Chapter 4

FARRELL, PARODY AND THE EXORCISM OF LAUGHTER

Perhaps the mission of those who love mankind is to make people laugh at the truth to make truths laugh the only truth lies in learning to free ourselves from insane passion for the truth.

Umberto Eco, The Name of the Rose

In Heaven there is no laughter; but there is no art in Heaven either

Gabriel Josipovici, The World and the Book

In Umberto Eco's The Name of the Rose, a blind man named Jorge commits seven horrible murders in seven days and burns down 'the largest library in Christendom' in order to prevent the Christian posterity from laughing, in order to destroy a book which could make truth a 'laughing matter.' Eco's brilliant novel which can be approached from a wide variety of angles seeks to highlight an essential fact about life and literature—first, that extreme seriousness is not the only way to
arrive at truth in life, that laughter can take us more *easily* to the path of truth and secondly, that parody is perhaps the most powerful and dominant mode of creative expression in contemporary fiction. Eco's profound insights about life and literature are of especial significance in the context of an analysis of the metafictional dimensions of Farrell’s fiction chiefly because parody is the central controlling technique that he uses with consummate skill in The Singapore Grip, arguably the most ambitious novel in the Empire fiction. And since The Singapore Grip is the most experimental of all his novels, the major focus of the following discussion would be this novel.

An important qualification needs to be pointed out before a discussion of the parodic strain in Farrell’s fiction is undertaken. Farrell’s novels are not extended parodies *a la* Cervante’s Don Quixote or Fowles’s The French Lieutenant’s Woman or Italo Calvino’s If on a Winter’s Night a Traveller. Farrell uses parody in his works not as a genre but as a technique. As Hutcheon puts it: “...it is obvious that parts of a work may be parodic without the entire text being so labelled” (1985:18). Parody in The Singapore Grip is a dominant fictional technique like metaphor in Troubles and The Siege of Krishnapur Or, to borrow Ruthrof’s words, parody in Farrell’s works are not “structure-carrying” but remain within the texts as “covert parodistic elements” (1981:140). This aspect of Farrell’s parody, far from imposing any strictures on his fiction, lends an added dimension to it in that this quality allows his novels to transcend the limitations which might apply to parody as a genre.

Perhaps, the foremost theorist of parody in fiction is Mikhail Bakhtin who has clearly elaborated in his writings that there has always been a tradition of writing which departs from the canonical forms—a hybrid literary form which is seen in the satyr plays of ancient Greece and carnival in the Middle Ages. Bakhtin defines parody as "an intentional dialogized hybrid. Within it, languages and styles actively illuminate one another” (1981:76). Bakhtin lays particular emphasis on the power of laughter to destroy hierarchical distance (Ibid:341). In other words, parody for Bakhtin is essentially subversive—it "is a writing which is always anti-authoritarian, satirizing and travestying the canonized genres and by implication the hierarchies of
power in society those canonized genres tended to reinforce” (In Haffenden 1985:166) and therefore, parody as the “laughing reflections of the direct word” (Bakhtin 1981:45) is immense in its scope and profound in its significance.³

Parody as a critical term is admittedly vague and it is often confused with pastiche which is a basically non-subversive mode of literary imitation.⁴ As Fredric Jameson puts it:

Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique style, the wearing of a stylistic mask, speech in a dead language: but it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without parody's ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse, without laughter, without that still latent feeling that there exists something normal compared to which that [sic] is being imitated is rather comic. Pastiche is blank parody, parody that has lost its sense of humour (1992:167).

Though Farrell makes use of both these ‘significant practices in postmodernism’ (Ibid), it is the parodic mode which Farrell is more at home with. The presence of parody in a literary text can have a wide variety of implications, ranging from the purely aesthetic to the overtly ideological. In the former sense, parody is almost synonymous with metafictionality or intertextuality whereas in the latter sense, it has what Lodge calls “a very valuable hygienic cultural function” (In Haffenden 1985:166). Farrell uses parody in his fiction with both these orientations. In her book, Parody/Metafiction, Margaret Rose is primarily concerned with parody in the former sense i.e., the self-reflexive aspect of parody and defines it as “a form of metafiction and a higher-order activity” which “raises our awareness of how we receive the literary texts and how the world is represented in them” (1979:90). As every parodic text implies a parodied text, the reader needs to be competent enough to notice the presence of a parent text to comprehend the full significance of the parody. To use Rose’s own terms, every parodic text incorporates within itself two ‘textworlds’ which she calls ‘TW1’ and ‘TW2’ and a failure on the part of the reader to enter into the complex web of dual or multiple textuality would lead to gross misreading.
Parody is, thus, essentially intertextual. Hutcheon coins the term “transcontextualization” to refer to the literary practice of inserting one text into another textual context and points out that parody works through “transcontextualization” (1985:7) and the reader’s capacity to understand the difference between the parodic foreground and the parodied background is of crucial significance. As “parody is, in its ironic “transcontextualization”, repetition with difference” (Ibid:30), the readers who fail to see both ‘repetition’ and ‘difference’ will tend to conclude that the work in question is either a lifeless imitation or a case of blatant plagiarism. Though Farrell’s novels in general and The Singapore Grip in particular presuppose a high level of literary awareness, it is the ideological function of parody that receives major focus in his works.

Both Rose and Hutcheon speak about the 'exorcising' function of parody. Through the parody of an earlier mode of discourse or style, the parodist seeks to go beyond its rigid confines. In German, ‘Zitieren’ which means ‘to quote’ also describes the evocation of ghosts. In other words, parody is a form of writing in which “the ghosts of the past are quoted in order to be overcome” (Rose 1979:63). In this sense, parody serves the writer "in the task of freeing himself from earlier models, giving his liberation concrete form in the parody text and in the liberating effect of laughter implied in it" (Ibid). Hutcheon echoes the same view when she says that “the ironic distance afforded by parody makes imitation a means of freedom [even] in the sense of exorcizing personal ghosts” (1985:35). These reflections on the uses of parody are of particular relevance in the context of a study of Farrell's parody. The liberating effect of laughter is central to Farrell's parodic technique and the process of exorcism takes on a distinctively different aspect in the Empire fiction. For Farrell, parody of a style is not limited to a personal exorcism of the evil spirits of literary influence but is extended to cover his passion for a freedom from the conventional ways of thinking about the colonial enterprise. Farrell's Empire fiction attempts to invoke, in a subversively parodic fashion, the ghosts of the imperial legacy in order that his readers may be liberated from the hackneyed rhetoric of power which was purposely perpetuated for the preservation of imperial hegemony. By incorporating within his texts the obsolete conventions of certain genres like the romantic adventure novel and
pulp fiction, Farrell persuades us that the imperialists were nurtured on illusions that retain no links whatsoever with the world of work-a-day experience. Parody involves "both a personal act of supersession and an inscription of titeTary-histoncal continuity" (Hutcheon 1985:35) and Farrell's Empire fiction not only 'inscribes' the continuity of the literary heritage of imperialism but also 'supersedes' the earlier fictional literature on the imperial theme. Farrell uses parody in his Empire fiction in order to 'quote' the ghosts of imperial literature so that they may be successfully 'overcome' through laughter. In other words, Farrell's parody seeks to 'exorcise' his readers of the ideological ghosts of Empire and of the vast body of pro-imperialist literature, effecting in the process a cultural exorcism through laughter.

