

Grandeur and Fall: Imperialist and Nationalist Ideologies in J. G.
Farrell's *Empire Trilogy*

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I. Britishness or English National Identity?

We live, says Tom Nairn, in a State

with a variety of titles having different functions and nuances – the U.K. (or “Yookay”, [...]), Great Britain (imperial robes), Britain (boring lounge-suit), England (poetic but troublesome), the British Isles (too geographical), “This Country” (all-purpose within the Family), or “This Small Country of Ours” (defensively-Shakespearean).

(Tom Nairn qtd. in Kumar 3)

In 1981 the infamous British Nationality Act was passed by the Parliament declaring that British citizenship would be granted automatically only to those who could claim the United Kingdom as at least one of their parents’ place of birth. The Act was met with serious opposition, and it revealed a series of questions which had been haunting the idea of the nation and varieties of nationalism in Great Britain for a long time, and, as I will argue, are still unresolved, although a number of attempts have been made to present a solution: what is the difference between Britishness and Englishness? How can we define these identities and why is it so difficult to give a clear definition even today? In what ways are they intertwined and influenced by each other?

Since “what we call content [of national identity] is in most cases the product of the process by which nations are formed, rather than some qualities intrinsic [...] to the nation” (Kumar IX), most critics examine this process of exclusion and creation of boundaries of identity when they try to give an answer to the questions of British and English identity¹.

These questions are all the more intriguing now when the debate on the crisis of British identity is resumed by Scottish and Welsh separatist attempts in the wake of

¹ However, we can find different approaches, too, to the definition of Englishness. Kate Fox, for instance, examines the English as a people, from an anthropological point of view. There are also critics who only give a list of characteristics of what they think the English are distinguished for (see Kumar 228; Paxman IX). For more on the process of the formation of national identity, see Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*.

devolutionary legislation. Furthermore, if we believe those who claim that British and English identities are closely connected, it can be suggested that when one is in crisis, the other suffers a blow, too.

To find an answer, many commentators turn to the times of the British Empire asserting that it was the origin and the nurturing place of these identities, thus the crises of a strong sense of national belonging and community are caused by the collapse of the Empire as well as by its controversial and ambiguous legacy which still has not been worked through². In Ian Baucom's opinion, the Empire is a place "where England loses command of its own narrative of identity" (Baucom 3). In a similar vein, exploring the dilemmas caused by this twofold identity, I shall turn to one of the most successful and thoughtful literary attempts, J. G. Farrell's *Empire Trilogy*, to address the issue of Englishness and Britishness in its inextricable entanglement in the imperial idea and its legacy. First of all, the trilogy deals with three different moments of history, emblematic moments that contributed to the decline and fall of the British Empire in some ways: *Troubles* (1970) is concerned with the growing tension between the opposing attitudes in Ireland in the two years before the declaration of the Irish Free State, *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973) is a Victorian pastiche on the Indian Mutiny of 1857, and *The Singapore Grip* (1978) describes the military, social, and economic circumstances among which Singapore was lost to the Japanese in the Second World War. The three volumes illustrate different historical events which, however, have one theme in common: "which is [...] nothing less than the nature of colonialism, the end of an Empire, and the end of an ideology" (Drabble 178). Second, we should not ignore the fact that the trilogy was written in the 1970s, just after the loss of some of the last remaining British colonies and dominions in the 1960s, when the sense of the crisis of British and English

² See, for example, Linda Colley's *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*.

identities was an increasingly pervasive feature of “the spirit of the times” (Farrell, *Singapore* 527)³, thus it is worth examining the attitude with which Farrell imbues his description of the historical past. As Farrell says: “It seemed to me that the really interesting thing that’s happened during my lifetime has been the decline of the British Empire. When I was a child it was very much a going concern.” (Farrell qtd. in Binns 16)

However, before we examine the trilogy and Farrell’s version of engaging with the problems raised by the collapse of Empire, we should look into the intricate ways ideologies of Britishness and Englishness are thought to be intertwined. Friedrich Meinecke’s theoretical division of two basic types of nationalism could be a useful starting point. He distinguishes a nationalism based on political and legal institutions, and encouraged by the state, from another sense of national belonging which has a cultural, emotional and personal basis (Kumar 21). Meinecke asserts, however, that owing to the fact that these “ideal types” (Kumar 21) of nationalism inevitably influence each other, almost all the modern nations emerged as the result of a process of their constant interfusion. Meinecke’s theoretical model can be still useful, especially if we consider his claim that on the one hand, the political nation uses the principle of *ius soli*, which means that it emphasizes the attainable, active citizenship of the members of the community that inhabits a common place. Here, citizenship is a question of choice. On the other hand, the cultural nation is based on the principle of *ius sanguinis*, defining itself as a “living organism”, a community of people who are born to belong to it. This type of nationalism cannot be chosen; one is destined to belong to or be excluded from it (Kumar 22).

Considering the British Nationality Act of 1981, we should note that the clash of the principles of *ius soli* and *ius sanguinis* can be traced back to the problematic of the Act. What

³ See, for instance, V.S. Naipaul’s *The Enigma of Arrival*: “I grew to feel that grandeur belonged to the past; that I had come to England at the wrong time.” (Naipaul qtd. in Baucom 164)

we can witness is the moment of transition from the long history of British national identity based on “the law of the soil” to a new, more exclusive identity defined in terms of ethnicity and “the law of blood” (Kumar 22). In addition, it might not be a coincidence that this transition was initiated officially during the turbulent times after the loss of the Empire. The need to redefine Britishness in this new situation is a pressing one (Baucom 209).

I would argue here that the difference between the British identity fuelled by the imperialist ideologies of the Empire and the Englishness defined by a narrower, stricter sense of nationalism can be described in terms of Meinecke’s contrasted types of nations. Constructed for and by the British Empire, there came into being an inclusive, political, imperialist definition of community based on the shared values of the colonizers as contrasted to the inferior image of the overseas territories (Gikandi 29). Thus the problem of full-fledged English nationalism lies at the very heart of the Empire: while Britain ruled over one quarter of the world, the colonizers could not afford to be divided by ethnic and cultural differences. The British identity was simply invented for the peoples of the first Empire within Great Britain to compensate them for England’s oppressing policies, and it allowed them to think of themselves as equal partners in the colonization of the rest of the world. Indeed, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland had a far from negligible share in the creation and maintenance of the British Empire. For instance, in 1830, the Scottish accounted for 14 percent of the British army, and the Irish recruits constituted about 43 percent of the crown forces (Kumar 170). British identity was a carefully constructed amalgam of symbols and institutions like the Union Jack, the Parliament, the Crown, the Protestant church and ideologies of liberal humanism, progress, the civilizing mission and imperialism. “In the leading public schools and universities, in court, in Parliament, in the armed forces, in imperial administration, nobility and gentry from all parts of the kingdom mixed and mingled, creating a common

society and a common culture” (Kumar 166).

However, the existence and dominance of the British identity during the time of the Empire had its setbacks, too, especially from the point of view of English nationalism, due to the fact that England, which considered herself as the inventor and preeminent advocate of the imperial ideology, was reluctant to encourage an English national identity which would have stressed her superiority over “the Celtic fringe” (Kumar 2). Instead, Albion supported and stood by Britishness, and shrank from any overt expression of English nationalist propaganda, and this is all the more remarkable as it happened at a time when the ideology of nationalism was elsewhere at its high noon.

