

# **CHAPTER – I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

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## **1) IMPERIALISM : AN ASSESSMENT**

### **1.1) INTRODUCTION :**

The term 'empire' refers to a group of nations or states brought under a single sovereign authority .For an earlier period it also stood for a state that was characterized by the dominion of a conquering nation over the conquered people. Thus were founded the empires of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Assyria and Persia. The activity of empire building was also carried out by the Mongols, Mohammedans, Turks and Tartars in medieval Europe. The term 'imperial' means belonging to an empire or emperor. It could also mean belonging or pertaining to a state, that is, supreme over colonies, dependencies or protectorates.

The explorations carried out in the Elizabethan period gradually concentrated into colonial settlements in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. The initial discoveries of the new territories were not all carried out with the colonial agenda in mind, but then the situation in most of these places afforded the opportunity and in many cases settlement became a political necessity . Initially, the trade interest constituted the primary objective of the English people who came to these territories and the involvement of merchants in such enterprises was the normal condition.

The nineteenth century constituted the age of imperialism. While the earlier stages of exploration, discovery and colonization were not unified into a particular format, but governed by individual conditions,

the nineteenth century saw the consolidation of British power and authority in many of the colonies.

## **1.2) MEANING OF 'IMPERIALISM' :**

Imperialism has two meanings, one describing an action and the other describing an attitude. Most commonly, it is understood in relation to empire building, as the forceful extension of a nation's authority by territorial conquest, establishing economic and political domination of other nations. In its second meaning, the term describes the imperialistic attitude of superiority, subordination and domination over foreign people.

## **1.3) DEFINITION OF 'IMPERIALISM' :**

i) "Imperialism is the policy of a state aiming at establishing control beyond its borders over people generally unwilling to accept such control. The imperialist nature of a policy is sometimes difficult to discover. The manifold political, financial, economic, technical and cultural activities of one state in another may aim only at the creation of sympathy, friendship, or influence, but they may also be techniques to gain control" (*Britannica Encyclopedia*).

ii) "Imperialism broadly, the extension of rule or influence by one government, nation, or society over another. Early Empires Evidence of the existence of empires dates back to the dawn of written history in Egypt and in Mesopotamia, where local rulers extended their realms by conquering other states and holding them, when possible, in a state of subjection or semi subjection" (*The Columbia Encyclopedia*, Sixth Edition).

iii) [Imperialism is]

1) “the policy and practice of forming and maintaining an empire in seeking to control raw materials and world markets by the conquest of other countries , the establishment of colonies”.

2) “the policy and practice of seeking to dominate the economic or political affairs of underdeveloped areas or weaker countries” (*Webster’s New World Dictionary* ).

iv) “Imperialism is a policy of extending the control or authority over foreign entities as a means of acquisition and/or maintenance of empires, either through direct territorial or through indirect method of exerting control on the politics and/or economy of the countries. The term is used by some to describe the policy of a country in maintaining colonies and dominance over distant lands, regardless of whether the country calls itself an empire” (*Literary Encyclopedia*).

#### **1.4) FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RISE OF ‘IMPERIALISM’ :**

Various factors contributed to the rise of ‘Imperialism’. A few outstanding factors are noted below:

##### **i) Economic factors:**

The foremost were the economic factors. The Industrial Revolution created a great need for raw materials .Asia and Africa offered most of the raw materials such as rubber, tin, petroleum, cotton, silk, vegetable oils and rare minerals. Owing to the Industrial Revolution, Great Britain, Germany and other European nations, began to produce ‘surplus goods’

for which they required market abroad. Asia as well as Africa served this purpose well. The trade interest constituted the primary objective of the English people who came to these territories and the involvement of merchants in such enterprises was the normal condition.

As the trade practices changed and a growing internationalism accompanied the Industrial Revolution, economic considerations played an important part in the consolidation of the British Empire.