Laughter is a fundamental element of Farrell's style. Perhaps, the only clear assertion in Fan-ell's criticism of laughter as an essential feature of Farrell's work was made by an anonymous reviewer of The Siege of Krishnapur who aptly pointed out that Farrell's "perception is distinguished above all by style—a style which ...delights in uncovering the opposite of what it purports to say and is sometimes so blunt as to stop the reader in his tracks. Happening by sheer felicity on a turn of speech, Mr. Farrell contents himself with an outrageous laugh or carries the phrase to an unexpected and totally original conclusion" (1973:1074). But this reviewer was referring basically to Farrell's parody of cliched phrases [which is discussed in a later part of this chapter]. Farrell juxtaposes the extremely serious with the perfectly ludicrous in such a way that his readers comprehend profound truths in the merry moments of laughter. Like Umberto Eco, Farrell seems to believe that "... the mission of those who love mankind is to make people laugh at the truth, to make truths laugh" the only truth lies in learning to free ourselves from insane passion for the truth" (1980:598) and also that significance and insignificance do not inhere in any situation—it is all a question of perspective. By alternating seriousness and levity in the Empire fiction, Farrell enables his readers to laugh their way to truths.

In Farrell, [intertextual] parody is basically of two kinds. Firstly, Farrell's novels make parodic references to various modes of literary discourse as part of a conscious accentuation of not only the obsolescence of literary styles but also of the
ideological formations those discursive modes imply. Secondly, Farrell interpolates newspaper cut-outs or journalistic intertexts into his novels so as to highlight the ironic difference between the facts of history and their fictionalisation in his novels. These two kinds of intertextual parody relate the historical or the real on the one hand and the literary or fictional, on the other.

Fan-ell's parody of the genre of romantic adventure fiction and imperial Gothic is steeped in ideological overtones. The principal difference between an actual adventure story and its parody is that the former allows the readers to be deeply involved and absorbed in the illusory world of the story while the latter forces us to analyse the differences between the two worlds—of fantasy and reality—with a mind to improving our own. The colonial romance as an expression of imperial chauvinism has always projected an image of the British as the most adventurous and courageous of the entire human race and has quite frequently glorified British military superiority. In other words, the scintillating stories of superhuman adventures in the mysterious and exotic spaces of the earth have always been a hallmark of the genre of adventure fiction. In the adventure fiction and imperial Gothic, “Africa, India and the other dark spaces of the earth become a terrain upon which the political unconscious of imperialism maps its own desires, its own fantastic longitudes and latitudes** (Brantlinger 1988:246). Farrell presents the fighting British heroes in an absurdly comic light and an air of parodic levity hangs about every scene of adventure in the Empire fiction. The “veteran assault force" in The Siege of Krishnapur is a glorious parody of not only the so-called “Black and Tans” of imperial force and the hare-brained strategies of war but also the genre of romantic adventure fiction. When the Collector finds that his defences against the Sepoys are weakening, he decides ‘to play his last card':

All this time he [the Collector] had been keeping a reserve force waiting in the library. This ‘veteran assault force" [as he called it] was composed of the only men left from the cantonment community who had not made use of the few elderly gentlemen who had managed to survive the rigours of the siege. Their joints were swollen with rheumatism, their eyes were dimmed
be taking part in the French wars, another that he was encamped before Sebastopol. But never mind, though their blue-veined old hands might be trembling their fingers could still pull a trigger. It was this force which the Collector now threw into the engagement, though he had to shout the order more than once as their leader, Judge Adams, was rather deaf. From the library they staggered forth with a querulous shout of ‘Yah, foney!.’ Shotguns and sporting rifles went off in their bands. The hall chandelier crashed to the ground and shots sprayed in every direction. For a moment, until the old men had been dragged back to the barricade, all was chaos. The veteran assault force had not been a success (SK, p.327).

The veteran assault force is a parody of the “Black and Tans” who were notorious for their brutality. Recruited from among English ex-servicemen and ex-officers, the "Black and Tans" were a special division of troops organised to quell the Irish insurrection by any means whatsoever. As Thomson puts it: “They ['Black and Tans'] were not expected to be gentle or just in their methods. They were meant to meet terror with counter-terror, and they did not fail in their duty” (1965:71). By presenting them as models of strategic disaster and physical infirmity, Farrell demystifies the concept of British military superiority.

In The Hill Station, Farrell parodies the genre of adventure fiction in a typically postmodernist fashion. Teddy Potter's narration of the dangers of the road to Simla reads like a brilliant parody of the adventure fiction:

Teddy Potter, meanwhile, was explaining to the ladies and especially to Emily that the road to Simla was positively infested with hostile tribesmen, with thugs and dacoits of every shape and description who were, moreover, particularly interested in making away with fair young English damsels...yes, it was jolly lucky that he and Woodleigh and Arkwright, under the ‘awe-inspiring command’ of the ‘universally dreaded’ Captain Hagan, should be on hand 'in the nick of time,' to prevent Miss Anderson being carried off to become the unwilling bride of a hook-nosed Pathan chieftain with a dagger in his belt. Why most likely the rascal
was already watching them from behind those very trees! (p.44).

Again, Farrell presents the love affair between Emily and Teddy Porter from an essentially parodic angle. Farrell self-consciously draws on the parodic potentials of the cliched rhetoric of romantic relationships. Emily's thoughts, after having been deeply angered by Teddy Porter's mingling with other women even before she professes her love for him, are presented as follows:

His only sin was that he had lingered chatting with other young women, unaware that Emily's imagination, galloping on as usual far ahead of the reality, had snatched him up on to her saddle and made off with him, hoofbeats drumming, as a prize of her very own. He could hardly be blamed for not behaving towards the new proprietor of his heart in a way that acknowledged the change of ownership when he had still to learn of it (p.135).