The disadvantages emerged when the sense of a crumbling Empire started to overwhelm the nations of Great Britain during the early twentieth century, and England gradually lost its one and only guarantee of identity. The English faced the difficult task of building a belated cultural national identity which had been so far dismissed by them. In a paradoxical way, the detachment from nationalism became an English national characteristic, and the English always made a point of its foreignness⁴. For instance, in his *Lion and Unicorn* George Orwell emphasized that, in contrast to Germany, England is fundamentally distanced from the fanatic subscription to nationalist ideologies. To illustrate the extent to which this idea remains part of the English frame of mind, here is a quote from a 2012 article from The Telegraph:

Next week, for instance, the rituals of Burns Night will keep the nationalist flames alight. But where is the English equivalent, a Shakespeare feast of Lancashire hotpot or shepherd’s pie, followed by readings from the works of the Bard and accompanied by pints of bitter and glasses of mead? On March 1, St David’s Day, the Welsh will happily sport a daffodil, but if an Englishman turned up at work on April 23 wearing a red rose in his lapel it would be assumed he was on his way to a wedding, not celebrating his

⁴ See G.K. Chesterton’s poem *The Secret People*: “For we are the people of England, that never have spoken yet.”

national day. (Johnston)

Following this logic, one could suggest that the difference between Britishness and Englishness can be simply defined by the contrasting ideologies of an imperialist and political national identity, and a localist cultural and ethnic one. However, the relationship between British and the English national identities cannot be described in terms of a binary opposition. First, it should be noted that, as I have already suggested, imperialism and nationalism are not mutually exclusive ideologies, but different aspects of the same historical process. Thus, instead of claiming that nationalism in England could not emerge due to the dominance of imperialist ideologies, it can be asserted that English national identity was formed in the context of imperialism (Crane 99; Gikandi 31). So, although Little Englandism was neither a powerful nor an approved ideology because of the status of the Celtic fringe, a kind of English national identity did arise. The people of England saw themselves as the nation that was the agent and driving force behind the British imperialist identity, providing ‘the most British’ subjects of the Empire. “Britishness [...] always contained a core of Englishness” (Kumar 156). After all, most of the ideas and institutions associated with Britishness were rooted in England’s history, and it was the English who originally started to build the Empire. For example, during the First World War, the Great War for the British, the image of Britain that had to be saved was the image of peaceful countryside and downs, which can obviously be more easily associated with England (or maybe Wales) than the Scottish sublime mountains and lochs, or the Irish bogs (Kumar 209-10). This could also be the reason why it was less difficult for the Celtic fringe to develop a cultural national identity distinct from the British one.

In this way, what emerged was a total English identification with Britishness and the ideology of the Empire at its zenith, which, it must be stressed, did not mean that the other

colonizers were not seen as British, too, but nor they were thought of as quintessentially British as the English. “Englishness and Britishness [were] so interfused as to be virtually indistinguishable” (Kumar 156). However, the faint sense of the decay of British Empire started to cast an even darker shadow over the consciousness of many. As this sense grew stronger, the English felt the need to dissociate their own nation from Britishness because, with the crisis of the British identity, Englishness was on the way to disintegration, too⁵. This process of dissociation is still going on.

Two interesting cultural phenomena can be identified as the results of the blend of British and English identities. First, the notorious negligence of the English in mixing up English and British malapropistically, something which most Scottish, Welsh or Irish citizens could illustrate with countless anecdotes. I shall quote here an excerpt from Tony Blair’s 1997 election victory speech, in which he refers to the Magna Carta as part of British history:

The British don’t fear change. We are one of the great innovative peoples. From the Magna Carta to the first Parliament to the industrial revolution to an empire that covered the world; most of the great inventions of modern times with Britain stamped on them: the telephone; the television; the computer; penicillin; the hovercraft; radar. Change is in the blood and bones of the British we are by our nature and tradition innovators, adventurers, pioneers. (Blair)

Second, although the English often identify themselves as British, attempts on the part of the English to gradually disengage themselves from British identity are also numerous. A comparison of J.G. Farrell’s *The Siege of Krishnapur, Troubles* and Ian McEwan’s *The Innocent* is a good illustration of this disaffection. *The Siege of Krishnapur* is set at the time of the Indian Mutiny, after which serious doubts concerning the benefits and superiority of the Empire were first raised and widely aired (McLeod 57). In the world that appears in Farrell’s novel, English and British identities are still interchangeable. For

5 Nevertheless, some critics do not agree on the crisis of English national identity. See Scruton’s *England: An Elegy*, Paxman’s *The English: A Portrait of a People*, or Wiener’s *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit: 1850-1980*.

example, when the Collector, a typical British character, prepares to enter the billiard room which is invaded by a group of “child-like” (Farrell 157) women, he nostalgically recollects the memory of the former status of the billiard room which is clearly reminiscent of the English countryside:

[T]he ceiling, very high for the sake of coolness, bore elaborate plaster mouldings of foliage in the English fashion. This had once been one of his favourite rooms but now he dreaded to enter. [...] Ah, then it had been like some gentle rustic scene...the green meadows of the tables, the brown leather of the chairs, and the gentlemen peacefully browsing around them. [...] Above the green pastures the billowing blue clouds of cigar smoke had drifted gently by beneath the ceiling like the sky of a summer's day. (Farrell 153)

Later, the Collector and the local Padre are having a conversation about differences of the world view of the Germans and the British, when the Padre asserts: ““True, compared with the simple, healthy British mind the German mind is sickly and delights to feed on such morbid fantasies.””(195) In this case, the stereotypical images about the irrational, stubborn, irresponsible frame of mind of the Celtic fringe are accommodated within the image of English practical thinking, which then serves as the model for the British one.

In contrast, in *Troubles*, which is set in Ireland after the First World War, the English and British national identities are no longer interchangeable. Accordingly, the Major, an English ex- (British) army shell-shocked man, who goes to Ireland to claim his bride, cannot consider his to-be father-in-law as his fellow countryman but as a member of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy.

[T]heir long, horse-like faces were turned continually to where their mother was sitting, for encouragement or advice. A dotting smile would appear on her face, which was an older, more wrinkled version of theirs[...]. And this horse face [...], these equine features were repeated again and again [...] from the oldest men and women to the youngest children. This was the face of Anglo-Ireland, the inbred Protestant aristocracy, the face, progressively refining itself into a separate, luxurious species, which had ruled Ireland for almost five hundred years: the wispy fair hair, the eyes too close together, the long nose and protruding teeth. (Farrell 308)

Throughout the novel, the characters are alternately identified as British, English, Anglo-Irish, and Irish, but here Britishness no longer has a clear meaning, which is acutely illustrated by a Royal Irish Constabulary officer's clothes. He wears "R.I.C. trousers", "khaki service uniform", the colour of the British army and "civilian cap bearing [a] crowned-harp badge". "A fine expression of the muddled will of the great British people!" (Farrell 398)

In *Troubles*, the confused, blurred national identities are already presented as one of the major problems behind the decline of the Empire that "messes with identity" (Baucom 14).

Finally, *The Innocent* is set in Berlin in the mid 1950s (moreover, the novel was written in 1990, twenty years after *Troubles*), when the sense of superiority and integrity of Britishness was obviously in ruins⁶. An episode of *The Innocent* serves to illustrate the paradox of Englishness and Britishness: while the English Leonard Marnham is consistently represented as British for the American Bob Glass, when Leonard invites a Scottish piper to entertain them, Glass complains:

'[...] There are going to be some intelligence brass there Leonard, including some of your own guys. D'you know what they're going to say.'