**ii) Excessive surplus capital:**

There was excessive surplus capital in the industrialized countries, which invested it in foreign lands. Political control over these lands would thus act as guarantee of security of their investment.

**iii) Progress in transport and communication:**

The Industrial Revolution introduced great progress in the means of transport and communication. Ocean liners could carry heavy articles like manganese ore from any part of the world. The telegraph linked the whole world and reduced great distances. The development of railways speeded the movement of goods between colonies and to the mother countries.

**iv) The activities of political groups and intellectuals :**

The activities of political groups and intellectuals, who desired to ensure national security and self-sufficiency, instigated colonial imperialism. Often Presidents and Prim Ministers worked towards colonial imperialism owing to the influence of business or other interest groups.

**v) Spirit of national pride and prestige :**

Strong motive for imperialism was the spirit of national pride and prestige. The British Empire had set the precedent that it was essential to have colonies in order to become a world power. Hence both Germany and Italy entered the colonial race. Some parts of Africa and the far East served as valuable naval bases and ports of call for trade, commerce and investment.

**vi) Urge to spread Christianity :**

There was an inner urge to spread Christianity among Christian European Nations. Both Catholic and Protestant missionaries went to the colonies with a view to proselytize non-believers into Christianity.

**vii) Activities of explorers and adventurers :**

The activities of explorers and adventurers like the Frenchman Du Chaillu and De Brazza in Equatorial Africa and the German Karl Peters in East Africa, helped to promote the new wave of 'imperialism'.

**viii) Expansions of population :**

The expansions of population also contributed to the spread of 'imperialism'. This was further aided by the periodical recurrence of unemployment, which compelled millions of Europeans to emigrate in search of new homes and careers abroad.

**ix) Lack of international consensus :**

There was international anarchy. Every nation was free to do what it pleased, because of the lack of any international machinery to enact

laws for nations and force them to respect such laws. This state of affairs encouraged the colonial race.

These various factors and forces were working towards the spread of 'imperialism' in different countries.

### **1.5) DIRE CONSEQUENCES OF 'IMPERIALISM' :**

There were far-reaching effects of 'imperialism' in several respects.

Western 'imperialism' converted the lands of Asia and Africa into European colonies. Owing to simultaneous colonial expansion of Western Powers into Asia and Africa, there were frequent colonial collisions all over Asia and Africa. This led to the formation of political and military alliances and counter-alliances, which ultimately brought about World War-I (1914-1918).

An important result of 'imperialism' was that Asia and Africa got westernized. The process of Europeanization in language, culture and civilization began in the sixteenth century. In India the English introduced the British educational system (Macaulay's "Minutes": 1835) with western education taught through English, from the primary schools onwards to the university level.

Owing to the process of Europeanization some of the colonies lost their culture and civilization. They became Europeanized and lost their identity as a nation.

However, the British rule in India in the nineteenth century left a lot of issues unsettled and in fact aggravated some that were already in existence. Poverty was a major problem in colonial India with extreme situations resulting in famines. The rural economy of India received a body blow because the products of the British industry easily outmaneuvered the handicraft items that were made in the villages.

In education, the problems multiplied when the British introduced the English model in 1833. Even though English was used as a medium of instruction, the infrastructure was not there in most parts of India. As such, a majority of the Indian population remained illiterate.

## **1.6) BRITISH IMPERIALISM IN INDIA :**

The foundation of the British Empire in India was laid by Robert Clive by winning 'the Battle of Plassey in 1757'. Thereafter Warren Hastings and Lord Wellesley forced most of the Indian rulers to submission. Finally Lord Dalhousie (The Doctrine of Lapse), by his policy of 'Lapse', annexed much of the territories of the Indian Princes. This completed the work of the British conquest of India by 1856. The revolt of 1857 was a momentous event in the history of India. It marked a turning point in the history of British imperialism. Its significance as a decisive event in the British rule in India has been adequately recognized by Englishmen in a series of historical accounts. After 'the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857', British India was transferred from the hands of the East India Company to those of the British Crown.

