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ANIMALS IN FARRELL: THE WORKINGS OF THE HERMENEUTIC CODE

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Abstract

Critics' references to animals in Farrell suggest these animals as a quite sustained feature. But most of them like to simplify the relevant issue by talking rather of Farrell's attitude towards animals or about animals' symbolic value. This paper, however, tries to suggest that these animals have a compelling narrative role, a role that both enhances and advances the narrative reality. Apropos, the hermeneutic details realise, through these animals, an intriguing world. By narratively establishing that world, Ferrell alerts us to the relevance of this world to his humane vision and to us as beings organically interlocked with that vague world.

Key Words: animals, hermeneutic codification, narrative role, relevance, vision.

1. Introduction

Critics' references to animals in Farrell suggest these animals as a quite noticeable feature. However, critics like to simplify the relevant issue by talking either of Farrell's attitude towards animals or about animals' symbolic value. Spurling, for instance, likes to refer to Farrell's unfavorable attitude towards dogs: "He [Farrell] saw them in the same light as Lowry did, not as dear faithful pets ... but as squalid, even fairly sinister creatures" ("As Does the Bishop" 1981, 145). Olivia Manning suggests cats as forming part of the poetic quality of *Troubles*: "We are never told how these cats exist, who feeds them, who looks after them ... They're poetic cats, they're symbolic cats" (Manning, A Radio Broadcast 1980). But it is Drabble who usefully remarks on the *narrative* value of these animals. "Dogs ... tend to manipulate their reluctant owners, and buildings— notably the decaying Majestic Hotel of *Troubles*- also have a life of their own, which no amount of human endeavour can control" (1981, 164-165).

Now a look at Farrell's works would, indeed, suggest his extensive use of animals. Dogs and cats, in particular, strike us as having a certain emphasis. Thus, we have dogs of

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different names and species: Sidney in *A Man From Elsewhere*, “Bonzo” in *A Girl in the Head*, “Chloe” in *The Siege of Krishnapur*, ‘The Human Condition’ in *The Singapore Grip*, “Garibaldi” in *The Hill Station* and in *Troubles* we have a collection of dogs: Rover, Bran, Woof, Laddie, etc. There are also spaniels, hounds and pariah dogs, particularly in Farrell’s “historical” novels. We also have in Farrell’s books dead and living horses, race horses and otherwise, named horses such as “Treacle” and “Starlight” in *A Girl* “Beeswing” in *The Siege* and also unnamed ones. The Majestic in *Troubles* seethes with rats and also with cats which “were everywhere ...” (1975, 135) We also see in Farrell’s books tame and wild rabbits, the latter being depicted careering across the fields or struggling on the ridges of the mountains. Farrell also makes us see, in his more “mature” books, cows in the streets and in Indian apartments, hens picking at the refuse, peacocks shrieking, piglets piping, dead buffalos, sparrows killed for hasty meals, vultures, jackals, monkeys and birds of all kinds. My thesis in this paper strives to suggest that animals in Farrell, which form a phenomenon on their own, have a narrative role to perform and that Farrell’s wide use of animals goes beyond what is usefully suggested by some critics as their symbolic or documentary significance. Farrell’s thematic concerns and vision precisely capture animals as manipulators of a unique narrative act that elaborates its moral implications. These thematic and visionary details are codified as the narrative unfolds.

In the Farrellian text, the Hermeneutic Code is shown to operate the horizontally interlocked events that are realised at certain narrative moments. Thus, in Farrell’s “historical” novels, the code voices the pressing circumstances of both human and non-human elements. It also projects the plight of the humans and animals which worsens as the situation deteriorates in time of war. The Hermeneutic Code is also shown to operate *paradigmatically* to enunciate the puzzling quality and/or syntax of events. As we delve into the Farrellian text, the *what* and *why* questions that pertain to the narrative syntax and that have to be asked are ultimately answered by Farrell’s (or more precisely by the “implied author[’s]”) to borrow a phrase from Booth (1983, 71)) narrative gestures and humane vision. The kind of analysis which I am conducting here calls, therefore, for a reading of Farrell in which animals are seen as narratively functioning on their own and not as devices having a bridging validity. They behave as human characters do, responding agonisingly to the hardships of an on-going war.