'[...] 'Lament is right. They're gonna say, Hmm, American food, German wines and *Scottish* entertainment. Is it Scotland in Gold? Do we have a special relationship with Scotland? Did Scotland join the NATO?' (McEwan 200, italics in the original)

What is more interesting is the answer he gets from his "British" colleague:

'There was a singing dog,' Leonard muttered without lifting his head. 'But there again, it was English.' (McEwan 200)

This is the paradox the cultural and political communities have had to face after the

6 This might also be caused by the fact that the English defined themselves against the "superior" American identity after the Second World War (Wiener 46). In *The Singapore Grip*, Dupigny's comment on the photo of a European colonizer who forces a coolie's head down so that his face would not be seen is interesting, too: "Whatever happened with the Japanese the old colonial life in the East, the European's hand on the coolie's straw hat, was finished" (Farrell 305).

downfall of the British Empire. It is rarely questioned that the power of the kind of ideologies that created, maintained, and made the Empire flourish is fading rapidly, and there is a demand for a redefinition of the sense of belonging that was dominant in the past but still lingers on in the present⁷.

However, to confront this challenge and be able to reshape the ideologies which give meaning to our own identities, we need to know first what are those patterns of thinking based on, how did they come about, and what are the means by which we could transform them.

Thus, before I try to give an account of the contemporary suggestions that are thought to be possible solutions to the problem, I am going to dwell on the dominant English or British cultural institutions and ideas that shaped the history of the British Empire as they appear in J.G. Farrell's *Empire Trilogy*. Furthermore, I will also attempt to focus on the way Farrell illustrates these ideas because, as I have mentioned it earlier, he wrote the novels in the 1970s and, as Margaret Drabble claims, he "constantly raises questions about the relationship of past events to the present and indeed the future" (Drabble 178).

⁷ As Kumar remarks, "for much of the [twentieth] century empire was a central presence in the life of the British people" (235).

II. Imperial Englishness in J. G. Farrell's *Empire Trilogy*

The time of the British Empire was burdened by controversial ideologies, values and institutions that supported both imperialism and English nationalism at the same time. The “heterogeneous” mid-nineteenth century, the high noon of the Empire, can be characterized as a time of fusion and clash of these ideologies (Crane 87). In his novels, Farrell uses and emphasizes these clashes to illustrate the disadvantages of each idea, and thus he subversively demonstrates their illusory stability. It needs to be noted that although the majority of the ideologies were conflicting, they all contributed to “the spirit of the time” as a whole. Also, it would be difficult to overestimate the extent to which these ideas and values dominated the frame of mind of those living in the time of the Empire - maybe even those who live nowadays.

What is most noticeable in Farrell's trilogy at first sight is that the protagonists' lives are strongly affected in all their details by the ideologies that have been mentioned. (This is in the forefront to such a degree in *The Siege of Krishnapur* that it may be even called a novel of ideas.) The characters make every decision with the dominant cultural ideas in mind. Thus these ideas become the basis of their personal identities, and the public and private spheres appear to be closely connected. In addition, almost all the characters find themselves in situations, sooner or later in the novels, that are usually brought about the uncontrollable force of the public sphere, and in which the different world views are continuously put on trial. “This contributes to the sense of stiffness with which many of the characters manipulate their ideas in bewildering circumstances, as though trying to cling to some sense of order in a rapidly dissolving world.” (Drabble 181) Most often, these ideologies prove to be insupportable, which, because of the strong link between subjectivity and ideology, leads to the instability of the identity of the protagonists (McLeod 10). Furthermore, the

insignificance of these situations is frequently emphasized, as if the author implied that the insistence on the imperialist ideas is pointless.

For instance, in *The Siege of Krishnapur*, the Protestant Padre and the Catholic Father O'Hare start an argument on the religious affiliation of the dead bodies because even in the midst of the siege they think that the Protestants and Catholics must be buried separately (Farrell 197). Farrell uses such situations to ironically and subversively rewrite the collision of ideologies all through the novels. It is no wonder that he found the discourse of religion an appropriate one in which to demonstrate the combination of nationalism and imperialism in one ideology. Protestantism was one of the most important elements of the English identity, on the basis of which the influence of the most tenacious enemies – France and Spain – could be suppressed and contained⁸. However, as Scotland and Northern Ireland were also Protestant, religion proved to be useful as one of the ideologies that connected England and the Celtic fringe (at the cost of completely alienating the Catholic Ireland), while, at the same time, imperialism could also be supported by it due to the claim that Catholicism could emerge anywhere in the world, so Protestantism needs to be transported everywhere to contain the Catholics (Kumar 114).

The breakdown of the fixed dichotomy of Protestantism and Catholicism can be seen in *Troubles*, too. The opposed ideologies are hidden behind the facade of religion but it does not prove to be efficient in dividing the people in the public sphere, which is sensed by most of the protagonists, but most noticeably by the Major. The invisibility of the enemy is the exact point which renders the troubles so destabilizing and dangerous.

Look, he thought, how does one recognize them? They wear no uniform. They're like spies. They should be shot like spies. They look like anyone at all. It was absurd, he thought, walking beside the tranquil green

⁸ Kumar also mentions the concept of „the elect nation” in Protestantism, which could give a sense of a unified nation (Kumar 108).

field scarred here and there by the brown patches of abandoned cricket pitches... (Farrell 92)

On the other hand, irony is ubiquitous again when religion segregates the private sphere with such an extreme force that it seems to be nothing but grotesque and absurd to what measures the characters think in religious terms when they separate themselves from their opposition who frequently happen to be their best friends or closest relatives. For, instance, when Sarah is introduced to the Major, she immediately stresses the fact that they are predetermined to part because of religion:

‘[...] But you’ve forgotten the most important thing.’

‘What’s that?’

‘The fact that I’m a Catholic. Yes, I can see that she told you but that you regard it as a fact too shameful to mention. Or perhaps you regard it as good manners not to mention such an affliction.’ (Farrell 29)

However, as Farrell claims, nobody notes the fact that the Catholic and Protestant chapels are built from the same stones (96), that is, they could be fundamentally reconciled.

Furthermore, it must not be neglected that Farrell’s unfinished novel would have extensively dwelt on the criticism of the oppositions within the Church. Here again, the extreme divisive effect of religion within the British community is emphasized, as if Farrell wanted to show that a stable British identity was only an illusion. In addition, by highlighting the slight ritual differences between Catholicism and Protestantism, the author illustrates rather ironically an ideology which creates situations in which the decision whether the sick gets a doctor or not is made on the basis of their religion. As Mr. Forsythe tells Dr McNab “it’s not every doctor who’ll turn out on a chilly night for a curate who’s known to be half-mad and three-quarters the way to Rome” (Farrell 68).

Another powerful ideology explored by Farrell (which was closely connected to religion) was the mentality encouraged and crystallized by the public schools of the

nineteenth century. The public school was the single most important institution which could imbue, through education, the appropriate values into the leading subjects of the Empire: the masculine, active, liberal humanist, gentlemanly ideal was created (Crane 114). In his book, Brian Doyle examines the process, and the demands on which it was based, of how English literature took the place of the Classics in the centre of public school education at the end of nineteenth century⁹. Thus, a national literature became essential in the shaping of the imperial ideology, too. It is interesting, for example, that English literature was first included in the curriculum in Edinburgh (Doyle 14).

Besides, the public school attitude ensured the rise of another cultural institution that is inseparable from the masculine ideal: the sports and games that required active participation were thought to be just as important in creating the best subjects of the Empire as the Classics. It is not a coincidence that one of the first things to do in the new colonies was to set up cricket fields that always stood as the expression of English superiority and discipline (Baucom 137). The cricket fields represented the essential Englishness for the colonizers, and at the same time they were used as a means to inculcate the superior culture into the colonized.