The rhetorical figures used in the passage serve to awaken the readers to the critical ironic distance which Farrell achieves through a conscious inversion of the generic conventions. Some early reviews of The Singapore Grip point to the fact that traditional expectations of the imperial romance did remain as a stumbling block to the proper understanding of Farrell's fiction. John McLlors described the novel as “an exciting adventure story, with powerful descriptions of air-raids, fires on the docks and fighting in the jungle” (1978:410). Farrell assaults the reader-expectations almost consistently in his Empire fiction. And one important feature of literary parody is its emphasis on the frustration of reader's hopes: “...parody functions as a means to evoking the reader's expectations for a certain text, genre, style or literary world before then destroying or disappointing these expectations step by step” (Rose 1979:114). By parodying the style of adventure fiction [of novelists like Kipling, R. L. Stevenson, Reider Haggard, John Masters and other masters of this genre] from which the conventional reader-expectations have originated, Farrell mocks the beliefs and
prejudices of the reading public who favour such unrealistic fictional isations of imperial history. As David Lodge puts it:

the idea that the novel draws on discourses which are not those of high literature ...provides a rather impressive theoretical case for the comic mode, which I think is not just entertaining but performs a very valuable hygienic cultural function: it makes sure that institutions are always subject to a kind of ridiculing criticism (In Haffenden 1985:166).

The dying-house scene in The Singapore Grip reads like a powerful parody of the literary features of a special genre of adventure fiction which flourished at the climax of Empire-the imperial Gothic. The dying-house which is filled with old men with a foot in their coffin [who are brought there to spare the family the bad luck that was supposed to accompany a death] is described in terms that are overtly mock-Gothic. The house which is scattered with 'skeletons and moribunds,' and 'shadowy cadavers' is reminiscent of the fantasy landscapes of imperial Gothic of novelists like Rider Haggard and R. L. Stevenson. Vera's and Matthew's descent from the bustling world of the fair ['The Great World'] into the subterranean dungeon of a dying-house with 'shelves of expiring people' recalls images from Haggard's novels in which heroes and heroines are temporarily entombed in tunnels, crypts and caves. When a 'quavering voice' piped at Matthew's elbow, Matthew 'start[s] violently and peer[s] into the gloom where another of the shadowy cadavers, hitherto lying supine on the lowest rack and displaying no signs of life, had now collected up two sets of bones and thrown them over the side of his tray; after dangling uncertainly for a while, they anchored themselves to the floor and proved to be legs; then with a further scraping of bones, their owner levered himself politely to his feet and stood swaying beside Matthew' (p.345). The description of the return of these 'moribunds' to their respective racks [quoted in toto in the second chapter in a different context ] is extremely suggestive in its wonderful mix of jest and earnest. The dying-house scene, on the whole, reads like a parody of the Place of Death in Rider Haggard's King Solomon's Mines (1951). When Brantlinger's observation
that 'Imperial Gothic expresses ...the larger gradual disintegration of British hegemony' and 'the narrowing vistas of the British Empire at the time of its greatest extent before its fall' is taken into account, it becomes evident that in scenes in which Farrell parodies the genre, he seeks to explore and expose the basic causes of the Empire's ultimate debacle.

In The Singapore Grip too, Farrell attempts an ironic inversion of certain stylistic conventions of pulp fiction. Vera Chiang's lustful reflections on the admirable attributes of Matthew's physical beauty is a parodic attack on such light literature of romance:

'How attractive he is!' Vera was thinking. 'How stooping and short-sighted! What deliciously round shoulders and unhealthy complexion!' She gazed at him in wonder, reflecting that there was no way in which he could be improved. Indeed, she could hardly keep her eyes off him. For the fact was that Vera had been brought up, as Chinese girls had been for centuries, to find stooping, bespectacled, scholarly-looking young men attractive (SG, p.340).

Again, the shockingly funny scene in which the uneducated Chinese girl, Vera Chiang gives 'a basic but hasty education' to Matthew Webb, a public school product, on how to make love, on the 'Five Male Overstrainings' and the 'Five Revealing Signs' which should be manifested by the partner represents a parody of all such scenes in the literature of romantic adventure. Vera's 'naming game'—she begins to give names like 'jade-flower stem,' 'head of turtle' etc., in a manner reminiscent of the 'missionary who had taught her English'—place similar scenes in pulp fiction in parodic contrast which serves to establish an ironic rupture with such light literature.

Thus, through a parody of the conventions of the novel of romantic adventure, Farrell satirises the mindset of those millions of readers who were nurtured on such low forms of literature. In other words, Farrell's parody seeks not only to explode the myth of the adventurous Briton but also to undermine the myth with contradictory
knowledge—that life in those turbulent days did not consist of "the signing of treaties and battle strategies" but "of catching colds, falling in love, or falling off bicycles" (Farrell in Vinson 1978:399). The ideological function of the adventure genre lay in its ability to feed on and, at the same time, bolster feelings of cultural superiority in the reading public. Thus, this parodic dimension shows how certain ideological preferences engender certain generic conventions and stylistic mannerisms and in so doing, unearths a cunningly contrived attack on the wonted culture of imperialists. If, as Martin Green pointed out, the romantic adventure form was "more influential than the serious novel" (1979:49), Farrell’s parody of the form implies that it had laid siege to the popular imagination during the imperial regime and that consequently, the popular view of history was a distorted one. In laying bare the devices of the adventure novel, Farrell seeks to lay bare the pretensions and ‘idealised’ values of imperial culture. Brantlinger says that "in the nineteenth century English novel, a season of imperial adventure in an exotic setting can cure almost any moral disease" (1988:12). Farrell, on the other hand, seeks to do something similar through a parody of such ‘imperial adventure[s] in an exotic setting.’ Differently put, by using the rhetoric of power with a view to highlighting its own pathetic inadequacy to represent colonial reality, Farrell goes beyond it.

The incorporation of newspaper snippets is of crucial significance in the context of an analysis of Farrell's intertextual techniques in that it is a powerful way of addressing the marked differences between the ‘official’ version of history and its possible variants. The journals and newspapers of the time serve to provide the readers with the 'official' versions of history while the world of Farrell's historical fiction not only seeks indirectly to question the authority of such 'official histories' but also unearths the 'unofficial' versions of history that have never been propounded. For instance, Farrell inserts a newspaper cut-out [entitled Amritsar] on the Hunter Commission report of the Amritsar massacre:

The findings of the Hunter Commission in regard to the disturbances in the Punjab in the spring of last year were issued last night as a Blue Book ... General Dyer's career as a soldier is over. All the members admit that firing was
necessary. Even the Indians recognise that the riots could not have been quelled by any other means .... No doubt, General Dyer acted rashly; but he probably had about two minutes in which to make up his mind. He was confronted with a fanatical Oriental mob, fired with anti-European frenzy. He knew that hundreds of white women and girls were dependant on him for their safety. Rightly or wrongly, he believed that the fate of India was at stake .... General Dyer was neither a politician nor a moralist. He was a soldier, and moreover, an Anglo-Indian. He thought of the memsahib who had been assaulted, and in India the memsahib is sacrosanct. The Hunter Report will have far-reaching consequences in India. We are not at all certain that they will lighten the task of the Indian Government...(T, p. 170).