The appointment of the Governor General was an important step in this regard as it smoothly shifted the power structure to the British



government. Although it was not until ‘the Sepoy Mutiny’ that technically the control of India went to the British government, the process had started much earlier, with ‘the India Act of 1784’ being one milestone of this phenomenon. The British control over Indian territories in the eighteenth century was achieved through a variety of ways, some of which were neither ‘noble’ nor organized to benefit the natives.

Within a very short span of time, the British dominated Indian cultural and political life and started exerting its influence on the social life. The British in India undertook a number of crucial works. The list of the works is so long that it cannot be mentioned here for want of space. However, some light will be thrown on substantial work:

- i) The advent of the British and the East India Company tells its own story of the Englishing of India.
- ii) Converted many Indians to Christianity;
- iii) Missionaries had helped in the establishment of printing presses.
- iv) The establishment of schools which imparted English education.
- v) India’s first news paper in English came out- *Hicky’s Bengal Gazette*.
- vi) Remodeled Indian political and administrative institutions according to the English pattern;
- vii) Industrialized India by building railways, stringing telegraph wires and setting up factories, mills and workshops;
- viii) Introduced western customs and ideas to the Indians;
- ix) Even before 1757, The English East India Company was interested only in making money.

- x) The company required large amounts of money to wage wars both in India and on the high seas and to maintain naval forces and armies and forts and trading posts in India.
- xi) In the intellectual field no attempt was made to spread modern ideas which were changing the entire way of life in the West.
- xii) The entire legal structure of Indian society had to be overhauled if it was to be based on capitalist commercial relations.
- xiii) The emergence of a liberal imperialist political ideology among British Statesmen and British Indian administrators.
- xiv) Imperialism and expansion also served at this stage an important ideological and political purpose in the imperialist countries.
- xv) The entire period was one of stress and strain for Britain, because the newcomers among the developed capitalist countries assailed its prominent position in the field of trade and investment.
- xvi) British rule and its impact on India created conditions for the rise of a powerful anti-imperialist movement and for unification of the Indian people into a nation.
- xvii) The impact of British rule led to the evolution of a new structure of agrarian relations that was extremely regressive.
- xviii) The foreign trade affected the internal distribution of income adversely.

## **2) LIFE AND WORK:**

The British novelist, James Gordon Farrell, was born on 25th January, 1935 in Liverpool into a family of Irish background. Farrell from the age of twelve attended Rossall Public School in Lancashire. During this time his parents moved to Dublin, and from this point on Farrell spent much time in Ireland: This may be the reason why he had

been treated as an Irish writer. In 1956 he went to study at Brasenose College, Oxford, while there he contracted polio.

Prior to the polio attack Farrell had been a healthy 21-year old youth, keen on sport. He was now transformed, literally overnight, into an invalid. His hair turned white, his weight shrank and he lost the use of both arms. He spent six months in a device, now-a-days obsolete, known as an iron lung, which was used to administer prolonged artificial respiration by means of mechanical pumps. This painful and terrifying experience was subsequently enshrined in vividly realistic detail in Farrell's second novel *The Lung* (1965).

In 1960 Farrell graduated with a B.A. degree in French and Spanish. He then found employment in France, where he worked as a language teacher from 1961 to 1963. During this period Farrell wrote his first novel, *A Man from Elsewhere* (1963). This novel was dedicated to Farrell's parents.

After leaving France, Farrell spent the mid-sixties in London. There he survived financially by teaching English to foreigners. In London Farrell quickly followed up his first book with two fluent but uneven comic novels, *The Lung* (1965), and *A Girl in the Head* (1967). In 1966 Farrell was awarded a Harkness Fellowship and set off to spend two years in North America. It was while he was living in New York that he decided to write a novel set in a time that was over. He chose Ireland in 1919-21, the popular name for this period –that of 'the troubles'– supplying Farrell with his title. Perhaps living in New York gave Farrell the distance he needed in space and time from his subject matter.