Public school mentality and the central cultural artefacts that public school education relies on and maintains at the same time are also depicted by Farrell as dubious. In *Troubles*, the Major, who can be read as the representative of the post-war British masculine gentlemanly ideal (Binns 45) is shell shocked, confused, and unable to control the flow of events. The spaces of outdoor activities which served as an organic part of the education of the elite are all out of order: they are beyond the order of the fixed categories of the Empire, thus they become subversive. The tennis courts no longer resemble the clear, strict site of a

⁹ Doyle also examines how English, an originally feminine discipline, became a masculine profession during the nineteenth century.

disciplined game, they are abandoned and growing wild. Both the squash courts and the swimming pool come to be the scenes of violence: Padraig is almost drowned in the pool by soldiers when he cross-dresses, which in a way represents one way of mixing social roles and identities. Furthermore, on the walls of the squash court appear the words painted with the blood of Edward's pigs: "Spies and traitors beware!" (360)

It is also significant that when the Major first arrives at the Majestic, the men go out looking for I.R.A. soldiers, and they consider the hunt only as a good game after the afternoon tea. Their conversation is full of words that imply the atmosphere of a sport, a game: "scrap", "match", "set". This is also emphasized by several other circumstances. Edward's weapons include a tennis racket because the hunt interrupts his match with the doctor. Also, during the chase two stories are told: one about Edward's boxing match against "the notorious Kevin Clinch", an Irish boxer; the other about an alleged Sinn Féiner, who is caught and unarmed by the audience of a tennis match¹⁰. In contrast, later in the novel, the animosity cannot be described in terms of a game: when Edward shoots the young Irish lad who had blown up the statue of Queen Victoria, the hunt turns into serious and dangerous reality that disrupts rather than constructs a sense of an order.

Farrell's image of sports, namely that they are part of an ideology that results in the people's lack of perspective and their deliberate escape from reality, is emphasized in his later novels, too. Furthermore, he shows that this escapism cannot be maintained for long because reality will sooner or later intrude and disrupt the belief in the ideology (McLeod 6). In *The Siege of Krishnapur*, this can be clearly seen from the fact that the siege is seen like a kind of entertainment, game, due to the crowds of native onlookers as an audience. Also, when General Jackson visits Krishnapur to inform the Collector about the outbreak of the mutiny,

¹⁰ It must be noted here that the image of war as a game was a widespread representation at the time of the Empire. In this way, war could be seen as a conflict played according to the rules, thus it seemed to be ordered and controlled. This image was only dismantled by the First World War (Crane 76).

he brings a cricket bat and pretends that he would consult the Collector about an upcoming cricket match (Farrell 63).

In addition, Farrell demonstrates ironically how the Collector tries to retreat to the idea of peaceful and ordered home from the intrusion of reality of the siege. At one part of the siege, the Collector watches the events in a delirious fever from a window of the Residency.

How delightful that would be! Tea on the lawn, spaniels at one's heels, scarlet and dark green...the colours of the rightness of the world and of his place in it! Even in his fever the Collector's amputated hopes and beliefs continued to itch.

'Let us have tea on the lawn again!' shouted the Collector from the window. [...]

He and Pain together watched a scene which reminded him of the beach. How pleasant it is to sit on the cliffs of Dover and watch the waves rolling in. (Farrell 214-15)

What is represented by the constant playing of cards which becomes a kind of obsession of the guesses at the Majestic, is continued in *The Siege of Krishnapur* by the fixation with tea parties, even when there is no more tea, only hot water. These repeated customs exemplify the confused and bewildered British people's demand for discipline and rules, which were inscribed into their frame of mind during the literature courses and cricket matches in the public schools. However, the inadequateness of these cultural ideas to construct a stable narrative that would denote British identity is emphasized by Farrell.

Also, Farrell shuffles the cultural stereotypes inherent in the imperial ideologies to illustrate the confused nature of times: Sarah, the Irish Catholic lady, is described once as a 'cultured' pearl who is to be saved from the Irish swine (Farrell 109). Moreover, in the same paragraph, the Major uses the French phrase '*une heureuse rencontre*', as if to denote his superiority, although, at the same time, British culture was also distinguished from the

stereotypical French one¹¹.

The statues represent British culture in *Troubles* as well, thus the IRA is fighting its war also by blowing them up. It is interesting that while the statue of Queen Victoria is blown up by a young Irish boy, the statue of Venus survives even the apocalyptic fire of the destroyed Majestic and returns in *The Siege Krishnapur* as an idea that is embodied by Lucy. Indeed, the demolition of the statue of Queen Victoria and the shooting of the Irish boy as a consequence mark one of those points of the novel when it can be sensed that the events are taking an irreversible turn. As if, with the devastation of the statues, the ideologies they represent started to decline, too. The statues embody and reassure ideas also in *The Singapore Grip*. When Walter pays a visit to the Governor, he laments on the continuous change of the times, “glancing for reassurance at the statue of Queen Victoria [...] which stood at the end of the hall. That, at any rate, was still unchanged”. (Farrell 248)

As it has been mentioned, the statue of Venus endures the fire at the end of *Troubles*, its symbolic significance is carried on to Farrell’s later novels, too. In *The Siege of Krishnapur* there is a highly comic scene when the tea party organized by Lucy, “the fallen woman” (Farrell 134), is interrupted by a cloud of cockroaches. Lucy cannot bear the cockroaches crawling under her clothes so she tears them down, and “there she [stands], stark naked but as black and glistening as an African slave-girl.” (Farrell 230) The next moment she faints, so Fleury and Harry agree to “shave the black foam of insects off Lucy's skin” (231) with the “sacred boards” of the Bible:

Her body, both young men were interested to discover, was remarkably like the statues of young women they had seen...like, for instance, the Collector's plaster cast of *Andromeda Exposed to the Monster* [...]. Indeed, Fleury felt quite like a sculptor as he worked away [...]. The only significant difference between Lucy and a statue was that Lucy had pubic hair; this caused them a bit of a

¹¹ Drabble also notes that “English language itself look[s] quaintly fossilized [in the *Empire Trilogy*], like the Empire that created it” (183).

surprise at first. It was not something that had ever occurred to them as possible, likely, or even, desirable.

'D'you think this is supposed to be here?' asked Harry, who had spent a moment or two scraping at it ineffectually with his board [...].

'That's odd,' said Fleury, peering at it with interest; he had never seen anything like it on a statue. (Farrell 231-32)

The Victorian ideologies about women are contrasted in this scene. First, we can see that Lucy's body is connected to statues (and we could say, that the statue of Venus is suggested here, too) that give an image of the woman's body, and at the same time, they hide the physicality of it. It can be clearly seen that although Fleury and Harry have seen statues of women they do not know the female body, they are surprised and bewildered by the pubic hair. Furthermore, it cannot be neglected that the Victorian images of women are contrasted through Lucy's body: the angelic woman, who is deprived of her bodily aspects, and the fallen woman, the prostitute, who has morally failed are juxtaposed¹². Neither of them can describe Lucy, which results in the fact that Fleury and Harry can only stand there in embarrassment, not knowing what to do with Lucy's pubic hair¹³. Thus it could be argued that the statues also represent an idea that covers reality and offers an escape from the knowledge of it¹⁴.

Farrell's trilogy also reflects on the role of architecture during the time of the British Empire. What we can see in the trilogy is the continuous destruction of the British spaces of identity. What happens to the cricket fields, swimming pools, and tennis courts, is present in the case of buildings, too. The most noticeable example is the Majestic Hotel in *Troubles*. It is

¹² McLeod notes that the female characters of Farrell are frequently criticized because they are not subversive enough (67). It can be added, however, that, considering Farrell's ironical tone, and the figure of Miriam and Vera, this criticism can be challenged.

¹³ Moreover, the reference to the African slave-girl offers a further perspective on the question of Empire and women, which is in the center in *The Singapire Grip*. As Crane claims, in Farrell's Singapore "the colonial experience" is clearly linked to sexual possession (109). Farrell describes the economy of the Empire by using the sexual metaphor of prostitution, which can be seen in Joan's marriage plans or Matthew and Monty's "adventure" in a brothel.

