Chapter 5

CONCLUSION: FARRELL AND INDIA

Imagination, taking up the thread of thought, shot its swift shuttle back across the ages, weaving a picture on their blackness so real and vivid in its detail that I could almost for a moment think that I had triumphed over Time, and that my vision had pierced the mystery of Time.

Rider Haggard, She

The present chapter attempts to explore the full implication of Farrell's sustained engagement with India and to show how Farrell fictionalises the British-India encounter from a fundamentally post-modernist perspective, thereby claiming an important niche in the Anglo-Indian canon of imperial literature. Most critics have played down Farrell's significant contribution to the post-imperial fictional discourse on British-India. Dinshaw M. Burjorjee is the only critic who has made at least a token attempt to include Farrell in the Anglo-Indian tradition through his essay The Indian Mutiny in Anglo-Indian Fiction Written after the Second World War, Burjorjee's main focus is not on Farrell's fiction; he goes on to make an assessment of eight post-Independence Mutiny novels and concludes that “the best Mutiny novel to date is J.G. Farrell's The Siege of Krishnapur” (1982:42). Apart from the reference in the title of the essay, Burjorjee does nothing to prove that Farrell should be placed alongside the
great masters of Anglo-Indian fiction. Frances. B. Singh's article on The Siege of Krishnapur focuses on Farrell's use of the concept of progress and history and makes no case for a place for him in the Anglo-Indian canon. Years after these two essays, in his full-length study of Farrell, the only one of its kind, Ronald Binns emphatically stated the view that Farrell "lies outside the broad tradition of British fiction about India" and his broad tradition included writers like Forster and Paul Scott. It is true that Farrell is not an Anglo-Indian novelist in the manner of Forster or Paul Scott; nevertheless, he is an Anglo-Indian novelist in his own distinctive way. The present chapter departs from Binns's position and attempts to place Farrell in an Indian perspective.

Farrell towers above the rest of his ilk by employing innovative fictional techniques in his presentation of colonial India. The fact that Farrell’s fictionalisation of British India is unique in several ways underscores the need for, and justifies the relevance of, a study of Farrell's Indian connection. India has captured Farrell's imagination in a way that no other colony of the empire ever managed to do. Farrell's first historical novel Troubles is set in Ireland and his third novel is set in Singapore while the backdrops for his Booker-prize-winning The Siege of Krishnapur and the unfinished The Hill Station are provided by India. The very fact that Farrell intended to write a sequel of sorts to The Siege of Krishnapur is a clear indication of his overriding interest in the subcontinent. In addition to The Siege of Krishnapur and The Hill Station, Farrell has written a record of his impressions of India titled The Indian Diary. The Indian Diary was written when Farrell was travelling in India in 1971 as part of his background research for The Siege of Krishnapur The Indian Diary, a remarkable account of Farrell's immediate reactions to India, conveys a strong sense of the country. And surprisingly, writers on Farrell have virtually ignored The Hill Station and The Indian Diary. Therefore, the present chapter gives a fairly detailed analysis of all the three works—The Siege of Krishnapur, The Hill Station and The Indian Diary in order to put Farrell's career in perspective and link it to the Anglo-Indian fictional tradition.
The Siege of Krishnapur assumes a place of no mean distinction in Anglo-Indian literature. Within just twenty years of its publication, The Siege of Krishnapur has been widely acknowledged as the best novel on the Indian Mutiny. The magnitude of Farrell's achievement becomes obvious when one considers the fact that more than fifty novels had already been written on the subject. This stupendous fictional output on the Indian Mutiny has been studied by British and Indian writers alike.

The only full-length study of Mutiny fiction, Novels on the Indian Mutiny by Shailendra Dhari Singh was published in the same year as Farrell’s The Siege of Krishnapur and includes analyses of a few post-Independence Mutiny novels like John Masters's Nightrunners of Bengal (1951), M. M. Kaye's Shadow of the Moon (1957) and Richard Collier's The Sound of Fury (1964). In addition to The Siege of Krishnapur, six more Mutiny novels were published in the 70s, but as years went by, these novels, written as they are by "a succession of inferior writers" passed into oblivion.

Ever since the Mutiny began to set literary imagination on fire, the question of historical objectivity was much debated. While the novelists loyal to the empire fictionalised the Mutiny as a life-and-death struggle between British civilisation and Indian barbarism, the Indians primarily looked upon it as a rebellion against the white colonisers (Tracy 1907:75). While M M Kaye and John Masters perpetuate many of the myths which have surrounded the British portrayal of the Mutiny, Manohar Malgonkar in The Devil's Wind sets out to tell the story of the Mutiny from an Indian point of view. All this points to Farrell's unique achievement in objectively fictionalising the Mutiny. R J Crane remarks:

Nightrunners of Bengal was enthusiastically described by one reviewer as "the best historical novel about the Indian Mutiny." This was arguably true at the time of writing; however, [Bhupal] Singh was moved to write, "it must be said the best novel on the Indian Mutiny is yet to come." I would argue that
with the publication of J. G. Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapur* that novel has finally been written" (1991:14).