In deciding to write a novel set in India Farrell was drawing partly on his family history for inspiration. Farrell's parents had been married in Burma in 1930 and then went to live in Chittagong, East Bengal. This was the period of the 'freedom riots' and the situation was threatening for the white expatriate population. Farrell's father was himself wounded in a raid on the armoury at Chittagong. Farrell showed a keen interest in his father's Indian experiences and subsequently dedicated the finished novel, *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973) to him. In November 1973, shortly after publication, *The Siege of Krishnapur* won that year's Booker Prize. In 1972, when he was completing *The Siege of Krishnapur*, Farrell read about the fall of Singapore and thought it would make a good project for him. The result was a massive, polemical epic intertwining the fortunes of colonial capitalism and the doomed city of Singapore, *The Singapore Grip* (1978).

In Farrell's case his importance as a novelist rests entirely on his three historical novels: *Troubles* (1970); *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973); and *The Singapore Grip* (1978). With the trilogy completed Farrell decided to leave London. He bought a farmhouse on the remote Sheep's Head peninsula in County Cork and moved there in April 1979 and set to work on finishing a short novel set in the hill station of Simla twenty years after the Indian Mutiny. The manuscript, untitled and consisting of an unrevised and unfinished first draft of around fifty thousand words, was cited by John Spurling and posthumously published in 1981 under the title *The Hill Station*.

On 11th August 1979, four months after moving to his new home in Ireland, J.G.Farrell was fishing from some rocks on the beach below his farmhouse when he either slipped or was washed by a large wave into the sea and drowned. He was forty four years old. His body was washed ashore later the same month on the other side of Bantry Bay, and he was buried in the graveyard of St James' Church of Ireland Church in Durrus.

During his short writing career Farrell published six novels: *A Man from Elsewhere* (1963), *The Lung* (1965), *A Girl in the Head* (1967), and three novels which are frequently referred to as his "empire trilogy", *Troubles* (1970), *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973), and *The Singapore Grip* (1978) and one unfinished novel, *The Hill Station* edited by John Spurling and posthumously published in 1981.

Farrell's first novel, *A Man from Elsewhere* (1963) was set in France. A careful study of the novel shows the clear influence of French Existentialism. It entirely lacks the ironic humour and the tender appreciation of human frailty which characterize his later work. The plot centres on the mission of a young communist, Sayer, to uncover material suitable for destroying the reputation of a famous novelist, Regan, who is dying. Regan is an ex-party member about to be awarded 'the catholic prize for world peace' and Sayer is sent from Paris to interview the writer in the remote backwater of Saint Guilhelm, where Regan has lived for twenty years. There are rumours that Regan was a collaborator and Sayer sets to work quizzing both Regan and those who know him in an attempt to uncover the truth about some murky wartime episodes involving Regan's wife, the German Commandant and some young men who were executed.

*A Man from Elsewhere* is a bleak cheerless book with a bleak cheerless ending and the wit, irony and charitable good humour which is so characteristic of Farrell's mature fiction is strikingly absent from this very first novel. The interest of the novel today lies mainly in the way it shows Farrell toying with techniques and themes later to become central to his historical fiction. These include a romantically melancholy view of male-female relations, the inertia of Luc, later to become a major trait of Farrell's heroes. Regan represents a liberal individualist viewpoint, whereas Sayer is an orthodox communist hardliner.

*A Man from Elsewhere* is a novel of ideas, genuinely dialectical in the sense that the author abstains from siding with either party in the debate. One expects Regan to emerge the winner, since he is a novelist and Sayer a cold machine-like figure indifferent to the attraction of fiction. In fact Sayer succeeds in untangling the dark secrets of Regan's past, revealing him to be not a collaborator but a man who has destroyed those who loved him most, for the sake of creating a new ideal. In their final confrontation Regan is shown to have far more in common with Sayer than the reader could have imagined was possible.