¹⁴ It is not a coincidence that Fleury and Harry get to know the female body in the Raj, as the colonies were thought to be the exotic places of forbidden knowledge (Baucom 86).

a crumbling, declining edifice (Farrell 15). In addition, it can be argued that both the Residency in *The Siege of Krishnapur* and Walter Blackett's house in *The Singapore Grip* exemplify this phenomenon.

That these buildings express the rigid hierarchy and clear boundaries of the Empire is immediately visible in the novel set in Krishnapur.

“The Residency was lamplit at this time of night. The marble staircase which faced Fleury as he entered gave him the delicious sensation of entering a familiar and civilized house; his eyes, which had been starved of such nourishment since he had left Calcutta, greedily followed the swerve of its banister [...]. Other Europeans besides Fleury had feasted their eyes on this staircase [...]; here in the Krishnapur cantonment all the other houses were of one storey; to be able to go upstairs was a luxury available only to the Collector and his guests.” (Farrell 47)

But the reader knows in advance that the Residency will soon be only an abandoned building in one of the “Cities of the Silent” (Farrell 10). Indeed throughout the novel, one can witness that the Residency is constantly being demolished and finally it is lost to the sepoys.

This happens in Farrell's next novel, too. The Blacketts' house, which in the beginning stands in the comfortable and distinguished Tanglin suburb of Singapore, is rendered equally chaotic with all the other suburbs of the city by the end: it is doomed to decline by the constant bombing and the influx of crowds of refugees looking for shelter.

What we can see in all three of the novels is that the British spaces of identity are under siege by the “native” identities, and the siege is successful in each of them (Binns 18). The identity of the colonizers becomes unstable due to the decline of the ideologies it is built on. Farrell's method of illustrating the demolition of ideologies by the devastation of the cultural artefacts symbolizing them is the most remarkable in *The Siege of Krishnapur*.

One of its most memorable scenes is the one in which the cannons defending the besieged British are filled with the canister of broken parts of the sculpture *The Spirit of Science Conquers Ignorance and Prejudice* (289). What Farrell does in this scene is used

frequently in the whole trilogy: he contrasts the high ideas with their obverse, practical or material side, and uses specific, absurd situations to explore and emphasize the clash within the ideologies, comically and ironically revealing the inherent instability of these ideas.

In *The Siege of Krishnapur*, there are a number of similar situations when the irony is achieved by making the symbolic, abstract cultural phenomena literal and material. For instance, when the defenders retreat from their outer ramparts, they can survive the attack of the sepoys only by blowing up the ditches that are packed with loads of paper amassed during the British administration of the Raj. In this scene, their “superior culture” defends them literally by rendering the sepoys blind due to the “snowstorm” of falling flakes of paper (216). As Ronald Binns claims, the Collector’s diminishing faith in the dominant ideologies of the Victorian Empire is symbolized by the fairly detailed process during which he gets rid of all the objects retrieved from the Great Exhibition (Binns 66). He has them brought out onto the ramparts when a biblical rain threatens to melt down the defenses. Also, when the siege starts the cannons are defended from the enemy’s artillery by the giant marble heads of Plato and Socrates (135). In addition, during the final attack, Fleury, who by now has become one of the imperialist heroes, finds himself face to face with a huge sepoy. He fights and almost kills him with the help of a violin (297). However, the most ingenious situation is described when the Collector recollects his memories on the efficiency of different cultural items when they are used as ammunition:

Without a doubt the most effective missiles in this matter of improvised ammunition had been the heads of his electro-metal figures, removed from their bodies with the help of Turtons’ indispensable file. And of the heads, perhaps not surprisingly, the most effective of all had been Shakespeare’s; it had scythed its way through a whole astonished platoon of sepoys advancing in single file through the jungle. The Collector suspected that the Bard’s success in this respect might have a great deal to do with the ballistic advantages stemming from his baldness. The head of Keats, for example, wildly festooned with metal locks [...] had flown very erratically indeed, killing only a fat money-lender and a camel. (Farrell 304)

In these scenes the “objects of civilization become means of pain and horror” (Binns 96).

English culture used as a means for imperialistic aims, and the ideology of the public school which was one of the most prominent institutions for creating and bequeathing this attitude toward culture to the young generations, are scrutinized with criticism in *The Singapore Grip*, too. However, in the last volume, this ideology is seen from a different angle: the critical edge is directed to the idea of liberal humanism. Liberal humanism made it possible to think about imperialism as a process of transporting the benefits of a better civilization to the distant lands in need of the order and rights offered by the British. It was the ideology that enabled the subjects of the Empire to see colonialism as service, as the elevation of the chaotic and primitive societies to the level of the British state, and the offer of the advantages of it (Doyle 100).

However, Farrell puts a great deal of emphasis on the contradictions inherent in liberal humanism, and calls attention to its obverse side: the economy of imperialism (Crane 24). In *Troubles*, for instance, Edward feeds his pigs with stale cakes while a group of women is daily looking for food in the dustbins of the hotel (Farrell 255). Another memorable scene is in *The Siege of Krishnapur*, when the rest of the food supplies that remains in the Residency is auctioned, and Mr Rayne wants to buy everything to sell them later for more (Farrell 259). The debate between the Collector and the Magistrate before reflects on some of the arguments that caused the tension in liberal humanism.

'In the outside world people perish or survive depending on whether they have money, so why should they not here?'

'This is a different situation,' the Collector had replied, scowling. 'We must all help other and depend on each other.'

'And must we not outside?' (Farrell 172)

In *The Singapore Grip*, the author concentrates on the setbacks of a capitalist

economy that renders the colonies vulnerable and powerless in the face of the practices of the colonizers (hence the claim that they are prostitutes). As the dialogue between Matthew and Ehrendorf illustrates, there is an ambiguous relationship between liberal humanism and capitalism:

‘How about the rights of the individual, imported along with a Western legal system? Isn’t that worth having, Matthew?’

‘Freedom of the individual at the expense of food, clothing and a harmonious life, of being swindled by a system devised to the advantage of those with capital? [...] It’s no good calling somebody free unless he’s economically free, too, at least to some extent...Is it?...however much lack of individual freedom may horrify an English intellectual sitting at his desk with a hot dinner under his belt’ (Farrell 461).

In addition, the majority of cultural creations in the novel also depict the material, economic side of imperialism. Instead of the portrait of Queen Victoria, which was hung in the Collector’s study during the Victorian age, during the Second World War Walter Blackett’s paintings illustrate the history of the development of his company (11). Moreover, the jubilee parade organized by Walter is saturated by features that symbolize economic phenomena (367). Mr Blackett’s intention with the jubilee parade is to demonstrate how, despite a number of obstacles, like “‘Labour Unrest’, ‘Wage Demands’, [...] ‘Racial Enmity’, ‘Slander Against Government and British Empire’, ‘Slander Against Private Enterprise’, [and] ‘Irresponsible Strikes’” (Farrell 258-59), his company had successfully managed to “continu[e] in prosperity”, thus representing the persistence of the glorious benefits of the imperialist project. But what it does represent is the exact opposite. By mixing the economic, capitalist concepts with the imperialist, missionary, public school attitude, it illuminates the most pressing question of the novel: who is the beneficiary of imperialism? Does the Empire bring wealth, order, and humanity to the colonies? Farrell’s answer is unambiguous: he deconstructs the stability of the ideology of liberal humanism by asserting that it is built on a fundamental controversy. The wealth of the colonies is drained by the imperialist colonizers,

it is used to strengthen and legitimize a “superior civilization” with the public school as one of its basic institutions from where a legion of new colonizers is sent forth under the banner of liberal humanism to close the vicious circle. As Baucom suggests, the country houses of the British aristocracy, which were the symbols of the cultivated mother country, could be built from the money of the overseas territories (168).