In his attempt to pinpoint the uniqueness of Fanell's *The Siege of Krishnapur* in comparison with earlier masters of Mutiny fiction, the author of the above passage implicitly states that Farrell deserves a pride of place in the canon of Anglo-Indian fiction.

Perhaps, Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapur* is the only historiographic metafiction among the Anglo-Indian fictional output on the Mutiny. With the postmodernist re-discovery of the use of history in fiction in the 1960s and 70s, giving birth in the process to what has now come to be called 'historiographic metafiction,' the writers of historical fiction began to employ stunningly original techniques in their novels. While all the Mutiny novelists of the 60s and 70s stuck to the conventional mimetic mode, Farrell's fictional representation of the Mutiny is postmodernist in the sense that his language/technique is fundamentally metaphorical and subversive.

Farrell's technique in *The Siege of Krishnapur* is subversion. Using subversive techniques of fictional recreation of the Mutiny, Farrell succeeds not only in subverting the hallowed concepts of British race superiority and the Empire's vaunted invincibility but also in throwing fresh light on the horizon of newer possibilities of fictionalising the Mutiny. When one considers this disruptive component of Farrell's fictional technique, most of the charges levelled against *The Siege of Krishnapur* fall wide of the mark, as those charges are made on the simplistic assumption of Farrell's fictional mimeticism. Roger Sale's complaint that Farrell does not take much interest in his characters (1974:18) and Byron Farwell's charge that 'women do not change at all' (1974:19) are quite untenable from the postmodernist viewpoint. As Hutcheon argues, characters, including protagonists of postmodern historical fiction are "the marginalized, the peripheral figures of fictional history" (Hutcheon 1988:14) whose lives are not worth anyone's special interest and who do not undergo any major transformation daring their
life. As for Binns's lament over the historical absences in The Siege of Krishnapur, the postmodern concept of historical fiction refutes the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction. It refutes the view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity (Hutcheon 1988:93).

In an interview with Malcolm Dean, Farrell said that the Mutiny was 'a traumatic event ... destroying the myth of the grateful and obedient natives being led onwards and upwards by the paternal white ruler' (1973:43). The Siege of Krishnapur captures the real trauma of the British when the natives, offended beyond endurance, suddenly started behaving like 'paternal rulers,' leading 'the whites onwards and upwards.' By imaginatively reconstructing the turbulent days of the Mutiny, Farrell attempts to show that the period of the Siege of Lucknow was a time when the British population was forced to live (for the first time in imperial history) just like the teeming millions of Indians who have been living for decades under foreign rule. Thus, Farrell's novel gives, in metaphorical terms, a subversive account of the Mutiny. Viewed from this perspective, the Residency under a siege of sepoys becomes a metaphor for India which has long been under British siege. The Siege of Krishnapur offers illuminating glimpses into the hearts of the British at their most unassuming and least romantic. Deromanticising the 1850s in The Siege of Krishnapur, Farrell shows that the superior race of Britons, shorn of all pretensions and pushed to the extremities of a life of the most penurious of Indians, are at heart far more ill-equipped and incapacitated than the natives to face the harsh realities of life. Once this argument that The Siege of Krishnapur is implicitly a fictional treatise on how the British would conduct themselves if they find themselves unexpectedly colonised by the colonised is accepted and amply illustrated through a critical reading of the text, Crane's charge that Farrell's lack of knowledge of Indians is reflected in the novel (1992:26) begs no answer.
The Residency which houses a group of frightened Englishmen and women who, as the siege progresses, make no bones about stooping to the lowest depths of human indignity in their brazen struggle for existence becomes a microcosm of the British India where millions and millions of frightened Indians appear to the British eyes to be barbaric and inhuman in their efforts to remain alive. Fear is certainly one of the dominant emotions in the occupants of the Residency just as it has always been in the minds of Indians under British rule:

...The dominant impulse in India under British rule was that of fear, pervasive, oppressing, strangling fear; fear of the army, the police,... The fear of the official class, fear of laws meant to suppress, and of prison... fear of unemployment and starvation (1956:75).

And the beleaguered community at the Residency pins its hopes on the possibility of a relief force which will make them fearless. Brought up on the myth of an 'original purity,' the siege uncovers the ingrained impurities and baser instincts of the occupants and the entire community teeters on the brink of collapse as they are forced to taste the bitter fruits of defeat, dishonour, and poverty for the first time during the siege. This unique angle of historical vision gives Farrell's treatment of the mutiny a universality of appeal which all other Mutiny novels are found lacking in and links Farrell firmly to the tradition of Anglo Indian fiction.