Finally there is the all important theme of the body. Farrell emphasizes the frailty and tangible physical decay of the dying Regan. There are also Gretchen's grotesque reflections upon the absurdity of human physical relations. This unromantic, defamiliarizing view of human beings as slightly absurd creatures was later to become a trademark of Farrell's writing, and it forms the central theme of his next novel, *The Lung*.

His next novel, *The Lung* (1965) provides a grimly humorous account of a man in an iron lung fighting his way back to health in the company of some comically eccentric fellow patients and a desirable young nurse. The human body as a fragile, vulnerable organism is an omnipresent motif. The novel's protagonist, Martin Sands, contracts polio and has to spend months in hospital. Sands' problems are not simply physical. He finds it hard to communicate with others; his marriage has broken up; he has abandoned his job as a reporter, disgusted by it. From being an alienated member of the world of the healthy Sands is abruptly transported to an enclosed community of the sick, where his condition merely worsens. Sands is consumed by a world-weariness.

*The Lung* is a more ambitious novel and is prefaced by portentous epigraphs from Tolstoy and A.L.Thomson indicating how the human spirit is dragged down by the desires and needs of the flesh. The handling of the theme of disease and hospitalization in *The Lung* is uncertain. Much of the novel takes place inside Sands' mind and consists of autobiographical fragments and surrealistic fantasies. Many of these fantasies are extremely funny, but they risk the charge of self-indulgence. The problem which arise in *The Lung* out of the author's own too close identification with the protagonist are present in Farrell's next novel, *A Girl in the Head*.

In 1967 Farrell published *A Girl in the Head* set in the fictional English seaside town of Maidenhair Bay. Like its two predecessors, the book met only middling critical and public reaction. The plot concerns the comic misadventures of Count Boris Slattery. Boris is a penniless wanderer who has found refuge by marrying into the Dongeon family.

His relationship with his wife, Flower, has broken down and he spends his time behaving eccentrically and wandering aimlessly around Maidenhair Bay involving himself in unfortunate situation.

Boris bears a number of similarities to Martin Sands. Like Sands he is haunted by thoughts of death and consumed by a sense of absurdity and worthlessness of existence. Boris, like Sands, also suffers from ill-health and the novel begins with his suffering a mild heart attack and being conveyed to a nearby hospital.

The theme of despair is underlined in *A Girl in the Head* by the appearance of Cohen, the drunken ex-doctor. Cohen has given up medicine, convinced that human beings are nothing more than machines. Boris attempts to cling to some sustaining illusion and disagreeing with Cohen, puts his faith in young love.

Farrell had evidently been reading Nabokov around the time he wrote *A Girl in the Head*. Count Boris Slattery's extravagant aristocratic ancestry clearly owes much to Nabokov, as does Farrell's use of odd and absurd names. Farrell's title points to Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955), the classic account of 'a girl in the head'.

In later years Farrell looked back upon his first three novels with some dissatisfaction. However, he did subsequently write one more piece of comic fiction, '*The Pussycat Who Fell in Love with the Suitcase*' (1973-74), his only published story. It is a bizarre, eccentric piece narrated in the intimate tone of voice which is such a striking feature of the Empire Trilogy. The story concerns a cat named Rameses, who is a



shop steward in a peppermint factory. One day Rameses comes home to find a suitcase in the middle of his bedroom floor. Rameses falls head-over-heels in love with suitcase, which responds with a disdainful, indifferent silence. The lovelorn cat absents himself from the factory and industrial disputes soon bring chaos to the town. The mayor therefore hides a tape-recorder in the case so that every five minutes it tells Rameses it loves him.

Beneath the light comedy one can detect continuity with the gloomy view of human relations which Sands and Boris subscribe to. It is a chilling, ironic view of human relationships and one which Farrell was to elaborate very much more compellingly in his comically entertaining but ultimately dark, sombre and tragic Empire Trilogy.