2. Episodic Codification

The affinity of Farrell’s realisations with George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* arrests our attention. Both Farrell and Orwell seem to be keenly aware of some working levels of non-human existence, the former in all his books, the latter exclusively in his *Animal Farm*, an allegorical work. Both writers have also managed to dramatise, through their use of animals, the logic or non-logic of the horrors that pervade the human scene. Both writers, of course, capture a precarious moment in human history and allow their literary act to demonstrate its dismal possibilities. But while *Animal Farm* which is “different from anything else that Orwell wrote ... is difficult to assess ... in relation to [Orwell’s] other works” (Lee 1969, 108), the literary act which evokes the non-human existence in Farrell forms a continuity, a connected reality that impinges on the reader’s consciousness.

Significantly, on a refined level, Farrell’s validity shows in his *literariness* (not in the sense of Russian Formalism but in the sense of the rhetoric of his language) which is substantiated by his ability to escape the political idiom. This is what Howe in his *Politics and The Novel* realises as the writer’s ability to “grasp the way in which ideas in *The Novel* are transformed into something other than the ideas of a political programme”

(Howe 1967, 23). Farrell’s use of animals, in accordance with this analysis, has to be envisaged as being part of his technique which is used here in the wider sense suggested by Mark Schorer in ‘Technique as Discovery’:

When we speak of technique, then, we speak of nearly everything. For technique is the means by which the writer’s experience, which is his subject matter, compels him to

attend to it; technique is the only means he has of discovering, exploring, developing his subject, of conveying its meaning, and, finally, of evaluating it ... (Schorer 1972, 387)

It is at this point that Farrell's technique and the operative codic manifestation converge. Now from a *technical* point of view, we may safely talk of a Farrellian animal in terms of a uniquely realised human character², manipulating the critical state of man. The parallel of his state could be, in a sense, found in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (Lee 1969, 111), 'in a sense', because animals in Orwell stand for human characters that are historically recognisable, hence the emergence of a *parable*. In Farrell, animals form a phenomenon whose narrative relevance gains momentum in his 'historical' novels. A 'baby rabbit' in the following extract from *The Hill Station*, an unfinished novel, is shown to behave almost as the little boy mentioned at this narrative point. Its fate sums up the divisions in the universe, thus accentuating the fate of besieged man. The pensive tone of the passage and the human point of view aggravate the distressing reality of the strife triggered by the game of life. The human 'smile' at the nullifying sight only reiterates its dismal value:

... but once they were on the road she was sunk into her own thoughts. Once she touched Emily's hand and pointed, smiling. Emily had looked, shielding her eyes, and would rather not have seen what she did see, an eagle with a baby rabbit in its talons rising as if without effort from a ridge at a little distance. Mrs. Forester's little boy, Jack, saw this, too, and looked so distressed that Emily wanted to reach out, and comfort him ... (1981, 37-38).

The 'eagle' in this passage may be replaced by the jackals in *The Siege* whose leader announces himself 'King', according to native interpretations (1975, 107). The suggested Code which operates the narrative context in which this verbal act occurs serves to evoke the British characters' failure to comprehend the reality of India. The animal 'characters' here precisely establish that vague, incomprehensible reality of the Indian landscape. The cries which these animals utter only reinforce this conclusion. This is how Farrell's mysterious image of India informs the narrative experience filtered at this revealing point:

A wired melancholy cry started up now, echoing over the moonlit hedges and tamarinds and spreading like a widening ripple over the dark cantonment. Beside Fleury, the Magistrate said: 'Listen to the jackals ... the natives say that if you listen carefully you hear the leader calling "*Soopna men raja hooa ...*" which means "I am the king in the night" ... and then the other jackals reply: "Hooa! hooa! hooa!" "You are! you are! you are!" Fleury could make out nothing at first, but later, as he was falling asleep it seemed to him that he could, after all, hear these very words (*Siege* 1975, 107).

Towards the end of *The Siege*, there seems to be a realised sense of human equilibrium which is narratively attained through the Collector's attempt to identify himself with the vultures whose liberating freedom opposes, in his consciousness, the restrictions of the human body. To explain the following passage in terms of Farrell's attitude towards the other beings is, in my opinion, to do injustice to the Farrellian text, The narrative point here, which cuts across the historical one, is to proclaim man a doomed reality:

The Collector was fond of vultures and did not share the usual view of them as sinister and ominous creatures. By their diligent eating of carcasses they had probably spared the garrison an epidemic or a pestilence, but that was not what the collector liked about them ... though clumsy on the ground, their flight was extraordinary graceful. They climbed higher than any other birds, it seemed; they ascended into the limitless blue until they became lost to sight or mere specks, drifting round and round in a free flight in which their wings scarcely seemed to move. They more resembled fish than birds, gliding in gentle circle in a clear pool of infinite depth. The Collector would have liked to watch them all day. Their flight absorbed him completely. He thought of nothing while he watched them; he shed his own worries and experienced their freedom, no longer bound by his own dull, weak body (*Siege* 1975, 338).