In what follows, an attempt is made to interpret The Siege of Krishnapur on the line of arguments proposed in the preceding pages. The Siege of Krishnapur, divided into four parts, pictures the progress of the white community from a state of dreadful complacency, resulting from political and individual security, through periods of acute stress and strain, brought on by the unexpected insubordination of a conquered race, to a state of utter helplessness, poverty and constant fear of imminent extinction. With meticulous attention to detail, Farrell has successfully shown that the real significance of the Sepoy Mutiny lies in the fact that it gave the haughty British colonisers a taste of what it is to be colonised and subjected to abject states of misery and indignity.
The first part of the novel focuses on the luxurious lifestyle of the English expatriate community. Farrell comically portrays the English making conscious effort to be unlike Indians in their everyday life. The Collector, like the others, finds it hard to believe that one was in India at all (p. 17). But, ironically as the siege begins and progresses, they are pushed into situations in which they become like the most desperate and helpless of Indians. The Collector, with his faith in the 'superior culture' of his own country, fails to forge any meaningful ties with India. Harry Dunstable's knowledge of the Indian language is 'limited to a few simple commands, domestic and military' (p.43), the Magistrate is too 'rational for Indians and cannot see things from their [Indians'] point of view' (p.98). The English ladies have only a hearty contempt for the natives. And most characters in The Siege of Krishnapur, including the Maharaja's son, Hari, have been brought up on the express instruction that anything Indian is despicable and therefore should be shunned like the plague. In the first five chapters, the Englishmen and women live as though they were in England, throwing lavish parties, going out for picnics and arranging balls in the typical English style. Farrell throws in sharp focus the gluttony of the well-fed colonists which indirectly leads to their adaptational breakdown under 'the apocalyptic stress of the siege.' During sumptuous dinners and parties, they glut themselves with ham oysters, pickles, cheese, tongues, chickens, fried fish, curried fowl, roast kid, creamy mango fowl, chocolate and other delicious items of food. The full stomachs of the British are sharply contrasted with 'those hundred and fifty millions of people living in cruel poverty in India' (p.223). But, as the siege begins, the white community is forced to forgo one luxury after another. As most punkahs become defunct, the ladies 'fight polite but ruthless battles' for a place under the working Punkahs. As flies and mosquitoes begin to torment them, they long for a fall in the temperature to stay away from the unbearable heat. The pitiable state of these women, herded together in extreme contiguity and robbed of the luxury of servants, looks quite similar to that of poor Indians. These white ladies were 'having to look after themselves for the first time in their lives. They had to fetch their own water ... They had to light fires for themselves ... and to boil their own kettles for tea ... delicate creatures accustomed to punkahs and
...khus-tattles, now exposed all day long to the hot wind...No wonder they were in such a poor frame of mind" (p. 172; Italics mine).

Even the fair Louise begins to look 'like some consumptive Irish girl.' During his rounds at the Residency, the Collector is deeply disturbed by a distressing scene in which women weep due to the discovery of lice in their hair: "Yet, the sobbing of the unfortunate women who had found lice in their hair had been easier to endure than the malicious pleasure of those who had found none. Why, in such wretched circumstances, faced by such great dangers, did they still prosecute these feuds?" (p.261). The Collector lectures them on the need to help each other through difficult times and live as a community but his efforts to keep them in harmony suffer a serious setback in a scene which becomes an ironic comment on the proverbial public-school morality of the British: "A row has developed because Miss Lucy had felt justified in keeping her maid occupied exclusively with her own comfort, while the other ladies believed that the girl’s services should be shared" (p.173).

With their consumptive appearance and lice-infested heads, the colonisers are forced to live the life of Indian untouchables. Farrell pokes fun at the Englishman's class-consciousness which throws into ironic contrast the British condemnation of untouchability among Indians. The ladies in the billiard room had divided themselves into groups according to the ranks of husbands or fathers: "Mrs/Rogers who was the wife of a judge, found herself unable to join any of the groups because of her elevated rank, and so she was in danger of starving to death immediately, for to make things worse, rations were issued collectively a fact which had undoubtedly hastened this social stratification" (p.173).

Deprived of the English style cuisine they are accustomed to, the English at the Residency begin to eat the common food of the poor Indian, "dal and chapati" (p.219) of the type which ironically had earlier filled the Collector with adumbrations of an
impending epidemic. As days go on, the demand for food begins to exceed the supply but even in such adversities, some of them try to take shameless advantage of the situation. The Magistrate holds an auction of the private stores which had accumulated due to the deaths of people during the siege. But at the end of the auction, it is found that almost all the food items are bought by Mr. Rayne who employed a number of servants to bid for his sake. When he was asked why he bought such large quantity of food, he says that he intends to sell them again to the famished occupants of the Residency at an exorbitant rate of profit because, as he puts it, “...It's a question of fortune....one has to make the best of a situation” (p.287). This, by implication, is Farrell's ironic comment on the Empire's ruthless instinct for economic exploitation. Witnessing such instances of barbaric selfishness, the Magistrate loses his 'interest in humanity' and concludes that 'the poor [are] just as stupid as the rich' (p.285).

