever, evasive as always—has arrived at a *performance of Narayan* in *Talkative Man* that exemplifies his self-consciousness, and that points to and then inflates those features as crescendo which serve as the joists of the Malgudi narrative.

The method of narrative closure is but one such element. The narrative shift from an approximation of the actual to the strange or the absurd is another. Narayan introduces this element into his general authorial method as early as *Mr. Sampath* (1949), with the slapstick description of Ravi's love-crazed destruction of the film set as he swoops in to carry off his prize, the beautiful Shanti. Narayan develops this tendency to indulge in inflated situational caricature in subsequent novels and it, too, becomes a feature of his signature. In *The Financial Expert* (1952), for example, we follow Margayya's struggles with poverty and with his son, viewing with wry amusement his desperate efforts to discover feasible means of making money and viewing with dismay his ineptitude as a parent. The narrative proceeds on a reasonably realistic plane until later in the novel when Margayya begins to earn immense amounts of money, and Narayan describes him as hauling in money by the sackful until entire rooms in his home are filling with it, and Margayya's wife must begin cleaning out and vacating

spaces and relocating to other areas in the house so that the space can be filled with even more cash. Simultaneously, Margayya fails physically, withers, begins wheezing, and takes on fiendish physical and behavioral traits. This narrative transition into the surreal and then back to the more readily recognizable stands out in *The Financial Expert*, as it had in *Mr. Sampath*, and becomes stock in trade for Narayan. The intriguing oscillation between fairly straightforward realism and either slapstick or the surreal seems tied to Narayan's perception of his role as story teller, as entertainer, and is in keeping with the folk traditions that remain central to his foundation as an artist. The extent to which the departures into the farcical become more pronounced in the latter portion of his career becomes one aspect of what it comes to mean to "perform Narayan."

The feature becomes standardized with Narayan's characterization of Vasu in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*. He doesn't delay in delivering the implausible for so long in *The Man-Eater* as he typically does in other novels, nor is the implausible so isolated or short-lived as it might be elsewhere. The blustery, ogre-like Vasu drags the hides of his newly-killed beasts up the stairs of Nataraj's print shop into the space he has usurped as his flat, and floats the carcasses in stinking vats in preparation for stuffing. The contrast between the foul giant, hands dripping with blood, and the gentle and accommodating Nataraj is sufficiently absurd and grotesque, but Narayan heightens the surreal contrast by having Nataraj also engaged in entertaining prostitutes in his den of carnage and carnal desire. As readers we accept Narayan's foray into the overtly mythic in his presentation of the demon Vasu, but we cannot help but recognize his further commitment to a mode of narration that walks a fine line between the actual and the farcical, and which willingly surrenders at times to the latter.

In "R.K. Narayan: The Malgudisation of Reality," Sudesh Mishra responds to V.S. Naipaul's characterization

of Narayan in *India: A Wounded Civilization* as an "intensely Hindu" writer whose work is marked by a fundamental acceptance of things as they are, a position from which Naipaul feels very much alienated. Mishra argues that Naipaul misreads Narayan whose "stories are about caricatural Malgudians in an imaginary Malgudi." "They do not, as such," adds Mishra, "even pretend to narrativise the shifting colliding landscapes of reality" (87). Mishra apparently intends to apply this narrative characterization to the entire corpus of Narayan's work. It is difficult to accept this reading of Narayan, particularly in connection with such novels as *The Dark Room* (1938) and *The English Teacher* (1945). Mishra indicates that "the world [Narayan] creates is a fantastic enclave inhabited by characters who reflect a caricatural reality that can never, no matter how fertile the human imagination, be taken as an approximation to phenomenal reality" (87). Again, while his emphasis on the "caricatural reality" is consistent with a central feature of Narayan's art, Mishra's use of the emphatic "never, no matter how fertile the human imagination" leaves one immediately skeptical and simply does not wash when one might try to apply it to not only the bulk of Narayan's work but also to the whole of many individual novels. Instead, Mishra hits directly on a key device in Narayan, a method he develops in moving the actual into and out of focus, often without warning and without clear situational motive. Malgudi places us in a world that often fuses the verisimilar and the caricatural, and occasionally it does indeed lead us to an encounter with "the actual," while it also occasionally transports us into the realm of the farcical. The caricatural and the farcical become much more representative of Narayan's style beginning with his fifth novel.