Empire Trilogy consists of three important novels: *Troubles* (1970), *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973) and *The Singapore Grip* (1978).

*Troubles* (1970) takes its title from the popular phrase 'the troubles', traditionally taken to refer to the first Irish Civil War of 1919-21, but now sometimes used in connection with the civil unrest which began in Northern Ireland in 1968.

The action takes place in the Majestic, a once-proud but now decaying hotel located in the fictional coastal town of Kilnalough. It is run by an eccentric red-faced English expatriate who has let the hotel slide after the death of his wife. The protagonist, the English Major Brendan Archer, is a survivor of the Great War. Upon his demobilization Archer decides to travel from his home in London to Ireland in order to

finalize his relationship with Angela Spencer, a young lady he met and perhaps became engaged to, while on leave during the War. Angela's father runs what was once a grand hotel, The Majestic, and Archer finds himself immediately swept up in the collapse of what was once a thriving Anglo-Irish community in Ireland. The Majestic is a mess, rotting from within much the same way that English dominion in Ireland is rotting from without.

Here the Majestic Hotel is an obvious metaphor for the British Empire itself in the early 1920s. It is an apt metaphor for the condition of the Irish Republic, the Irish in general and the condition under which England still sought to control the large land holdings. Yet this novel is not entirely political. Human beings live within its covers, complete within their loves, their follies, their prejudices, and their madness. It is a rich, imaginative, and funny work, even as its atmosphere is morbid and gothic.

The next novel of the trilogy is *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973). This is an excellent novel about the Sepoy Mutiny in India in 1857. The focus of the story is the siege of the British Civil Service enclave at Krishnapur (historically this was the siege of Lucknow). Hearing about the Mutiny the Collector in Krishnapur had ramparts built around the British buildings in Krishnapur. Shortly afterwards the sepoys attacked in wave after wave for a period of several months. Surprisingly Farrell describes the sufferings of those besieged with a good deal of humour, humour that pricks holes in the pompous beliefs and attitudes of 19<sup>th</sup> century British colonizers. Here, Farrell's focus is less on Krishnapur and the siege than on the attitudes and the beliefs of the colonizers who

made that siege inevitability. He puts these empire-builders under the microscope, skewers their arrogant and superior attitudes with the rapier of his wit, subjecting them to satire and juxtaposing them and their narrowly focused lives against the realities of the world around them. Remarkably, Farrell does this with enough subtlety that one can recognize his characters as individuals rather than total stereotypes at the same time that one sees their absurdity and recognize the damage they have done in their zeal to spread their “superior” culture.

Farrell’s dark humour is unparalleled. Using irony, understatement, and a sense of the absurd, he conveys his disapproval of imperialism without resorting to the harshness of polemics. By concentrating exclusively on the inhabitants of the Residence and not on India’s local population, he makes their behaviour appear ridiculous in its own right, rather than ridiculous in comparison to other cultures.

Every aspect of this novel is exceptional- the characters and characterizations, the plot, the setting, and both the historical and the literary value. For a novel written in 1973, the style of *The Siege of Krishnapur* is unabashedly traditional; making no pretence of any type of modernism, it simply tells us its story in colorful detail and muscular prose, recalling the tense narrative spirit of Kipling and Conrad. Although it is based on a historical event, it is much more about its characters and how they are affected by the Siege than it is about the historical forces that drive the event. What Farrell has achieved here is a very neatly structured and satisfying fictional picture of British colonial life in India during an extraordinary time of turmoil.

*The Singapore Grip* (1978) is the third novel in Farrell's Empire Trilogy. It is Farrell's most obviously accessible and cinematic novel, offering an exotic location, romance and dramatic wartime events. What is striking about the novel the way in which Farrell used the form of the popular 'blockbuster' to convey what is at heart a bitterly ironic and politically highly-charged vision of Empire. Farrell certainly seems to have *War and Peace* in mind when reading *The Singapore Grip*. Farrell has an uncanny ability to root out and deflate pretensions and hypocrisy wherever it exists, and that is what he does here to incredible comic effect.