As the pressures of the siege continue unabated, Farrell describes the rattled English citizens in Indian terms. As poverty strikes, the dhobis hike their prices and even the Collector begins to wash his own clothes 'like a low-caste dhobi' (p.260). When the shortage of food becomes very acute, the white community 'spent more time watching the native princes eating their banquets than they did watching the enemy lines' (p.305-6). As their life is reduced to that of the poorest Indians, "the wealthier natives brought picnic hampers in the European manner and their servants would unroll splendid carpets on the greensward" (p.305)—an event which is an ironic counterpoint to the white community's lavish picnic in the Botanical Gardens described in the first part of the novel. In their search for food, the British resort to desperate and barbaric remedies. An old horse was captured, and put to death and the meat was distributed as rations: “Any piece of rotten meat that would still be found in the enclave was slipped over an improvised fish hook, attached to a rope and hurled over the parapet in the vain hope of...catching a jackal or a pariah dog that might swallow it” (p.306).
Gradually, they are reduced to the point of being savages, eating anything that came their way. The Collector spots a black beetle on the stairs, catches it between his fingers and pops it into his mouth and crunches it *with as much pleasure as if it had been a chocolate truffle* (p.314). Finally, the Collector rallies the defenders *like a muezzin* [p.315] and when the relieving troops arrive, the General is disturbed to find them *looking like 'poor devils:'* "he had never seen Englishmen get themselves into such a state before; they looked more *like untouchables* (p.340; Italics mine).

Thus, Farrell, by presenting the Mutiny as a reversal of British fortunes, subverts the concepts of British courage and *sangfroid* and explodes the myth of the perfect coloniser. In other words, Farrell has demythologised the 1850s. He has successfully-recreated the feelings of that time while stripping it of romanticism and adding truths not found in the literature of the day. In a perfectly unique manner, Farrell has debunked the myths of the Raj.

The Siege of Krishnapur evokes India through a cluster of powerful images and symbols. One such image is that of the tennis court: "[P]icture a map of India as big as a tennis court with two or three hedgehogs crawling over it" (p. 102). This typically Farrelllesque image of India as a tennis court beautifully conjures up a picture of the way the British saw or treated India in the 1850s. By a metaphorical extension of this image, it could also be argued that Farrell is suggesting that the British are as out of place in India as hedgehogs are on a tennis court.

The image of 'the vast and empty plain' recurs throughout the novel. As Ronald Binns has pointed out, "FarreU's *India,* like Conrad's *Africa,* is portrayed as a vast, incomprehensible land that makes the pretensions of the white man seem puny and absurd" (1986:68). The indifference of the vast *expanses* of India to the affairs of the British is suggested in many parts of the novel. The Collector delivers a declamatory speech on progress and *civilisation,* but his *‘shouts rang emptily over the vast Indian plain which stretched for hundreds of miles in every direction’* (p.81) when the occupants
of the Residency contemplate flight from the enclave, “the vast plains of Indian sap their confidence and courage. Even if they succeed in breaking through the sepoy lines, where would they go? where did safety lie on that vast hostile plain?” (p.248). Later when the Reverend Hampton sermonises in high-pitched tones about 'the mysteries of the Indian plains* (p. 147). This indifference of the Indian subcontinent is reflected in the Indian character, the prime minister to the Maharaja, who even after a month in British captivity remains, to the Collector's surprise, totally unaffected by and indifferent to the stresses of the siege: "the siege simply had made no impression on him whatsoever" (p.232) while, Farrell ironically remarks, "the siege can be very dull to a man of culture" (p.203). Looking at the Prime Minister, the Collector "realised that there was a whole new way of life of the people in India which he would never get to know and which was totally indifferent to him and his concerns" (p.232). And finally it is the vast plains of India that enlighten the Collector about the siege, India and life itself. "Crossing for the last time that stretch of dusty plain which lay between Krishnapur and the railhead, the Collector experienced more strongly than ever before the vastness of India; he realised then....what a small affair the siege of Krishnapur had been, how unimportant, how devoid of significance' (p.343). The ‘terrible days of the siege’ which were 'the dark foundations of [his] civilised life' (p.343) in Krishnapur give him a poignant awareness of the reality of India, its people and its life. The naked ugliness of the poverty which struck the 'superior culture' during the siege awakens him to the tragic significance of the starving millions of India. He resigns from Fine Arts communities and progressive societies, disposes of his art collections, feels a "cautious contempt for the greedy merchants of England for whom the Exhibition had been an apotheosis" (p.332) and believes that "culture is a sham” (p.345). He takes to "pacing the streets of London, very often in the poorer areas, in all weathers, alone, seldom speaking to anyone but staring, staring as if he had never seen a poor person in his life before" (p.344). By portraying this complete transformation of the protagonist under the effect of the siege and the utter changelessness of the Indians in the novel, Farrell persuades us that while the Mutiny exposed the spiritual and physical chinks in the British armour, for the Indians it was just another painful episode in a dull
routine of painful life, thereby stressing the permanence of India in contrast with the transience of imperial glory.