The passage shows how Farrell's language uniquely and insistently works out Farrell's intimate narrative gestures. The pariah dogs which the Collector sees slumbering in the

shadow of the church punctuate the deterioration of the human state in the sense of having the narrative function of devastating war going on and of elucidating the irredeemable poverty of India. The image of these 'uncivilised' dogs connects, in the Collector's mind, with the image of the deprived humans to realise a ludicrous imitation of what nature has strived to create:

A few yards away, still in the shadow of the church, was another collection of dogs, uncivilised ones this time and dreadful to behold ... Hideously thin, fur eaten away by mange to the raw skin, endlessly and uselessly scratching, timorous, vicious, and very often half crippled, they seemed like a parody of what Nature had intended. He had once, as it happened, on landing for the first time at Garden Reach in Calcutta, had the same thought about the human beggars who swarmed at the landing-stage; they too, had seemed a parody. Yet when the Collector piously gave to the poor, it was to the English poor, by a fixed arrangement with his agent in London; he had accepted that the poverty of India was beyond redemption. The humans he had got used to, in time ... the dogs never (*Siege* 1975, 158).

Here we have an instance of how Farrell's poetic language liberates itself from its denotative skin. Kristeva seems to be intrigued by the function of poetic language:

... Poetic language alone carries on the struggle against ... death, and so harries, exorcises, and invokes it. ...The poet is put to death because he wants to make language perceive what it does not want to say, provide it with its matter independently of the sign, and free it from denotation. (Kristeva, "Desire in Language" 1981, 31)

She also speaks of the protective act of poetry: "Poetry protects us from this automatization, from the rust that threatens our formulation of love, hate revolt and reconciliation, faith and negation" (Kristeva, "Desire in Language" 1981, 32).

Barthes however speaks of the "overnourishing signs" of poetry: "The Hunger of the Word ... initiates a [poetic] discourse full of gaps and full of lights, filled with absences and overnourishing signs" (Barthes, *Selected Writings* 1983, 58).

Earlier, I have suggested that some critics of Farrell like to arrive at neat conclusions concerning the writer's attitude towards the animals of his creation. The last sentence of the previous Farrellian passage, for instance, together with what is thought to be the uncomplimentary description of 'the pariah dogs' are taken to suggest Farrell's unfavorable attitude towards dogs, a thing which ultimately undermines their narrative significance. Yet, a careful reading of this passage should not concern itself with the writer's attitude towards animals under pressing circumstances but with animals as narrative manipulators of the damage done, mental and otherwise. The distressing image which Farrell evokes here testifies to this dismal point where the certainty of hopelessness is a narrative fact:

There was no ration for dogs ... nor, come to that, for monkeys or mongooses; they would all starve unless relief came soon ... or their masters would share their own food with them and all would starve together. It would have been better to have shot them all. But a civilised man does not shoot his dog ... his 'best friend'. Yes, but these were exceptional circumstances. Now there was even talk of shooting wives if the situation became hopeless, to spare them a worse fate at the hands of the sepoys (*Siege* 1975, 158-159).

"Dogs" and their plight seem to have arrested Farrell's attention. They become a measure for the deterioration of the quality of life in India. This is how Farrell describes a hopeless situation in his "Indian Diary"²:

... the dogs in Lucknow are more pitiful than I've seen anywhere. There was a dreadful, utterly furless creature hopping along in the botanical garden yesterday. Only the birds seem to do well here – vultures sweeping into a palm- tree and squabbling yesterday evening or drifting so high that they are mere specks. It seems absurd, though, that the dogs should make a bigger impression than the human beings. (Farrell, "Indian Diary" 1981, 208)³

In *Troubles*, as the tragic situation in Ireland worsens, Farrell reveals in the Major, who earlier succumbs to the narcotic charms of the Majestic, a grim attitude ironically tinged with a sense of historical reality: “At the very end of November, while getting dressed one morning, he became extremely depressed and one by one the buttons dropped off his shirt, like leaves off a dying plant” (1975, 257). This is an image of utter despair, an image that metaphorically depicts the Major’s macabre state at this point.