The buffoonish tycoon Walter Blackett is a solid stand-in for British imperialism at its blindest- having convinced himself of the great service he has supposedly done for the natives of Singapore, he struggles to maintain his rubber empire even in the face of steadily encroaching chaos. He is surrounded by characters of depth and interest: the skeptical Dupingy; the well-meaning but naïve Matthew Webb; the "divided" Ehrendorf; and the wonderfully droll Major Archer. Each of these men in his own way, fleshes out the novel's vision of colonialism and the pitfalls of world diplomacy.

*The Singapore Grip* is a book of epic proportions, playing off-often humorously – the pomposity of British Colonials and the grim onset of occupation by the Japanese. Farrell's ability to place the reader in pre-war Singapore is well-executed. In the final analysis, nobody comes out looking good, not the Japanese, not the British, not the Capitalists, not the Communists.

*The Hill Station* (1981) is Farrell's last unfinished novel edited by John Spurling and posthumously published in 1981. The novel, set largely in Simla in 1871, forms a kind of modest sequel to *The Siege of Krishnapur*. *The Hill Station* is set in the middle of the long period of civil peace in India which lasted from the suppression of the Mutiny up until the 1890s. The plot of the novel centres on a doctrinal row about ritualism which has broken out in Simla between Kingston, a tubercular clergyman, and his Bishop. A parallel sub-plot follows the fortunes of Mrs. Forester, an outcast from polite society because of her flagrant liaisons.

The 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. Farrell portrays a world where sickness is omnipresent. McNab's niece, Emily, has a paralyzed hand, the hotel owner Mr. Lowrie suffers from a heart condition, Mr. Forsythe, the curate, is sick with fever, and one of the young curates at Elysium House has a swollen gland in his neck. The chief focus of interest is Mr. Kingston, who displays all the symptoms of suffering from tuberculosis, a subject Farrell clearly intended to explore with the same relish for encyclopedic detail that he brought to cholera in *The Siege of Krishnapur*.

*The Hill Station* would apparently have taken Farrell's interesting sickness, a stage further by exploring some of its psychological spiritual dimensions, illustrated in the clash between Mr. Kingston and the Bishop. Both men are sick and both are able to transcend physical incapacity by sheer force of will. Farrell's notes for the unwritten part of the novel

suggest that Kingston would have resigned from the Church at the request of the apparently dying Bishop, leave Simla and die. A note by Farrell indicates the mordant and melancholy conclusion which the book would have had: "The Bishop, recovered, is playing croquet again. Another curate-challenger McNab does not wait; he knows how it will end" (1981: 175).

Farrell's novels are compellingly readable and his belief in the importance of a strong narrative drive and a solidly established plot and characterization has won his books a wide audience. His fiction contains elements of popular narrative modes- a fairy story, the adventure story, the 'blockbuster'-but Farrell treats them ironically and his novels convey a distinctively dark, idiosyncratic, tragicomic picture of existence. Farrell's narrative method is both sophisticated and old-fashioned. His omniscient narrator moves confidently between his characters. Like some latter day Thackeray or Fielding, he watches their follies.

Farrell's novels are unique examples of post-modern historiographic metafiction. His writing is well worth rediscovering. Sardonic, generous, eccentric and sad, it seems as original now as it must have done in the 1970s, before successive waves of historical and post-colonial fiction dampened the memory of Farrell's achievements in this line. His "trilogy" is concerned with the gap between imperial deals and imperial practice.

Farrell's novels are never earnest or pompous. On the contrary, they are often extremely funny, combining vivid historical backdrops

with an ironic, absurd sense of humour pitched somewhere between P.G.Woodhouse and Samuel Beckett.

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