Farrell uses another Indian image to portray the inscrutable permanence of India. The very description of the village in the opening pages of the novel connotes the ominous potentials of a country whose various aspects remain shrouded in mystery,...

"the village crouches in a grove of bamboo and possesses a frightful pond with a water buffalo or two; more often there is just a well to be worked from dawn till dusk by the same two men and two bullocks every single day in their lives" (pp.9-10; Italics mine).

After the siege which effects significant changes in the British characters as well the political life of imperial Britain [the Queen Victoria was declared the Empress of India in 1857), the Collector is struck by the permanence of India which is symbolised in the two men and two bullocks." When he thought of India in later years he would always see these two men and two bullocks" (p.343) Again, soon after his last meeting with Fleury, "he was thinking again of those two men and two bullocks, drawing water from the well everybody of their lives. Perhaps, by the very end of his life, in 1880, he had come to believe that a people, a nation does not create itself according to its own best ideas but is shaped by other forces, of which it has little knowledge" (p.345). These closing lines of the novel, juxtaposed as they are with an inscrutable component of Indian life read like a profound commentary on the imperial folly.

Farrell makes marvellous use of the billiard room as a powerful symbol of the serene British India before the siege and its turbulence during the siege. As a symbol of the luxurious component of British life in India, Farrell's billiard room evokes the English countryside with its greenery, peace and tranquillity. Its "ceiling very high for the sake of coolness, bore elaborate plaster mouldings of foliage in the English fashion" (p. 170). In the days before the siege, the billiardroom was "like some gentle rustic scene..., the green meadows of the tables, the brown leather of the chairs, and the gentlemen peacefully browsing amongst them. Then there had been no other sound but the
occasional click of billiard balls or the scrape of someone chalking his cue. Above the
green pastures the bellowing blue clouds of cigar smoke had drifted gently by beneath the
ceiling like the sky of a summer’s day" (p. 170). But, as several rooms of the Residency
fall into disuse due to the sepoy offensive, the billiard room becomes filled with the
ladies living in close proximity. Gradually the billiard room gets transformed into an
Indian bazaar and the Collector ‘dreaded to enter there’ (p. 170). The room which used to
tranquillise the British senses begins to have an oppressive effect on them. Farrell’s
description of the Collector moving through the billiard room during his rounds evokes
the picture of a British citizen moving through one of the bustling bazaars of India: “alas,
the ears were rolled by high-pitched voices raised in dispute or emphasis; the competition
here was extreme for anyone with anything to say: it included a number of crying
children, illicit parrots, and mynah birds” (p. 170). Thus, Farrell uses the billiard room as
a strong symbol of the strife-torn British India of 1857.

The English characters in the siege never try to understand the Indians probably
because Farrell wants to stress the fact that the mutiny itself was the tragic result of
British indifference to the Indian way of life which led to a profound misunderstanding
between the two people, but Farrell’s knowledge of the country and its people and the
British perception of both are clearly reflected in the siege. To Fleury, India is ‘a mixture
of the exotic and the intensely boring’ and yet ‘irresistible’ (p.31). As Farrell describes
the Indian towns, he captures every single detail of Indian life with great perspicacity. He
talks about the bunniahs and the inevitable bystanders one finds everywhere in India,
idly looking on, wherever there is anything of interest of happening (and even where
there is nothing) because they are too poor to have anything better to do, and the least
sign of activity or purpose, even symbolic (a railway station without trains, for example)
exerts a magnetic influence over them which nothing in their own devastated lives can
counter” (pp. 130-131). When the Collector describes the character of the rich natives to
Fleury, Farrell puts into his mouth some highly realistic observations about the affluent
Indians the 1850s who wasted their lives in delicious indolence. They “were brought up
in an effeminate, luxurious manner. Their health was ruined by eating sickly sweet meats and indulging in other weakening behaviour. Instead of learning to ride and take up manly sports they idled away their time girlishly flying kites. Everything was for show with your rich native ...he would travel with splendid retinue while at home he lived in a pigsty" (p.77).

In the light of the forgoing discussion of The Siege of Krishnapur, it can be argued that Farrell deserves a place of no mean distinction in the Anglo-Indian canon of Mutiny fiction. Farrell's novel is both a reading of all the textual histories of the Indian Mutiny and an invention, an extension and a supplement to it. Farrell is undoubtedly the only postmodernist Mutiny novelist in Anglo-Indian literature. By successfully breaking away from the shackles of the romantic adventure tradition of Mutiny fiction, Farrell has been able to demonstrate that the popular picture of the Mutiny was a distorted one.