The misfortune of Rover, Edward’s dog, has precisely the narrative function of realising that image of distressing hopelessness of the human situation at this particular episodic moment. Farrell shows in Rover the bewildering reality of aging. Rover gradually gets blind and suffers a great deal. As it gets weaker with the passage of time, it is humiliated by animals of lesser power and importance and haunted by its own fears. Farrell’s revealing words in the following passage substantiate Rover as a character on his own:

Like the Major, Rover had always enjoyed trotting from one room to another, prowling the corridors on this floor or that. But now, whenever he ventured up the stairs to nose around the upper storeys, as likely as not, he would be set upon by an implacable horde of cats and chased up and down the corridors to the brink of exhaustion. More than once the Major found him, wheezing and spent, tumbling in terror down a flight of stairs from some shadowy menace on the landing above. Soon he got into the habit of growling whenever he saw a shadow ... then, as the shadows gathered with his progressively falling sight, he would rouse himself and bark fearfully even in the broadest of daylight, gripped by remorseless nightmares. Day by day, no matter how wide he opened his eyes, the cat-filled darkness continued to creep a little closer (*Troubles* 1975, 257).

In *Troubles*, the relevant codic details also seem to work in terms of social division, thus revealing the crisis of man. Here, Farrell implicitly sets Irish poverty as the professed antithetic image of British luxury. We are thus told through Angela, Edward’s daughter, that her father’s dogs are fed with sheep heads ‘though I’ve heard the country people sometimes eat them too’ (1975, 43). We are also told that these dogs have ‘healthy coats ... on them’ (Ibid.). Ironically, as the neutral Major is steered firmly down unfamiliar corridors through a yard and into a smaller one walled by outhouses, he sees ‘a dozen or so dogs of varying ages, shapes and sizes ... dozing on piles of straw or empty sacks’ (Ibid.). Then as the Major and Edward, the owner of the Majestic, wade through Edward’s ‘beauties’, the mortifying scene gathers momentum. Soon they arrive at another empty yard with a three-sided fireplace where an iron cauldron steams and bubbles. Here they meet Evans, the tutor, a fellow with a pale, unhealthy and completely expressionless face. Evans is shown stirring the cauldron with the flames ironically leaping about his ears and giving him a sinister look. Later, we see Edward urging the Major to look at the ‘rich’ and ‘juicy’ meal. Then, impulsively, unmasking ‘the pots’ macabre contents’, Edward picks up a couple of charred sticks and fishes with them until he locates something beneath the surface. The Major now finds himself ‘face to face with a long skull, eyeless and tipped with grinning teeth’ (Ibid., 440). Significantly enough, the filtered signs of the Irish villagers reduced to the state of Edward’s dogs and, conversely, of Edward’s pride in his dogs- “Aren’t they beauties?” (Ibid., 44) – have the value of foreshadowing the human tragedy at this early narrative point in Farrell’s book.

Later, a telling scene in *Troubles* which shows Edward’s piglets gleefully depicted suggests a grimly realised code functioning in terms of disconnection which is, thematically speaking, at the very heart of Farrell’s ‘historical’ novels. As Major Brendan Archer turns to look back at the hotel, Edward now calls him from inside the squash court “to have a look at his beauties ...” (Ibid., 131). Then, Edward appears kneeling on a pile of steaming straw, tickling the stomachs of the now ecstatically excited piglets which can hardly prevent themselves from “nipping and suckling at his fingers and tumbling over his shoes” (*Troubles* 1975, 131). The image, here, narratively recalls that of Regan’s supposed daughter, who in *A Man* caresses Sidney’s ear, (1963, 50). The two images serve to define, at the relevant point, the character’s psychology, that of the alienated Gretchen in *A Man* and that of the divided Edward in *Troubles*.

To take up Edward's case once more, the names given to these three pigs, the way in which Edward talks of them and the manner in which he introduces them to the Major almost reveal them as 'characters' with a defined narrative role to perform. At this point, we discern in Edward the gratified man talking to his own children:

Look at them; did you ever see such wonderful little fellows in all your life? Here now calm down a bit and show your visitors how well you can behave. Here, Brendan, this is Mooney, that is Johnston and the one sniffing at your sock is 'Brien' (*Troubles* 1975, 132).

The food given to these pigs heightens the dissociated realities of the conflicting elements in Ireland. Here, the luxurious image of Edward's piglets eating cakes only stresses its antithetic one, that of the impoverished Irish:

We feed them mostly with stale cakes from the couple of the sacks sent down from Dublin on the train once a week: iced cakes, barm bracks, Swiss rolls, oh everything! lemon sponges, almond rings, currant buns, Battenberges's, Madeira cakes ... A lot of them are so fresh you wouldn't mind eating them yourself (1975, 132).