This snippet from a newspaper of the time proves that the journalistic reports, far from giving an accurate rendering of events, vitiate history into partial and biased documents which offer a warped view of reality or in other words, mythologise history according to the ideological demands of the time. This snippet throws light on a variety of issues like Farrell’s distinctive angle of historical vision and an original technique of articulating it. The fact that the cut-out is inserted after a scene in which the Major and Edward discuss the future of ‘tattered’ Irish children ‘dragging aimlessly through’ Edward’s fields ‘in a doleful search for something edible: a little corn that had seeded itself from last year’s harvest or a stray potato plant’ (T, p. 170) is quite significant. When the Major tells Edward: "I sometimes wonder what would happen if one caught one of those little brats young enough, taught him how to behave, sent him to a decent public school ..,” Edward curtly replies: "You might just as well dress up a monkey in a suit of clothes"(Ibid). The fact that Edward, the fanatic loyalist of the Empire who would go to any extent to exterminate the Irish to retain the colony bears an exact resemblance to General Dyer accentuates Farrell’s technical originality. The ‘official’ history of the time offered by the cut-outs is counterpointed by an ‘unofficial’ version of the same history which Farrell offers in his fiction. Newspapers and novels are traditionally held to be two entirely different discursive practices, one a factual record and the other its imaginative and/or imperfect reconstruction. Hence, Farrell’s extrapolation of newspaper snippets, apart from foregrounding the textualisation of history, also represents an attempt to contest the boundaries that traditionally separate the two modes of discourse.
fictional. Moreover, such press accounts serve to throw what Farrell calls 'the bricks* of fact into focus, to give the readers the feeling that such periods of turbulence have actually come to pass, producing in the process a Brechtian effect of alienation which prevents the readers from plunging headlong into the hallucinatory world of fiction.

Farrell’s parody of historicism is equally imbued with ideological implications. This traditional mode of historical discourse implied an attempt to project a nation’s history as an expression of its evolving ‘spirit’ and to impose a false notion of immobile harmony and uniformity upon our conception of a historical period. By parodying this idealised mode of historical thought, Farrell persuades us that historicism cannot provide us with an absolute or objective interpretation of history and that the concept of a uniform and harmonious culture is a myth imposed by the colonial appropriators on the expropriated natives of the colonies. In The Singapore Grip, the scene in which the imperialist Walter finds himself ‘brooding on what makes up a moment of history’ is worth quoting in its entirety for the important reason that it throws sufficient light on Farrell’s use of rhetorical figures to powerful comic effect as well as on Farrell’s essentially absurdist vision of history:

... if you took a knife and chopped cleanly through a moment of history, what would it look like in cross-section? Would it be like chopping through a leg of lamb where you see the ends of muscles, nerves, sinews and bone of one piece matching a similar arrangement in the other? Walter thought it would, on the whole. A moment of history composed of countless millions of events of varying degrees of importance, some of them independent, others associated with each other. And since all these events would have both causes and consequences they would certainly match each other where they were divided, just like the leg of lamb. But did all these events collectively have a meaning?

Most people, Walter believed, would have said ‘No, they are merely random.’ Perhaps sometimes, in retrospect, we may stick a label on a whole stretch of events and call it, say, ‘The Age of Enlightenment’ the way we might call a long hank of muscle a fillet steak, but we are simply imposing a meaning on what was,
unlike the fillet steak whose cells are organised to some purpose, essentially random. Well, if that was what most people thought, Walter did not agree with them (5(7, pp.434-35).

Farrell’s perspective seems to be quite New Historicist in that every historicist interpretation involves ‘imposing a meaning on what was ... essentially random.’ Farrell continues:

Certainly, it was not easy to see a common principle in the great mass of events occurring at any moment far and near. But Walter believed that that was because you were too near to them. It was like being a single gymnast in a vast stadium with several thousand other gymnasts: your movements and theirs might seem quite baffling from where you stand whereas viewed from an aeroplane, collectively you are forming letters which spell out ‘God Save The King’ in a pattern of delightful colours (Ibid).

Apart from stressing the essential precondition of distance for the attainment of objectivity in historical analysis, Farrell awakens his readers to the mysterious process whereby the rhetoric of imperial power originates and gets disseminated. Farrell seems to imply that the Empire-builders who never succeeded in going ‘too near’ the subject races [in the sense of socially interacting with them] always had to base their administration on their own biased interpretation of the colonial situation. Consequently, for them, the colonised people, at a sharp remove from their own lives, ‘collectively’ formed letters which spell out ‘God Save the Queen.’ Farrell continues to denounce the notion of this ‘spirit of the times:’

Well, what was this organising principle? Walter was vague about that. He believed that each individual event in a historical moment was subtly modified by an intangible mechanism which he could only think of as ‘the spirit of the time.’ If a Japanese bomber had opened its bomb doors over Singapore in the year 1920 no bomb would have struck the city. Its bombs would have been lodged in the transparent roof that covered Singapore like a bubble, or bounced off it into the sea.
This transparent roof was 'the spirit of those times.' The spirit of these times, unfortunately allowed the bombs of an Asiatic nation to fall on a British city (Ibid).

Through a parody of the naive concept of a 'spirit of the times' and by showing how the process of historical interpretation itself can have a variety of interpretations, Farrell implies that traditional historicist interpretations cannot be a substitute for historical truth, that provided the limitations of historicism as a methodological tool are recognised, it can extend and refine our understanding of certain moments of history and, finally that the idea of a uniform and harmonious culture which existed in the heydays of Empire is nothing short of a myth imposed on history by the imperialists to further their own political interests.