Here, the clash between progressive, cosmopolitan imperialism and conservative, localist nationalism is overt to such a degree that indeed, this has become the most frequently used dichotomy in distinguishing Englishness and Britishness (Wiener 5). However, as it can be witnessed in Farrell’s novels, too, industrial and capitalist imperialism is not really opposed to the traditional, localist nationalism. They are rather the sides of the same coin. The idealization of the English countryside as the quintessence of the home only served to screen one of the most puzzling paradoxes of imperialism: while most of the people who participated in the shaping of the imperialist ideology shared fears about the loss of the idyllic English countryside, nobody seemed to be aware of the fact that the scenery which served as the model for this idyll was actually created from the wealth of the colonies (Kumar 170).

Thus on the basis of Farrell's trilogy one can connect and criticize both English nationalism and British imperialism. Farrell's novels reflect a basic similarity between the two: neither of them wants to acknowledge the existence of the reverse side. When English nationalism illustrates England as an idyllic, rural country, it tries to exclude the fact that England was the country where industrial revolution started, with thousands of people living in the crowded cities (Wiener 6). Similarly, while the British Empire expanded with the help of the idea of liberal humanism, it consciously ignored the fact that capitalism, the economy

of the Empire deprives the colonies of their wealth and humanity¹⁵.

In addition, Farrell has a similar approach in the novels to another opposition of ideologies describing the difference between Englishness and Britishness. In Farrell's novels the all-pervasive idea of progress can be seen as a constituent of imperialism. In contrast, the English tend to think of themselves as a conservative nation¹⁶.

In Farrell's trilogy, the fusion of British, imperial liberal humanism that supports progress, and the image of a stable and unchanging English countryside is not only represented by the country houses of the aristocracy. The discourses of science and technology also serve to illustrate this.

Natural sciences basically did not have enough prestige to participate in the official education of the British gentleman, they nevertheless became a kind of national pastime, which also features in Farrell's trilogy (Doyle 24). Natural sciences came to be considered as expressions of the practical, empirical British frame of mind as opposed to the abstract, theoretical thinking of the Continent, mainly France (Kumar 54). Farrell also illustrates how the discourse of sciences was tried to be reconciled with religion and imperialism, for example in the idea of the Great Exhibition of 1851.

First of all, in *Troubles*, Edward is obsessed with scientific experiments because, as he claims,

‘It’s never been done before. Never actually *measured*, that is...so, of course, as far as science is concerned it hasn’t strictly speaking existed until now.’ [...] I’m drafting a paper to send to the Royal Society. [...] I always wanted to make a contribution, however small.’ (Farrell 284-85)

Furthermore, the sciences represented the English attitude that advocated a society in

¹⁵Wiener even draws a parallel between the colonies and the rural England: he asserts that both were thought to be vulnerable to the capitalism of Empire (52). Tagore, in contrast, claims that England as a nation is an industrial machine which only ventures to the colonies for her own material well-being.

¹⁶ “England [is] naturally neither capitalist nor imperialist.” (Wiener 61)

which one could make one's way on the basis of his/her merits (Doyle 86). Edward does not have to be a professional to contribute.

In contrast, the businessmen in the novels are described as characters who subordinate every aspect of their life to business, even their personal relationships: they have to be professionals. In *The Siege of Krishnapur*, Walter Blackett's son, Monty deals with shares once in the name of his father, and loses a huge sum of money. He is reminded by his father that business is not only a hobby, it is a way of living. In a similar vein, Walter and Joan, his daughter, try to arrange a marriage for Joan that is good for the Blackett's Company all through the novel. When Joan slips in the bed beside Matthew in front of her father, Walter only responds:

‘Oh, the little rascal,’ chuckled Walter. ‘Oh, the little hussy! [...] And before her own father’s very eyes!’ [...] And while Joan hung her dress on a coathanger to dry before climbing into bed Walter beamed at Matthew more expansively than ever. ‘Well, there you are, my boy,’ he seemed to be saying. ‘There are the goods. You won’t find better. You can see for yourself. It’s a good offer. Take it or leave it.’ (Farrell 272)

However, as Wiener claims, the ideologies of the class of businessmen were looked at with contempt by the English who excluded “the industrial spirit” from the list of English national characteristics (Wiener 10)¹⁷. If we agree, it can be concluded that while the sciences, which were cultivated by enthusiastic amateurs, were at the heart of the definition of English national identity, the business class was the exact opposite: it was oppressed and exiled to the space of imperial Britishness.

Farrell's trilogy, nonetheless, does not support the contrast of the ideologies of science and business, the novelist rather fuses them into one. This is the most vivid in *The Singapore Grip*, illustrated by a number of scenes in which science is used as a justification of the

¹⁷ Also, Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful* illustrates how the English think of themselves as a nation which ignores the profit-oriented industrial ideology.

civilizing mission:

‘Incidentally, when I told Sinclair about the man I’d seen in Shanghai with strawberry jam coming out of his stomach he wasn’t at all impressed and said he’s seen lots of thing like that and that Asiatics are always killing each other. It seems they don’t mind. It’s been proved scientifically.’ (Farrell 26)

‘The reason the Japs are so touchy and arrogant is that they eat too much fish,’ said Brooke-Popham. ‘It’s scientific. The iodine in their diet plays hell with their thyroids. They can’t help themselves.’ (Farrell 142)

The use of sciences to prove one's moral superiority is the basis of one of the most ironic conflicts in *The Siege of Krishnapur*. The conflict between Dr. Dunstaple and Dr. McNab heightens when Dr. Dunstaple attacks his colleague's cure for cholera. The cynical Magistrate calls attention to the fact that Dr Dunstaple throws in his reasons against McNab in a manner that can easily influence the opinion of the prejudiced audience. This is the opposite of the image of the imperialist mission embodied by the Collector's *The Spirit of Science Conquers Ignorance and Prejudice*. The doctors' debate illustrates Farrell's image of the sciences all through the novel. It is a discourse imbued by ideologies that obscure rather than clarify the complexity of the imperial mission, that blind people to the reality of their present.

This can be seen in the image of the Great Exhibition of 1851, too, which combines the contemporary ideologies of technology, consumerism, Empire, and progress (Kumar 192). The Exhibition in the beginning of *The Siege of Krishnapur* is seen as the celebration of the superior civilization of the British Empire.

‘It’s not simply to acquire wealth, but to acquire *through* wealth, that superior way of life which we loosely term civilization and which includes so many things, both spiritual and practical...and of the utmost diversity...a system of administering justice impartially on the one hand, works of art unsurpassed in beauty since antique times on the other. The spreading of the Gospel on the one hand, the spreading of the railways on the other. [...] I had the privilege [...] of attending the Great Exhibition which opened in our homeland [...]. To wander about in that vast building of glass, so immense that

the elms it enclosed looked like Christmas trees, was to walk in a wonderland of beauty and of Man's ingenuity.' (Farrell 50)

However, as the besieged British community is forced to face the reality of their situation, they start to entertain doubts about what the Exhibition stands for. By the end of the siege, the Collector, the keenest advocate of the grandeur of the Exhibition questions the very ideas that were symbolized by the "The World's Vanity Fair":

The extraordinary array of chains and fetters, manacles and shackles exhibited by Birmingham for export to America's slave states, for instance...Why had he not thought more about such exhibits? Well, he had never pretended that science and industry were good *in themselves*, of course...they still had to be used correctly. All the same, he should have thought a great deal more about what lay behind the exhibits. (Farrell 300-01)

Thus, in the world of Farrell's Empire trilogy the ideologies behind English nationalism and British imperialism are described as intertwined and unstable. Most of them appear to hinder both English and British subject's ability to observe the circumstances in the colonies in an open-minded fashion, thus these ideologies seem to bind and blind the colonizers. When the flagpole falls on the Collector, and he is trapped by the flag, he realizes the binding effect of the imperial ideologies:

This was a nightmare he had had on the night they had taken refuge in the Residency, and repeatedly since then throughout the siege; when the Collector, cursing, had at last fought his way out of the flag, it was such a relief to escape from his nightmare that he felt he did not mind so much about the sepoys (Farrell, *The Siege of Krishnapur* 290)

The flag in this scene can be seen as a symbol of the British ideas that compels the Collector to perceive the siege with the imperialist ideologies in mind. As a consequence, not only the people who lay siege to the British community, but also this besieged community is coerced into a narrative which deprives them of control. When this narrative proves to be insufficient to describe the experiences of the characters, the components begin to break

down: trust in Protestantism, liberal humanism, the progress in a superior culture can no longer help. Some of the characters in the Empire trilogy try to react to the situation by escaping to the protecting stability of the ideologies of home and past, especially to the idealized images of the English countryside, only to find them also destabilized by the events unfolding at the time of the Empire.