The Hill Station opens in a typically postmodernist fashion by making a direct comparison between the past and the present: "Nowadays the railway goes all the way upto Simla, but before the turn of the century it stopped at Kalka." Farrell sets the 1870s—the period when the Empire was in a perfect state of health and security—and fictionalises the manner in which the raging doctrinal debates of the Church of England jolt the foundations of social life in distant Simla. In a time of political well-being, the two sides of a doctrinal controversy which broke out in England are almost violently debated by a tubercular clergyman named, Kingston and his Bishop in Simla. At the very outset of the novel, Dr. McNab gets a foretaste of things to come when he, on his way to Simla with his wife and Emily [his niece], finds Kingston reading Keble's Christian Year. Mr. Lowrie, the owner of Lowrie's Hotels in Simla and Kalka, gives McNab the details of the doctrinal battle: "... there have been certain difficulties at Saint Saviour's in the past few weeks. The parishioners have been upset by certain rituals of what one would have to call ... a Puseyite cast, quite unknown to our Protestant traditions. Kingston is thought to be ... going 'over the Tiber'... Do I make myself clear?" (HS,
Thus, for Farrell, the so-called "Period of the Great Game" was not totally from anxieties about the disruptions of civil peace. Had Farrell lived to complete this novel, perhaps he would have delineated, more effectively than he does in the completed volumes in the Empire fiction, the manner in which 'the broad living basis of historical events' makes even minor characters "experience the smallest oscillations in this basis as immediate disturbances of their individual lives" (Lukacs 1962:45).

Farrell introduces a "fallen woman" in both the India-centred novels [Miss Lucy in The Siege of Krishnapur and Mrs Forrester in The Hill Station] not only to stress the real character of the Victorian milieu but also to show how the British social structure bore a close resemblance to the Hindu caste system. In Victorian society, the two groups of women—the pure and the fallen—was almost an absolute category. As George Watt has pointed out, "the fallen woman had no power to assert herself; she had few rights, if any" (1984:4). The manner in which the ‘fallen’ Lucy is treated at the Residency by her own compatriots is exactly similar to the way an Indian untouchable is treated by the Brahmins.

Lucy Hughes provided a problem which the Collector was unable to solve. She was ostracised even by the members of the lowest group, in fact, by everyone except Louise. The charpoy in which she had spread her bedding had been pushed to the very end of the room, beneath the over blast of the open window. It was the only bed that had any space around it, for even Louise's bed, which was next to hers, stood at a small, but eloquent distance (p. 173).

Farrell appears to be suggesting that the inherent hypocrisy of the British assumes respectable forms in times of normalcy and peace while the Mutiny revealed it in all its naked ugliness.

In The Hill Station, Dr. McNab is surprised when Mrs Forrester invites Emily to go with her due to "the rigid caste system among the British in Simla which prevented
social contact between the official and non-official classes" (*HS*, p.36). And Farrell’s description of the manner in which Mrs Cloreworthy snubs the ‘fallen’ Mrs Forrester when the latter extends a courteous greeting is chillingly ironic:

The lady [Mrs Cloreworthy] turned her face resolutely and quite deliberately to look in another direction, where, as ill-luck would have it, one tattered mongrel had just mounted another and was pumping vigorously, unaware that ladies were in the vicinity (*HS*, p.84).

Perhaps, Farrell’s disease fetishism would have found its most fruitful expression in *The Hill Station*; but, unfortunately it is an unfinished novel. Binns points out that "[T]he real thrust of *The Hill Station* would seemingly have been less concerned with either religious ritual or social satire than with a development of Farrell’s interest in the theme of sickness" (1986:83). In this novel, we find Farrell grappling with a serious attempt at an explanation of the incontestable nexus between human disease and social developments. Throughout this novel, Dr. McNab explores the possibilities of this link:

McNab had come to sense that there was another dimension to sickness than the one he had considered until now in his writings on specific diseases: this was a moral or a social dimension, he was uncertain even how to define it. If you had insisted that he explain to you what he meant and show you his evidence he would have had to admit that all it amounted to, this 'moral dimension', was a conviction based not on objective evidence of the kind he had hitherto always cherished, nor on experiments which could be repeated, not even on experiments of any kind, repeatable or not, but simply on an instinct that all things were one, that everything was connected, that an illness was merely one of many fruits of an underground plant in the community as a whole. The illnesses propped up, here and there like mushrooms, apparently individual growths but all in fact the fruit of the same plant (*SH*, p.66)
Again, a little later on, he feels convinced "that just below the surface of what was evident in sickness there lay this moral or social or even spiritual aspect to it which if he could grasp it, would permit him to understand medicine in a more fundamental way" (p.62). And when the consumptive but very austere Bishop Kingston gains a facile victory over the Reverend Grenville [who is "a good deal heavier and thirty years younger"] in arm-wrestling, Dr. McNab feels certain that it proves his theory "that physical strength is in some way connected with moral strength" and that "illness was all one, its apparent variety being merely the fruits of his 'underground' plant" (p.69). Thus, in The Hill Station, Farrell almost succeeds in locating the essential link between physical illness and external reality.