One of the most interesting ways in which Farrell affirms his endorsement of the values of postmodernist fiction is his parodic use of extended metaphors and cliched rhetoric with tremendous comic effect. Farrell's parody of cliched metaphors and usages in the Empire fiction serves to unveil the unmistakable self-reflexiveness of his fictional consciousness. A careful reading of Empire fiction would bring to light how Farrell's acute dissatisfaction with cliches and hackneyed expressions leads him to parody them in his works. Farrell makes certain trite linguistic mannerisms available to parodic treatment in two ways—firstly, by introducing characters who can express their ideas and feelings only in a language composed primarily of worn-out idioms and usages and secondly, by using these very cliches to such an excess that they are burlesqued in the process. Malcolm Dean specifically refers to Farrell's Uncompromising contempt for cliches: "Any cliche which passed one's lips would be pounced on and one would be mercilessly mocked with it" (1981:181). In what is a clear case of blatant misreading, an early reviewer was mightily displeased with Farrell's love of cliched expressions. He wrote: "His [Farrell's] characters 'sink their teeth' into 'weighty problems,' accept things 'lock, stock and barrel' and come to clanging conclusions like: "The old order of things was as dead as a doornail". After an hour or two of this, who could be blamed for edging away ...?" (Porterfield 1979:72). The excessive use of such rhetorical commonplaces in Farrell's texts serve
not only to draw attention to their own modes of production and reception but also to the hollowness of their ideological baggage,

In The Singapore Grip, Walter, the imperialist, harangues Matthew on the greatness of the imperial enterprise in a language which mocks itself and its user:

Over this great area of the globe, covered in steaming swamp and mountain and horrid, horrid jungle, a few determined pioneers, armed only with a little capital and a great creative vision, set the mark of civilisation, bringing prosperity to themselves, certainly (though let's not forget that the crocodiles of bankruptcy and disgrace quietly slipped into the water at their passage, ready to seize the rash or unlucky and drag them down into their watery caverns), but above all, a means of livelihood to the unhappy millions of Asiatics who had been faced by misery and destitution until their coming! (SG, p. 156; Italics mine).

The idea of a 'a few determined pioneers, armed only with a little capital and a great creative vision' setting 'the mark of civilisation' over a 'great area of the globe, covered in steaming swamp and mountain and horrid, horrid jungle' depends for its effect on its parodic ability to recall the high-sounding rhetoric of power which had always been a formidable weapon in the dissemination of the mystique of imperialism. The 'crocodile image' almost verges on the preposterous and contributes to a deliberate effect of bathos which exposes the emptiness of the rhetoric itself. This description of the glory of the imperial mission is followed by an interesting reflection on the nature and usefulness of Walter's rhetoric which with 'some fanciful touches' here and there had grown more 'solemn and impressive': 'if they [fanciful touches] earn their keep, he [Walter] allowed them to stay; otherwise they were discarded' (p. 156). Walter uses a handful of trite metaphors in his reflections on 'the spirit of the times' [in the long passages quoted above in the context of Farrell's parodic attack on naive historicism]: 'a moment of history' is compared to 'a leg of lamb where you see the ends of muscles, nerves, sinews and bone of one piece matching a similar arrangement in the other,' and the obtrusive metaphor continues in the following paragraph too, being in a state of inability to comprehend 'the spirit of the times' is
compared to 'being a single gymnast in a vast stadium with several thousand other


gymnasts' and a little later, 'the spirit of the times' itself is compared to a 'transparent


roof.' By using such silly metaphors to express a profound philosophy of history,


Farrell succeeds in parodying the traditional notions of history as well as the cliched


manner of their articulation.


In another scene in the same novel, Farrell compares, in a bitingly satirical


vein, 'the Western manner' of love-making to 'a pair of drunken rikshaw coolies

colliding briefly at some foggy cross-roads at the dead of night' (p.293). Even in his


eyear fiction Farrell indulges in such metaphoric overkill. In A Girl in the Head,


Boris reflects on his past in terms of a cliched metaphor:


I don't pretend to have remained unaffected [sic] by all


the shattering events of my life. They have clearly left


their marks on me, like footprints in wet concrete. But


in the last few years the concrete has dried and


hardened. So now at last, though covered in footprints, I


am able to meditate impassively on my life (GH,p.23;


Italics mine).


The parodic impulse becomes overt in a scene where Smith, an army official takes


recourse to a trite metaphor 'to speak plainly': "It was as if, to speak plainly, on life's


ladder some unseen hand had all but sawn through a number of the more important


rungs" (SG, p.453). The merchant house of Blackett and Webb which epitomises the


imperial greed for gold is ironically compared to "an oasis of virtues in a desert of less


scrupulous businesses" (p.453). Smith describes Communism as 'seeds in a pod':


'The way I describe it, which many people have been kind enough to find


illuminating, is that they are like millions of seeds in a pod. If we allow that pod to


burst in India, say, or even in Australia, why, they will be scattered all over the


Empire in no time" (p.467). A general air of depression is described with use of such a


'fabulatory' metaphor: "an air of melancholy settled over the table like a gentle fall of


snow on an avenue of statues in the park, collecting in white drifts on heads and


shoulders and blurring individual features" (p. 134). Again, the life of the moribunds


in the dying-house gives Matthew the feeling that 'it would not take very much to
capsize the frail craft in which the old chap was trying to navigate the final stages of his life's voyage* (p.343).

Though similar instances of this type of imagery can easily be multiplied from the Empire fiction, the above citations must be sufficient to justify the rationale behind this enquiry—which is to reveal how Farrell employs metafictional techniques in his critique of imperialism. Thus, by deliberately taking rhetorical strategies to excess, Farrell parodies them in the process of using them and in so doing seeks not only to escape from their tyranny but also to go beyond them.