How do the characters of Farrell's fictional world react to the dissolution of the ideologies defining their own identity? How do their reactions reflect Farrell's attitude to imperialism and nationalism? How do they mirror the answers to the question of English and British identity given in the time of Farrell? Can they be seen as plausible solutions for the crisis of Englishness? In the next chapter, I will discuss these questions.

III. Narratives of Identity Then and Now

Ah, the idols and icons of history, ah, the emblems and totems of yesterday. How when we knock down one, another rises in its place. How we can't get away [...] from our fairy-tales. How even [...] during a great Depression which returns to haunt us in our own unprosperous times, Empire Day was regularly celebrated with no small enthusiasm. (Swift 155-56)

Farrell's view of history plays a major role in his remarkable writing technique. In his Empire trilogy he questions the validity of a unified, stable view of history, and he constantly blurs the boundary between reality and fiction.

In *Troubles*, although it is set in the time of determining “historical events”, the Majestic Hotel is deliberately distanced from them. The characters can only get a glimpse of history through the newspapers, which can be highly biased. A story of the private, local sphere is in the foreground all through the novel, which is, though saturated by the relationships and ideologies motivating the public sphere, swept away by history at the end. Hence, *Troubles* is a story, which is part of history but also against a kind of narrative of history which only accounts for the significant events. In addition, as Binns points out, *Troubles* is also part autobiographical, as one of the characters of the novel is Farrell's grandfather, who was an Irish timber merchant.

The entanglement of reality and fiction, and the subversion of a stable narrative of history continue in the subsequent volumes of the trilogy, too. The story of *The Siege of Krishnapur* is based on the siege of Lucknow, a legendary moment of the Indian Mutiny (Binns 65). However, in the novel, the insignificance of the events at Krishnapur is highlighted by the Collector, as if he deliberately wanted to point out that the grandeur was only given as a construct by the narrative of history (Farrell 311). Thus, Farrell rewrites history but there are a number of “historical absences” in the novel (for example, the relieving force at Lucknow sacked the town, which is not mentioned in the case of

Krishnapur) (Binns 80). Also, one of the most important points of the novel is illustrated by the scene in which the general of the relieving force thinks about how the relief of Krishnapur will be constructed and presented to fit into the grand narrative of history¹⁸.

Even when allowances were made, the ‘heroes of Krishnapur’, as he did not doubt they would soon be called, were a pretty rum lot. And he would have to pose for hours, holding a sword and perched on a trestle or a wooden horse while some artist-wallah depicted ‘The Relief of Krishnapur’! He must remember to insist on being in the foreground, however: then it would not be so bad. With luck this wretched selection of ‘heroes’ would be given the soft pedal...an indistinct crowd of corpses and a few grateful faces, cannons and prancing horses would be best. (Farrell 310-11)

Farrell emphasizes the constructedness of history, and ironically presents this construction as the exact opposite of what really happened: history becomes fiction. Furthermore, *The Singapore Grip* can be called a documentary fiction: it offers a fictional version of the Japanese invasion of Singapore, what is, however, full of real figures (for instance, General Percival) and some of Farrell's critics denounced the novel exactly because they thought it was over-researched (McLeod 80). Besides, Walter Blackett's paintings serve the same purpose as the representation of the relief of Krishnapur the general had in mind does: they highlight the constructedness of a narrative of history which is concerned only with the imperialist perspective.

In addition, Farrell's characters always have a feeling of unreality when they are forced to participate in the historical events.

Percival [...] found himself having to elude the grasp of another, even more cruel conviction: namely, that the Governor now sitting opposite him *was not real*. Nor was it only the Governor who suffered this disability: his wife did, too, and his staff, and indeed, everyone here in the Singapore Club and, come to that, outside it. For it had dawned on Percival that he was the victim of a cruel and elaborate charade: that the moment he left the Governor's presence the fellow would cease to exist. (Farrell 583)

This feeling is ubiquitous in the trilogy: it is sensed by the Major in *Troubles* as well

¹⁸ See also Thomas J. Barker's painting 'The Relief of Lucknow'.

as by the Collector in *The Siege of Krishnapur* and Walter in *The Singapore Grip*. (Binns 52)

What cannot be adjusted to the stable narrative of events cannot be seen, literally and figuratively.

This is strengthened by the emphasis on perspective, or rather, the lack of perspective of the characters. In *Troubles*, the Major grows the habit of observing the landscape with a looking glass, which he took from a dead German soldier in the First World War. However, he “scanned the bright, peaceful countryside” in vain, the “menace” “was invisible” to him (Farrell 398) Also, when Captain Bolton and the Major watch the crowd of Irish people who gather to witness an alleged religious miracle, the Major comments on his lack of perspective.

The Major raised the binoculars and gazed once more at the young man on the rock jetty [...]. Behind [the young man] as he spoke great towering breakers would build up; a solid wall of water as big as a house would mount over his gesticulating arms, would hang there above him for an instant as if about to engulf him, then crash around him in a torrent of foam. [...] Before turning away, he watched another huge wave tower over the young Irishman, hang for a moment, and at last topple to boil impotently around his feet. It was, after all, only the lack of perspective that made it seem as if he would be swept away. (Farrell 248)

In the second volume, the Collector is observed by his daughters during siege through a telescope from a window of the Residency. Later, he is the one who scrutinizes the events; moreover, by the end of the siege, the crowds of native onlookers are also mentioned frequently, watching the scene. Besides, as I have mentioned in the previous chapter, the Residency is the only two-storey building in Krishnapur, which does not only symbolize that the British have the upper hand, but can also shed light on the reason of the control: the colonizers can see over the whole town, their perspective is not blocked by other buildings. The significance of the opportunity to change one’s perspective is also stressed in *The Singapore Grip*, as Matthew experiences when he is sent up to the roof of a house to help fight the fire:

Soon he began to savour the strange sensation of being marooned above the city in the hot darkness; he was pervaded by a feeling of isolation and melancholy [...]. He was so remote from what was happening down there, after all. It seemed impossible that anything happening on the ground could touch him. Below was the fire, and beyond the fire and all around lay the city of Singapore where two hostile armies were struggling to subdue each other in the darkness. Up here it made no difference. (Farrell 563-64)

However, Farrell's characters seldom try to look at the events from a different viewpoint. They rather withdraw into their positions and accept the given ideologies based on their perspective, which allows them to create a stable, unified narrative (Kumar 242). What cannot be aligned with this narrative is not understood by them, and, thus it is wrapped in a sense of unreality. However, when the historical events reach them, there is so much unreality in the air that the cohesion of the characters' narrative of history falls apart.