*The Indian Diary* was written during Farrell's tour of India in connection with his researches for The Siege of Krishnapur in 1971 and it contains a series of candid reflections on various aspects of Indian life and of Indian cities, towns and villages. Landing in Bombay, Farrell gets a breath of that "smoky, rubbishy smell" which seemed to be all over Bombay city (*ID*, p. 187) and notes that "the main feeling I had after my first twenty-four hours in India is one of great security due, I think, to the lack of aggressiveness in the people" (Ibid).

*The Indian Diary* is characterised by Farrell's meticulous attention to the minutest of details which is a significant feature of his Empire fiction. Just as The Siege of *Krishnapur* powerfully evokes the India of 1850s, *The Indian Diary* presents a mirror-image of the India of 1970s where "one sees horrors frequently, in the course of a few minutes—an Anglo-Saxon hippie in a dhoti, arms covered in scabs, stoned out of his mind and really in extremis" (p. 188) and "naked children and babies squatting in the dust" while in "the Tea Lounge of the Taj Mahal a group of young Indians [were] talking very loud and possessively about Europe" (Ibid). Farrell is also struck by the beauty of Indian girls in saris: "how wonderfully feminine they look" in comparison with "the
occasionally frost-bitten begum in Knightsbridge or a too pale English girl (Ibid). Thus, India in _The Indian Diary_ is a country where apparent irreconcilables peacefully coexist.

Farrell’s perception of the ubiquity of heat and dust in India is brilliantly assimilated into the craft of his fiction in the form of recurrent images of heat and dust in _The Siege of Krishnapur_ and _The Hill Station_. On the train journey to Jaipur, Farrell says that he had ‘eaten a bucket of dust’ (p. 190). Though the Jaipur bazaar is "not so depressing as in Bombay, there too, plenty of destitutes are huddled in dusty encampments and wasteground" (pp. 190-1).

Critics of Farrell have commented on the affinity between the style of the diary and Empire novels. Spurring writes: "...in the diary one can see ... [Farrell’s] sympathies and antipathies, self-doubts, hesitations and moments of atavistic impatience ... so sensitively and humorously explored in fictional characters like the Major in Troubles, Fleury in _The Siege of Krishnapur_ and Matthew in _The Singapore Grip_" (1981a:ix). Binns also speaks about the "striking parallels between Farrell’s fiction and [this] diary, with its comic anecdotes of undignified personal discomfort, its eye for the grotesque and bizarre, and its sense of the diarist's perplexity, frustration and compassion as he moves through a strange, alien and sometimes horrifying land" (1981:30). Farrell gives a graphic description of a Parsi burial:

A cloud of birds circles over the Towers of Silence where the Parsis expose their dead to be eaten by vultures. The ... bigger vultures can be seen heaving themselves in and out of trees which hide the racks on which the bodies are stretched. In the park it is very pleasant The Indian families stroll in the evening sunshine. In England or America a huge crowd would have formed and someone would be selling tickets (p. 189).
And later when Farrell meets a fat Parsi girl, he finds it *strange* to think that she is likely to end as a meal for the vultures in the Towers of Silence* (p. 191). Similar evidences of structural organisation in *The Indian Diary* links it to the fictionalisations of India in *The Siege of Krishnapur* and *The Hill Station*. Farrell also touches on those aspects of India that make her *exotic in Indian terms* (p. 194); he describes his *encounter* with a sinister fortune-teller (p. 192) with a touch of playful irony: "He [the fortune-teller] said as a trailer of the coming feature that three ladies were interested in me, one foreign ... When I finally escaped his clutches, he was quite angry and spat ... but perhaps for purely bronchial reasons" (Ibid). Despite the apparent misery of their life, Farrell thinks that "people here don't actually look unhappy. People in England, including Indians, look much more desperate" (p. 193).