Another element of technical uniqueness in Farrell’s vehement critique of the economics of imperialism through laughter in The Singapore Grip is the presentation of very serious events and discussions from a highly comic perspective. Matthew, walking through the fair, ponders the weighty problem of the politics of imperial economics: "Was a colony like Malaya, as the Communists claimed, a mere sweatshop for cheap labour operated in the interests of capitalism by cynical Western governments? ...Or was Western capital, as Walter insisted, a fructifying influence bringing life and hope to millions by making hitherto unused land productive? Or was it both the things at the same time? [Had not Marx himself suggested something of the sort?]" (SG, p. 163). Immediately after this, Farrell introduces a scene in which a Chinese girl accosts Matthew and ‘on an impulse’ flicks open a button of her frock and slips his hand through the opening. And "one moment Matthew was standing there, immobilised by the question of colonial welfare and progress, with the damp palm of his hand neatly moulding a young woman’s naked breast" (p. 165; Italics mine). The whole scene which can also be interpreted as a parody of pulp fiction serves to highlight the irrelevance of armchair speculations in actual life. During a serious discussion with Matthew about the ‘colonial question,’ Walter’s son Monty invites him to spend a weekend with a prostitute (SG, p. 180). A little later, a similar discussion on the political unconscious of imperialism goes on against the sordid backdrop of a brothel (Ibid). Again, Matthew’s perceptive analysis of the failure of the League of Nations is ironically undercut by a dispute by a drunken Scandinavian over the doubtful virginity of a prostitute (pp. 194-5).
Farrell was profoundly aware of the infinite potentials of language, of the way in which language asserts and denies the possibility of precise reference—an aspect of his work which is significant in that it confirms his postmodernist identity as a self-conscious experimenter of form. Though Farrell does not declare like certain postmodernist novelists that "the treachery of words is notorious" (Vidal 1989:46), his novels can be cited as instances of the virtual celebration of such 'treacheries.' In his concise overview of Farrell's works, James Vinson writes: "In the best Anglo-Irish tradition, he [Farrell] is master of language, combining eloquence and humour, but keeping a firm control over "the beautiful tragic cadences" which so many have found seductive" (1976:427; Italics mine). As pointed out in the previous section of this chapter, Farrell does not attempt to apotheosise uncertainty in the manner of American deconstructionists or postmodern novelists like Thomas Pynchon and Richard Brautigan. Farrell’s aim is primarily to show that history is textualised and that this textuality can be quite destabilising. In his personal memoir, Malcolm Dean remarks that in his real life too, Farrell never allowed ‘solecisms, misnomers, and malapropisms, to pass uncriticised: "The misused words would be caught [by Farrell], repeated with mock brutality, and the offender asked if he really meant what he had said" (1981:181). And this anxiety regarding the instability of linguistic reference finds joyous expression in his Empire fiction. On the one hand, Farrell invites us to establish strong connections between his fiction and our facts and on the other, deeply disturbs our dogmatic faith in the reality of represented worlds. Farrell accomplishes this dual objective through a self-conscious play on the titles of his Empire novels which reminds one of the masters of contemporary postmodernist fiction.

The titles of Farrell's novels lend themselves to a multiplicity of interpretations. In Troubles and The Siege of Krishnapur, though the meanings are not fixed, they are fixable. The titles of these two novels have primarily two interpretative dimensions—the historical or the actual and the individual or the metaphysical, and the texts of the novels enact a vibrant oscillation between these two poles of possible reference. Both the titles—"troubles" and the "siege"—activate these dimensions so powerfully and consistently that these terms remain in a state of creative oscillation from one pole to the other. While an examination of the historical
dimension of the titular significance of these two Empire novels brings to light Farrell's ironic vision of the past, an enquiry into its metaphysical aspect reveals Farrell's concern with what life was like in those violent days of imperial expansion and finally, with man and his predicament. A close attention to this dual character of the titles illumines, in Lukscian terms, the ways in which Farrell portrays 'the broad living basis of historical events' in such a way that even minor characters 'experience the smallest oscillations in this basis as immediate disturbances of their individual lives' (p.45) while in Barthes's terms, it activates the 'hermeneutic code.' In The Singapore Grip wherein the 'hermeneutic code' is employed, the meaning of the title is neither fixed nor fixable; it remains in a state of becoming, of creative instability. An exploration into the hermeneutic code helps towards a resolution of the enigma of the title because the reader is led to ask, as Barthes puts it in his reading of Balzac's novella Sarrasine "What is Sarrasine? A noun? A name? A thing? A man? A woman?" (1970:19). When the reader hits upon this code in Farrell's novels and legitimises its signs, it also throws sufficient light on the metafictionality of Farrell's Empire fiction.

In Troubles, the word 'troubles,' ominously repeated a number of times in the text of the novel and in a variety of contexts, lends itself to a broad range of interpretations. Historically, 'troubles' refer not only to the Irish troubles but also to troubles on an international level. Troubles accepts a global perspective and shows the readers that the period of Irish troubles was actually a point of time in history when British colonies and other nations across the world seethed in troubles, external or internal or both. In Troubles, Farrell succeeds in presenting the Majestic as a microcosm of the troubled Ireland while Ireland is masterfully projected as a microcosm of the trouble-ridden world at large.

Metaphysically, 'trouble' constitutes an essential ingredient of the human situation in which man is fated to enact a continuous process of being caught in one trouble after another. In this sense, the title 'troubles' refers to the way in which Irish militant nationalism 'troubled* the 'living stream,' to use Yeats's well-worn phrase. Troubles in various parts of the world act as a background against which Farrell
foregrounds the troubles of Ireland. And from this grand perspective, Farrell narrows and intensifies his focus on the troubles experienced by real flesh-and-blood people, the novel's characters who are the 'ex-centric' figures of history. Once Farrell zeroes in on these living victims of 'troubles,' the word begins to acquire a variety of meanings which may be quite irrelevant, though not insignificant, to the Irish troubles. It becomes an accurate word for the problems which the protagonist Major Brendan Archer experiences when he comes to the Majestic to claim his fiancée, Angela. What follows the Major's arrival at the Majestic is a series of extremely disheartening events which Farrell describes as the Major's 'troubles.' For Edward Spencer, the 'trouble-shooter' of the Empire, his own children constitute the major troubles of his life while the three children consider their imperialist and imperious father 'a storehouse of troubles.' Most characters are troubled by variously diagnosed diseases. Though Sarah is constantly plagued by illnesses, she is the prime source of troubles for most characters in Troubles. Even as she is in love with the Major, she carries on secret liaisons with two older men, one of whom she finally manages to elope with. The Irish insurgents are troubles in the eyes of the occupants of the Majestic while these English people represent the cause of the turbulence in their own lives. The old imperial order and the Irish promise of a new one are, in a sense, troubles for 'the maintaining individuals' among both the colonisers and the colonised. Both these forces—the rebels who dream of founding a free Irish republic and the British who want to retain their sinews of power—are equally harmful from the standpoint of the common run of 'maintaining individuals.' In addition to these external troubles, there are internal troubles caused by religious prejudices. The rift between the Catholics and the Protestants deepens as Irish troubles continue to escalate. Sarah is a Protestant and therefore, not a 'member of the quality' and as a result, the ladies at the Majestic give her a wide berth. The Catholic boy Ripon [Edward's son] falls in love with the Protestant girl Marie Noonan and has finally to elope with her—an event which, even as the Irish troubles rage outside, unsettles life at the Majestic. Thus, it is troubles which threaten individual lives and imperial fortunes alike. In short, Farrell implies that living in the period of Irish troubles was like living in 'troubles,' with no hope of peace from any quarter—inter-personal, regional, national or international.
In its immediate historical context, the 'siege' of The Siege of Krishnapur refers to an event widely known as 'the Siege of Lucknow' in the first Struggle for Indian Independence during which a group of Englishmen and women were besieged by the rebellious sepoys. By inventing a fictitious place called 'Krishnapur' [meaning 'the place of Lord Krishna'], Farrell consciously activates other dimensions in the title. Farrell has clearly pointed to the metaphorical overtones of the 'siege' in The Siege of Krishnapur In an interview, he remarked that a siege “is a microcosm of real life and [the] human condition—with hostility all around you with the individual in a rather temporary shelter” (Dean 1973:31). Viewed from this perspective, the siege of the novel becomes a profound lesson in British psychology as the Britons fail to withstand the rigours of the siege with grace. The besieged English people are ‘sieged’ by various fears and prejudices—this aspect of the novel is elaborately discussed in the last chapter.