What most of them do is analogous to several reactions given to the sense of crisis of national identity in Farrell's time. They reach back to past events that have already been constructed as stable (Baucom 19). Through nostalgia it is possible to create a soothing and desirable image of the First World War which has been one of the historical events when the firmness of the contemporary ideologies collapsed (Kumar 232). In both *Troubles* and *The Singapore Grip*, the time of the First World War is preferable to the present. The Major in *Troubles* thinks of the war he fought as a fight which was played by the rules, where one knew the enemy, and, hence, knew who he was. Even if he suffered from shell-shock, he had at least a stable identity then, as opposed to the present when the enemy is invisible. This can be seen in *Singapore*, too, where the general Brooke-Popham thinks nostalgically of his experiences of the First World War.

[He] sat with his shoulders up to his ears, frozen in an attitude of weariness; he was remembering the old days. What fun it had been when they had first gone over to France in 1914! Not like today [...] What a fine autumn that had been [...]! A clear golden light lay over the reaped fields and the farms and the gardens full of fruit. He had only to close his eyes to see a little group

of pilots at Saponay, lying in the straw and chatting after a reconnaissance sortie [...]. (Farrell 137)

So, the need for an unchanging and solid narrative is realized in most of the characters, as it can give them a sense of a strong identity. For this purpose, the inherent contradictions in the narrative and the possibility of change are excluded. This is why on the level of the nation the image of the rural England was created which embodied the past and an unalterable national identity (Wiener 5). This can also be the reason of the possibility to think in terms of a continuous, unwavering progress of the superior British civilization after the creation of the imperialist narrative (Wiener 3). And, most of all, this produces the basis of the idea that all through the time of the expansion of the British Empire, though the English and British nation and culture encountered a number of other cultures, still, the English and British national identity are not or should not be subject to influence by the cultures of the colonies (Kumar 178).

However, as it happened, the image of an unchanging, independent national identity of the colonizers could not last: the British and English identities were shaped just as much by the Empire as they tried to use it to change the colonies. “The flow of influence was two-way, even though the English nation was the inspiring and guiding spirit” (Kumar 36).

Farrell also illustrates this when he compares the interdependence of the mechanisms of the Empire to those of a clock in *The Singapore Grip*: “That ordered life in Tanglin depended [...] on the city below, and on the mainland [...], whose trading, mining and plantation concerns might represent wheels and cogs while their mute, gigantic labour force are the springs, steadily causing pressures to be transmitted from on part of the organism to another” (Farrell 6).

The British national identity depended on the Empire exactly because it was defined against the colonies. However, the boundaries distinguishing the British identity were not

clear and stable frontiers, which gave way for fears of the colonies corrupting the identity of the home country¹⁹. Also, what shows that the qualities excluded from the British identity and applied to the image of the other (namely, the colonies, in the context of the Empire) were at the same time desired is that there was a constant tendency to “go native”²⁰.

The mutual influence and blurred boundaries can be demonstrated by the history of cricket, as described by Gikandi. It is not negligible that in *Troubles*, the Major grows more pessimistic when he hears about the news of the English cricket team:

The future of the British Isles could never have seemed so dismal since the Romans had invaded; there was trouble everywhere. The ultimate stunning blow arrived [...] with the news that [...] England had been defeated in the first test match in Australia by the appalling total of three hundred and seventy-seven runs. (Farrell 277-78)

As Gikandi claims, cricket was one of the most important markers of difference between colonizer and colonized (10). Also, Baucom describes how the cricket fields were considered by the British as a space where the ideologies and values of the British could be transported to the colonized without difficulties (148). However, as cricket was picked up by the colonies so successfully, they repeatedly defeated the English team. So, later the English team had to play the strategies acquired first by the colonies. Cricket was redefined as a symbol of the shared values of the Empire, rather than a marker of difference, and, as Gikandi claims, it is nowadays more important in India and the West Indies than in England itself (Gikandi 10). Hence, the colonies have changed not only the style of cricket but also that of another globally played game, the Empire: they showed that they can influence the identity of the British, and thus, the English.

So, as Farrell is well aware of it, those who think nostalgically of the times when

¹⁹ For instance, raping an English woman was the biggest sin imaginable that could be committed by a native. This shows the fear of transgression and degeneration (Kumar 178).

²⁰ Kumar notes that in Ireland even laws were introduced to “prohibit the [adoption of a] wide range of Irish customs and manners” (the Statutes of Kilkenny from 1366) (Kumar 76).

England and the English identity were more stable and unified, only think of an invented version of the past whose totality and stability was constructed later. Just as Brooke-Popham recreated the First World War in his memories as a pleasant and unified event, the times of the British Empire are also reconstructed by the national consciousness as a basis for a strong and stable identity.

Thus, one of the reactions of Farrell's characters to the collapse of their ideologies is that they try to strengthen their identity by looking back to times that are reconstructed in their nostalgia as total and unified. This is a possible way to react to the collapse of the Empire after the 1960s, too, which on the national level leads to the rising of nationalist sentiments. However, whether the awakening of nationalism goes against the imperialist ideologies of the Empire or enhances them remains a question. Nevertheless, as Crane mentions, Farrell is definitely against nationalism, as he thinks that it carries on the values of imperialism (120). What Farrell writes in the closing passage of *The Singapore Grip* can be a hint at his attitude:

Why, Malaya is no longer even called Malaya. Things that once seemed immutable have turned out to be remarkably vulnerable to change. Or have they? The man behind the newspaper [...], as his eye was caught by that headline 'Plantation work pays less than one dollar a day', [...] said to himself that nothing very much had changed, after all, despite that tremendous upheaval in the Far East. That if, even after independence in these Third World countries, it is *still* like that, then something has gone wrong, that some other, perhaps native, élite has merely replaced the British? (Farrell 598)

Although, here Farrell only considers the economic aspect of the condition of the former colonies, we have already witnessed how closely it is connected to the dominant ideologies. In addition, it can be argued that while the reaction to the crisis of English national identity is the nostalgic recollection of a reconstructed imperialist Englishness to sustain a strengthening nationalism, and the insistence on a stable and unchanging narrative,

the English will not be able to answer the challenges in a turbulent and changing present. To maintain the illusion of an unchanging narrative, to support a collapsing imperialist Britishness (and Englishness), the English will always have to turn from the present and brood melancholically on the past.

Instead, Farrell advocates another possible way to deal with the sense of the breakdown of Englishness: instead of strengthening it in vain, he lets it break down, and calls for the writing of new narratives of identity²¹. It can be claimed that he is one of those who

are at least pleased to see what they discern as the dissolution of the old, crusty, backward-looking British and English identities. They celebrate the new hybrid, multicultural Britain [...]. These are not [...] cultures or communities of separation, sitting uneasily side by side [...]. Rather they are genuinely new constructs, creative and hybrid forms [...] (Kumar 242)

In *The Siege of Krishnapur*, the Collector can only realize the problem: “He was invaded by a great sadness, then. And as he dug, he wept. [...] it suddenly seemed to him that he could see clearly the basis of all conflict and misery, which reveals its presence by the utter and atrocious inflexibility of all human habits and beliefs, even including his own.” (Farrell 178-79) However, in *The Singapore Grip*, Matthew can find a possible way of how the people of changing and unstable communities should approach each other:

But now the *beau monde* had been replaced by that bewildering array of races and types he had noticed earlier [...], even two members of the pygmies could be seen executing a perfect tango close at hand. Matthew gazed enchanted at the teeming dancefloor. Abruptly, he realised [that] this sight gave him such pleasure. (Farrell 186)

²¹ Crane claims that Farrell was ignored by the critics in the 1980s because he was not considered as a writer of “contemporary consciousness”, he was thought to be a late modernist (Crane 13). This interpretation of Farrell’s work can not only be countered by the demonstration of Farrell’s use of “ironic black comedy” (Crane 13), but also by the claim that his call for new narratives of identity could rather have him enlisted amongst the postmodernist writers.

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