Again, it is in *Talkative Man* that this folk characteristic-cum-tradition reaches its zenith. As Narayan develops the character of the duplicitous impostor, Dr. Rann, it is never clear whether his "great work," his potentially Nobel Prize winning research that is recorded in his forthcoming magnum opus, is in itself a farce, a grand performance, or is in fact his obsession; the notes that Talkative Man discovers in Rann's diary would suggest the former. When Talkative Man encourages Rann to lecture publicly on his select field of "Futurology," we are again transported into that special realm of the Narayan absurd. Rann passionately threatens his audience with the apparently certain triumph of The Cannibal Weed, speaking with "the theatricality of a Seventh Day Adventist"[6]:

> I have in my collection a specimen—a wire-like root three hundred feet long when it is pulled out. Under a microscope at the root-terminal were seen sacs to suck up water. Ultimately no water will be left underground, in rivers or in the sea, when billions of such sacs are drawing up water and evaporating them at the surface. (105)

Rann's address becomes increasingly feverish as he delivers his prophecy of global collapse by A.D. 3000:

> The rats will destroy our food stock and the weed will devour everything, including the rats, and grow to gigantic heights although rising in our present observation only at the rate of a tenth of a millimetre per decade, but it will ultimately rise to gigantic heights sticking out of our planet skyward, so that an observer from another planet will notice giant weeds covering the surface of the planet like bristles. (107)

Women faint, the crowd becomes angry, chairs are smashed, and absolute bedlam breaks out. This is precisely the kind of narrative escalation that Narayan employs in the novels from *Sampath* onward, but nowhere does it arrive at quite the level of lunacy that we find in *Talkative Man.*

By the time Narayan published *The Painter of Signs* (1976), the entrenchment of particular features in his narrative repertoire led some critics, such as Carlo Coppola, to remark on the author's stock devices:

> Those familiar with his fiction know in advance some of the elements which will constitute the story: The novel will be set in Malgudi; the hero will be ambitious and made to cope

> with conservative societal elements which keep him from realizing his desires; an older female relative—a mother or aunt—will represent the "traditional" point of view and thus attempt to restrain the hero; the love interest is provided by a young lady whom the hero fancies but eventually loses; and throughout there will be the gentle Narayan humor derived from irony, which springs from the character's self-deception, foibles, and misunderstanding. (333)

Coppola's review of *Painter of Signs* conveys a ho-hum reaction to what was then Narayan's most recent work, and perhaps this attitude was prevalent enough to help to explain why the author, despite his rather long and firmly established international reputation, encountered at least some initial difficulty in securing a publisher for the novel.[7] Nevertheless, the return to certain features, devices, or themes need not be any more trite than the recurrent return to a particular setting, fictional or not. This is true of Narayan, but the return to a small set of particular narrative elements is as deliberate as the return to Malgudi, and the two ultimately become inseparable.

To complete the list of the narrative elements to which Narayan returns with increasing fidelity in the later years, with the strongest commitment and most evident self-consciousness in *Talkative Man,* one could turn first to the device of the intractable guest, a device that also narrows somewhat a larger recurrent Narayan narrative device, the arrival of the disruptive stranger. The intractable stranger appears perhaps first in *The Guide* (Raju, who remains at the temple because food comes freely to him), and sees the motif elevated in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* (Vasu), and then elevated still further in *Talkative Man*: Rann becomes the immovable object first in the Malgudi Station waiting room, then in TM's own home. At first the station master appeals to TM:

> Impossible situation. This is the third week, your friend must go.
>
> He can't make the waiting room his father-in-law's house . . .

> Rules don't permit more than eight hours' stay between trains.
>
> . . . I'll lose my job at this rate! (17)

Later TM finds himself in the same position after taking Rann in:

> I resented his attitude: in my own house he was a visitor to whom I'd offered asylum for no clear reason. It had just been an impulse, nothing more, and to rescue him from bed-bugs flourishing in the railway station waiting room. Yet he behaved as if I were a hotel steward violating the privacy of a guest. (42)

Shortly after Rann finally vacates the railway station waiting room, his wife, hunting him down, occupies that same space, thus revitalizing the same motif once again. This, too, as indicated earlier, is another of the repeated features of the later works: the deserted wife who returns to capture her fugitive mate—we encounter it in *A Tiger for Malgudi,* then in *Talkative Man*, then again in *The Grandmother's Tale* (1994).