It is in The Singapore Grip that Farrell’s metafictional awareness of the instability of linguistic reference finds its most joyous expression in that he transcends the restrictive poles discussed above. The ‘grip’ of the title is so bandied about in the novel that the readers lose their 'grip' on the referential axis of the word. Farrell’s evocation of the illness-ridden life of the poor colonised in Singapore concludes with the grim observation that ‘it will take high explosive...to loosen the grip of tuberculosis and malaria on them’ (p.217). Singapore is described as an octopus holding other trading centres in ‘a friendly grip' (p.250). Walter wants to get Matthew in his daughter’s ‘grip’ (p.527). In its halcyon days, Blackett and Webb had a firm ‘grip on the destinies of individual companies’ (p.314) while, due to the Japanese war, the company begins ‘to lose its grip on the country and its own destiny' (p.528). Dupingy speaks about ‘the national vanity which at intervals gripped nations like France and Britain’ (p.320; Italics mine).

Another sustained use of the term ‘grip’ occurs in authorial comments on the unreality of the fictional world of the novel. The characters of The Singapore Grip lose their 'grip on reality very frequently. The world of the novel alternates between reality and dream so much so that the readers find themselves delicately poised on the
uncertain territory between logic and magic. Matthew loses 'his hold on the passage of time' (p.533) and is at a loss to decide whether he is dreaming or not (p.254). Walter feels that 'his grip on reality had loosened' (p.365). Sinclair is 'gripped by [a] sense of unreality' (p.365). The fictional world of The Singapore Grip is full of 'ghostly voices, speaking gibberish which, however, sometimes held a queer sort of significance' (p.503). At the end of the novel, General Percival feels that people, whether historical or living, 'had no real substance, that they were merely phantasms...incredibly life-like but no more reality than the flickering images one saw on a cinema screen' (p.553). Almost every significant event in the novel tends to loosen the characters' 'grip on reality.' This technique of 'dis-realising' the fictional world of his historical novel is part of a conscious attempt by Farrell to discourage notions of dogmatic clarity of perspective in judging the colonial experience. The novel's dreamy texture, by implication, seeks to highlight the unreality which pervaded the imperial enterprise, obscuring issues and confounding perception.

But it is with reference to the concept of the 'Singapore Grip' that the meaning of the title is irretrievably disseminated and destabilised. When the first two times Matthew broaches the subject of the 'Singapore Grip,' it "proved a failure as a conversational opening. Nobody replied or showed any sign of having heard him" (p. 108). A little later, Matthew receives an explanation from Dupingy who thinks that 'grip' derives from la grippe [the French word for influenza] and says that 'Singapore Grip' is a 'grave tropical fever' (p. 146); but, when Matthew speaks to Ehrendorf about 'The Singapore Grip' as a fever, he is taken aback and says that "it was a suitcase made of rattan, like a Shanghai basket" (p.200). Joan immediately adds a "further element of confusion to a scene which Matthew had already found sufficiently puzzling" (p.200) by saying that 'Singapore Grip' was actually "a patent double-bladed hairpin which some women use to curl their hair after they had washed it" (Ibid). Matthew is not satisfied with any of these interpretations and comes to think that 'Singapore Grip' refers to a peculiar handshake of the Chinese (p.389)—which again is promptly disproved. He comes to think that it is the name of a 'secret society' (p.389). But when he asks Vera Chiang if the 'Singapore Grip' is a secret society, she finds the question "so entertaining that her impatience with Matthew
melted away" (Ibid). Towards the end, when the expression the "Singapore Grip" is discussed for the last time in the novel, Ehrendorf gives an interestingly new version which comes as an anti-climactic digression in the scene in which Matthew is seriously engaged in an angry attack against the self-interested West corrupting human affairs across the world: "... the expression the 'Singapore Grip' refers to "the ability acquired by certain ladies of Singapore to control their autonomous vaginal muscles, apparently with delightful results" (p.498). This interpretation shocks Major Brendan Archer's sense of modesty and immediately Matthew, perhaps, having comprehended the acute instability of the expression gives a final interpretation of the 'Singapore Grip': "it is the grip of our Western culture and economy on the far East ... it's the stranglehold of capital on the traditional cultures of Malaya, China, Burma, Java, Indo-China and even India herself. It is the doing of things our way ... I mean, it is the pursuit of self-interest rather than of the common interest!" (p.498). But this final explanation, far from being generally acceptable, forces Ehrendorf to think that "The Singapore Grip was about to be pried loose," though, significantly, within the text of the novel, the expression is never fully pried open. Whatever may be the meaning of this well-known expression for the specialists of history, the readers who confront the term for the first time from Farrell's novel The Singapore Grip will only be confused about its actual import. Though the explanation provided by Matthew might sound politically more acceptable than others, the fact that other characters refuse to accept it as the final word on the meaning of the expression points to Farrell's self-consciousness about the fluidity of linguistic reference.

The last chapter of The Singapore Grip (pp.566-68) is overtly metafictional. The whole chapter, in a sense, is an attempt to give full expression to Farrell's fictional self-consciousness. At this point of the novel, the narrative is ruptured to such an extent that the novel almost writes itself. In a manner reminiscent of the multiple endings of A French Lieutenant's Woman, Farrell unearths the processes whereby the novelist controls the world s/he imaginatively re/constructs. Farrell supposes that years and years after Japanese invasion of Singapore, "Kate has a pleasant, kindly, humorous look [as characters tend to have when their author treats them well]" (p.566; Italics mine). Farrell creates a spring scene in which a cat is trying
to catch butterflies in a garden and immediately shows how the author, if the whim takes him, can 'de-create' the spring and make it winter: "Let us suppose that it is winter. Rub out the cat, erase the butterflies and let us move back inside where it is warmer" (p.566). Then, it "is suddenly summer again and a cat is trying to catch a butterfly" (p.568). Farrell relates this changeability of the fictional worlds to the constantly changing nature of human life and history: "Malaya is no longer even called Malaya. Things that once seemed immutable have turned out to be remarkably vulnerable to change" (p.567). And the novel ends with a direct address to the reader:

In any case, there is really nothing more to be said. And so, if you have been reading in a deck-chair on the lawn, it is time to go inside and make the tea. And if you have been reading in bed, why, it is time to put out the light now and go to sleep. Tomorrow is another day, as they say, as they say (p.568).