Thus, *The Indian Diary*, though it runs only to thirty pages, recaptures an authentic smell of the India of the 1970s. Travelling through the cities of Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Patna, Banaras, Hardwar etc., Farrell sketches an India where roads and streets are constantly crammed (p. 188), where people organise themselves even in misery (Ibid), where people spit betel juice all over the pavements of cities (p. 189), where swarms of bicycle tongas try to persuade people to ride (p. 192), where tourists are tolerated in the same way as dogs and cows (p. 193), where crowds of maimed or half-blind children peddle their deformities (Ibid), where *Germans* come and go in great busloads' (Ibid), where one has to live with 'the appalling recklessness of the driving' (p. 196), where unscrupulous Europeans use their *European-ness* to scrounge money* from foreigners (p. 197), where superior officers reprimand their subordinates in abusive terms (p. 198), where angry verbal battles on political issues are fought without malice (p.202), where buses go unexpectedly on strike (p.203) and, in short, an India where 'anything is possible' (p.214). *The Indian Diary*, thus, becomes a journey through the heart of India, traversing its edges and centres with equal comprehension and *alacrity*. 
To conclude, Farrell is a great novelist of Empire who has been consistently ignored by critics after his death. His fictional recreations of the decline of imperial power are distinguished by a unique style which is markedly different from the earlier masters of imperial fiction. While the *rhetoric of power* latent in novelists like Kipling, Conrad, Orwell, Forster and Paul Scott was profoundly capable of dismantling the apparent anti-imperialist 'structure of feeling' in their works, Farrell has been able to resist and go beyond the pressures of this rhetoric of power. Farrell’s distinctively eclectic fictive imagination fruitfully exploits the realist and anti-realist notions of fictional theory and successfully transcends the limitations of die-hard traditionalism and narrow experimentalism, birthing in the process novelistic masterpieces which are characterised by a judicious blend of realism and symbolism and of history and historical imagination. Farrell’s masterful use of the rhetoric of disease to critique the imperial rhetoric of power is undoubtedly unprecedented in the entire body of the literature of imperialism. No other novelist of Empire before Farrell has attempted, in a fundamentally postmodernist fashion, to make the subject of imperialism available for parodic treatment. Each volume in the Empire fiction is unique in its own way—*Troubles* is the only experimental novel on the Irish troubles, *The Siege of Krishnapur* is the only postmodernist novel on the Indian Mutiny, *The Singapore Grip* is the most ever comprehensive fictional critique of economic imperialism to date and *The Hill Station* represents the first attempt at writing a non-adventure novel set in the period of the Great Game.

While Farrell successfully goes beyond the Kiplingesque rhetoric of power, it is important to note that his critique of imperialism never degenerates into what Edward Said calls a “rhetoric of blame” (1993:19). In other words, Farrell's novels do not represent direct tirades against the British Empire; they are artistically perfect laughing reflections on the folly, cruelty and indignity of the imperial encounter. Despite his strong antipathy to the imperial enterprise, Farrell’s treatment of the disintegrating Empire is full of compassion and sympathy. As Victoria Glendinning has aptly put it:
His [Farrell's] dislike for the tyranny and distortions of colonialism is always apparent, as is his respect for the most hopeless individual ... he has sympathy for those caught up in good faith in a decaying system of Empire—such as the Major in Troubles. Maybe it was this compassionate ambivalence that made him such a good writer (1981:18).

Living in an age where post-colonial rule puts even the colonial exploiter to shame, Farrell's diagnosis of the imperial malaise does not end on a clear note of rosy optimism. At the end of the most ambitious novel in the Empire fiction The Singapore Grip, Farrell discusses a piece of news about underpaying millions of plantation workers even years after the end of British imperialism and significantly, voices his dark misgivings about the independent nations: "... if even after independence in these Third World countries, it is still like that, then something has gone wrong, that some other, perhaps native elite has merely replaced the British" (SG,p.567) and immediately, Farrell recalls a remark "about King William and the boatman who asked who had won the battle ['What's it to you? You will still be a boatman.']" (p.568). Though Farrell felt that it was still too early to see the fruits of freedom from imperial domination, his Empire fiction clearly expresses the hope that the end of British Empire would be ultimately beneficial to humanity at large because, as the dying novelist, Reagan says in A Man From Elsewhere, "the relationship between master and servant is a crime against the liberty and dignity of man" (p.55).

Viewed from a contemporary global perspective, though a span of fifteen to twenty years has passed since its writing, Farrell's Empire fiction still holds a significant relevance to the realities of the present. Despite the high-sounding rhetoric of international peace, the fact that the unprecedented proliferation of conventional and nuclear arms continues to hold the world in a constant threat of war for economic and political power and the consistently unashamed use of the rhetoric of power by neo-colonialist countries like America has become more alarmingly widespread than ever serves to make Farrell's
critique of the rhetoric of power exceedingly pertinent today. As Said puts it in the context of his analysis of Conrad’s Nostromo:

Much of the rhetoric of the ‘New World Order’ promulgated by the American government since the end of the Cold War—with its redolent self-congratulation, its unconcealed triumphalism, its grave proclamations of responsibility—might have been scripted by Conrad’s Holroyd: we are number one, we are bound to lead, we stand for freedom and order and so on. No American has been immune from this structure of feeling ... Yet it is a rhetoric whose most damning characteristic is that it has been used before, not just once [by Spain and Portugal] but with deafeningly repetitive frequency in the modern period, by the British, the French, the Belgians, the Japanese, the Russians, and now the Americans (1993:xviii-ix).

Viewed against the backdrop of this global scenario, exposure to and study of Farrell’s fictional discourse on imperialism would not only improve interaction between different cultures but also help to stem the tide of aggressive neo-colonialism. It is this profound concern with abiding issues of universal significance that gives Farrell’s Empire fiction its characteristic tone and appeal and perhaps, ensures that a future of peaceful co-existence based on timeless principles of human dignity and equality will ultimately come to pass.