The central point here is not simply to establish a catalogue of narrative features that become repetitious elements of the writer's craft in his waning years. Instead, as the title of P.S. Ramana's book *Message in Design: A Study of R.K. Narayan's Fiction* suggests, there is indeed a "message in design." One may certainly arrive at rather different conclusions from those arrived at by Ramana; however, as he reiterates the more stock assertions about Narayan's work and its relationship to his presumed worldview. After surveying what he sees to be the central most significant patterns of narrative repetition in Narayan, such as a character's resignation to tradition, or a character's attraction to, followed by a rejection of, an outsider with questionable values, for example, he concludes that

> Narayan's narratives preach a definite worldview though they appear to offer nothing more than entertainment. In presenting a casual and surface view of things and in avoiding any direct reference to religion, culture, philosophy or politics, the narratives imply a general satisfaction with

> things. But it is the design of his novels and short-stories, i.e. the organization of events, characters and narration, that reveals the implicit ideological message in Narayan's fiction. (167)

One must ask, however, whether absence of explicit depiction of poverty, violence, misery, or corruption necessarily signifies contentment, or even resignation. Perhaps, but not certainly. Surely, this is a Naipaul-inspired or at least a Naipaul-parallel argument, and Sudesh Mishra answers to this rather effectively, although he overstates the case about Narayan's "caricatural reality." Nonetheless, as one searches for the "essential Narayan" within such a temporally broad spectrum of fiction, one is led—and Ramana is correct in this—inevitably to encounter the author's recurrent attraction to a small set of particular patterns. We have simply settled on different patterns or devices as being central, given our differing emphases and purposes. The narrative devices highlighted here—the abbreviated or truncated conclusion, the inflation of at least one scene to the level of the absurd or surreal, the arrival of the intractable stranger,[8] and the return of the deserted wife—become features of the Narayan landscape; they remain central to the world of Malgudi as the River Sarayu itself, and are an identifiable a stroke in his signature as do such phrases as "There appeared no escape. What else could I do?" or "Not in his nature, I suppose." These devices, the message in these designs, may not be so much about a worldview as they are simply a record of the artist's own self-awareness and his willingness to then play "the part nature assigned" him and to make that very *role* the subject of his art near the end of his long career. As we follow the sequence of novels from *Sampath* onward, it becomes apparent that as Narayan finds the style, the persona, that identifies the "Master of Malgudi," he displays his self-awareness as an artist and moves in *Talkative Man* to a performance of this author that more than typifies, and it becomes a celebration of voice. In this sense, the mild

humor and muted irony that typically lie behind the Narayan tale reach their apex in the author's own performance of Narayan, the author of Malgudi. Given the evolution of his narrative emphases and his distanced and ironic stance, *Talkative Man* seems a novel that *had* to be written. What else could he do? Just his nature, I suppose.

Notes

1. Following publication of *The Dark Room*, Narayan had written to Graham Greene that he was planning a much longer work next, set in an ancient time, and that he was becoming a bit weary of writing about middle-class life (letter dated April 3, probably 1939, held in the G. Greene collection, Burns Library, Boston College).

2. For more on *The World of Nagaraj*, see Rajini Srikanth's essay "*The World of Nagaraj*: Narayan's Metanovel" 197-204.

3. See, for example, Richard Cronin, "Quiet, Quiet India: The Despair of R.K. Narayan" 52-59.

4. For just a few examples, see Silvia Albertazzi, "The Story-Teller and the Talkative Man: Some Conventions of Oral Narrative in R.K. Narayan's Short Stories" 59-64; S.C. Harrex, "Mode: Comedy; Type: Rakshasa, Author: R.K. Narayan" 134-43; and Yasmine Gooneratne, "Traditional Elements in the Fiction of Kamala Markandaya, R.K. Narayan and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala" 121-34.

5. In an interesting parallel to *Talkative Man*, Master's wife not only materializes to recapture her wayward husband, she insists, as does Rann's wife in *TM*, on the husband's present manifestation as a sham and characterizes him as a disguised fugitive, which forces upon the reader an interesting reconsideration of the narrative in *A Tiger for Malgudi*.

6. The slapstick farce that surrounds Rann's supposed scholarship and his subsequent public lecture most likely follow from Narayan's own well-documented academic frustrations and his cynical view of formal education, particularly the esoteric obsessions of specialists. In a brief, undated personal essay held in the Narayan collection, Boston University, for example, Narayan writes that he may rightly be labeled "anti-educational," both because he regards the aims of education to be

often misguided and because so much of the educational pursuit ends in jargon-saturated theory.

7. Graham Greene registers his disbelief and aggravation over this situation in a letter to V.S. Naipaul, dated May 17, 1976 (letter held in the Graham Greene collection, Burns Library, Boston College).

8. Narayan returns one last time to the theme of the unwanted, or at least intrusive and disruptive, guest in *The World of Nagaraj* (Nagaraj's nephew Tim and his wife).

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