In fine, it is important to note that Farrell's metafictionality is not only an attempt to assert his experimentalism but also to go beyond what Edward Said calls "the textual attitude"—an attitude based on the fallacious assumption that "the swarming, unpredictable and problematic mess in which human beings live can be understood on the basis of what books—texts—say" (1978:93). This 'textual attitude' has always characterised the imperial discourse. By suggesting the possible variants of fictional history of the Empire precisely at the point where his fiction ends, Farrell conveys the idea that "to apply what one learns out of a book literally to reality is to risk folly or ruin" (Ibid).
Notes

1. Other prominent critics have also expressed the same idea. Malcolm Bradbury remarked in an interview: "I think that most of the great twentieth century novels are comic and in an essential tradition of comedy which has tended towards "the great without" (In Haffenden 1985:42). Bradbury has in mind Wyndham Lewis who attacked certain novelists for their undue focus on inward psychology. Fredric Jameson writes: "It is obvious that modern literature in general offers a very rich field for parody" (1992:166). Horst Ruthrof shares this view: "... literary parody ought not to be viewed simply as a clever linguistic exercise addressing itself to an esoteric circle of literati, but as a mode which is present, overtly or covertly, in all literature’ (1981:140).

2. In his essay From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse, Bakhtin cites numerous instances from “the ancient world’s literature of laughter” (1981:25) in order to prove his thesis that "the importance of parodic-travestying forms in world literature is enormous" (Ibid).

3. Linda Hutcheon expresses some serious reservations about practising the Bakhtinian theory as it is: "To adopt slavishly Bakhtin’s specific statements about parody [that is to imitate his practice] is to fall victim to the arbitrary and monolithic... in those statements; to adapt, on the other hand is to open up one of the most suggestive Pandora's boxes this century has produced" (1985:70). My aim here is just more to invoke the insights of the great theorist than to adopt or adapt his statements.

4. The present study does not attempt to present all the taxonomies of this genre. Gilbert Highet lists seven types of literary parody: epic, romance, drama, didactic poetry lyric, prose: non-fiction, and prose: fiction (1962:103-147). Horst Ruthrof identifies four strata of the parodic discourse: "It seems that the parodistic impulse is always specifically aimed at one or more of the following strata: (a) print [or sound], (b
linguistic formation, (c1) the presented world and (c2) the presentational process, and 
(d) the stratum of high-level interpretative abstractions" (1981:143).

5. To a great extent, this aspect of Farrell's fictional technique explains the early critical 
responses to The Singapore Grip. Most critics have described the novel as belonging 
to the tradition of romance.

6. In an interview with BBC, David Lodge speaks about his parodic novel The British 
Museum is Falling Down in similar terms: "The British Museum is Falling Down 
... is partly an effort to exorcise the enormous influence that any student of literature 
feels, the influence of the major modern writers. It is a kind of joke on myself in a 
way."

7. An early instance of similar parody occurs in a scene in Troubles where Farrell's 
describes the tragic death of the heroine, Angela through a parody of the literary 
conventions of the idealised portrayal of death: "Gone to the angels....And now 
Angela had gone to join the ancient pre-Raphaelite poets and the steady-eyed 
explorers who had shed their earthly envelopes (as the saying goes). She had gone to 
join the dead rowing blues (they were most probably among those blurred chaps on 
Edward's War Memorial) who had quaffed pre-war champagne out of her slippers. 
She had gone to the place where all the famous people go, and the obscure ones too 
for that matter" (T,p.94). By self-consciously referring to the obsolescence of certain 
rhetorical devices in describing death in a work of fiction [Hardy's “the President of 
Immortals ended His sport with poor Tess” comes to mind as an obvious example of 
the parodied background], Farrell makes his readers accept the fact that death is 
nothing to be idealised, that it simply takes us to a place where people, irrespective of 
their stations in life, must go and that there is no point in worrying about it

8. Farrell inserts newspaper cut-outs in all his Empire novels except The Hill Station 
but it is only in The Singapore Grip that Farrell dates them.
9. There are a number of such extrapolations which assume great significance from the standpoint of technique. Another example appears at the beginning of the second section of Troubles entitled The Tuam Murders: "Preaching in the Roman Catholic Cathedral, Tuam, on Sunday, the Most Rev. Dr. Gilmartin said that he came to sympathise with the people of Tuam in the sickening horror and terror of last week. A foul murder of two policemen was committed within three miles of the town on the previous Monday morning. Had no reprisals been taken, he said, there would be a great wave of sympathy with the police. Commenting on the wrecking of the town, His Grace said that he need not add that one crime did not justify another ... in this case police had taken a terrible revenge on an innocent town. No matter from what quarter the encouragement came, the policemen committed a fearful crime in gutting a sleeping town with shot and fire. The town was vengefully and ruthlessly sacked by the official guardians of the peace, and if the Government did not make immediate compensation and reparation for the damage done, the sense of crying injustice would remain as a further menace to peace and goodwill" (p. 195). This press report on police reprisals shocks the readers into an awareness of the blatant abrogation of human rights during the imperial years, of the fact that the so called civilised imperialists, whenever their authority was questioned, behaved in a manner that will put even the worst savages to shame.

10. This seems to be one possible explanation of the fact that most historical novels are set in a period which is not too recent. In the introduction to his novel The Go-Between, Hartley writes: "Someone, perhaps writing to please me, pointed out that many of the greatest novels had been written about time forty years before the date at which the novelist was writing—and this is roughly true of War and Peace, Vanity Fair and Wuthering Heights. Their authors found it was the point of time—not too near and not too far away—on which their imaginations could most easily focus" (1953:2).
11. Dean goes on to describe how Farrell mocked him: "Years I foolishly used the phrase in an unguarded moment, he [Farrell] was still introducing me to new people as 'This is Malcolm ... he was educated in "the university of life" (1981:181).

12. In his brilliant metafiction *Trout Fishing in America*, Richard *Brautigan*, in a strikingly similar fashion, makes the title a site for the endless proliferation of meaning. *Trout Fishing in America* can be anything in the novel: a *person*, a corpse, the name of a hotel, a pen nib, or an adjective. Commenting on this play on the title, Lodge remarks: "by presenting the reader with more details than he can synthesise into a whole, the discourse affirms the resistance of the world to interpretation" (1977:237). One is also reminded of the comically protracted metaphor of rocket as phallic in Thomas Pynchon's *metafictional* masterpiece, *The Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) and also of the mystery regarding the precise meaning of V in his novel, V (1963).