The chaotic scene which the Major has to witness reinforces the wider chaotic world of Ireland, a world in which Major Brendan Archer, a fugitive from a shell-shocked world, strives to preserve his sanity. The Major is about to issue a favourable comment on Edward's pigs when he is silenced by a growl and an ear-splitting squeal. Rover, Edward's dog, has followed Edward and the Major to the squash court. Chaos prevails as the other two pigs squeal. Edward tries to calm them down. The piglet Mooney leaps and lands quite near the dogs. The ensuing scene nullifies the bewildered Major:

For a moment the piercing noise, the grovelling figure of Edward, the swaying lanterns and the asphyxiating ammoniac stench all combined with weariness from his journey to make the Major wonder whether his reason had not become unhinged (p.132).

In *The Siege*, we may measure the tragic realities of the siege by the look of famined animals. Apropos, a dim conclusion, is triggered off by the frustrated Collector: 'What a sad spectacle they made!' (1975, 193). Later, the codic text works hard to realise the character's disconnection from present realities. Thus, the present image of devastation unleashes, in the Collector's mind, the pleasant image of the past; defined in one of its aspects, by the presence of animals at the background of a leisurely existence:

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 his place in it (*Siege* 1975, 237).

This is a romanticism that is meant to evoke colonialism at a thriving moment of racial superiority. It is precisely here that the implied author evokes the central character as a disjoined entity, as an emblem of a crumbling world. In a sense, the extract above recalls Lowry at his best, illustrating a man yearning for irreversible moments of innocence and pleasure:

The Consul felt a pang. Ah, to have a horse and gallop a way, singing, away to someone you loved perhaps, into the heart of all the simplicity and peace in the world; was not that like the opportunity afforded man by life itself? Of course not. Still, just for a moment, it had seemed that it was. (Lowry 1980, 216)

This and other instances may voice Lowry's influence on Farrell, a suggestion emphasised by Spurling, who refers to Lowry's *Under the Volcano* as a novel 'which always remained one of his (=Farrell's) favourite books' (Spurling 1981, 143). Jonathan Culler would like to term this kind of literary interaction as 'intertextuality':

... The notion of intertextuality names the paradox of linguistic and discursive systems: that utterances of texts are never moments of origin because they depend on the prior existence of codes and conventions. (Culler 1976, 1382)

According to this connecting notion of intertextuality, Farrell's exquisite narrative moments are foregrounded in the previous literary codes of great writers, a thing which,

eventually, realises, judging by his extensive cultural references, the depth of his narrative code.

Violence against animals pervades the narrative scene in Farrell. This deviant act may have a link with an on-going war. The feature, however, is noticeable even in Farrell's earliest novel, *A Man* (1963). Here Regan claims to have accomplished a creative act by killing Sidney, his dog. But it is in Farrell's historical novels that violence has become an observable phenomenon. Thus, in *Troubles*, Edward kills Rover for mercy: "I shot Rover ... He was getting old. I thought ..." (1975, 352). In the same book, the whimsical Auxiliary Force kills a tame rabbit under the pretext that it is a wild one. Edward and the Major kill cats so as to get rid of an impediment. The lugubriously horrific image of the bloody scene, whose irony works out the deterioration of the human state, realises the macabre reality of the crumbling bastion. This is how Farrell's deconstructive style illustrates the episode:

It was the Major who had to seek out the moaning animals and finish them off. All this made a dreadful mess: blood on the carpets, there forever, ineradicable, brains on the coverlets, vile splashes on the walls and even on the ceiling. Edward, in his excitement, shot out a couple of window-panes and caused a great plaster scroll bearing the words 'Semper fidelis' to plummet earthwards, taking with it a rotting window-box gay with crocuses from one of the ladies' rooms two storeys below. Apologetic for his poor marksmanship, Edward had insisted on gathering up all the carcasses and throwing them into a sack he had brought for that purpose. When they had been collected, he threw the sack over the shoulder and descended the stairs. The Major followed, jingling the empty brass shells in the palm of his hand. By the time they had reached the second landing the sack was oozing dark red drops. Fortunately, the carpet too was red. The drops scarcely showed (1975, 300).

Evans, who is playing cards at an earlier moment also performs a nullifying act:

... the tutor sprang forward and dealt the beast (= the cat) a terrible blow on the back of the neck. It gave a piercing wail, thin as the shriek of a child, and dropped senseless to the carpet (Ibid., 215).

The narrative fact that Evans experiences fierce exultation at his deed may deftly enunciate the crisis of man at this horrific narrative moment: "For an instant as he held it high over his head, there was a savage rictus on his white pocked face" (p. 215). Later, the Shein Feinners kill Edward's piglets and then use the blood of the slaughtered animals to manipulate, in capital letters, their political disaffection: "SPIES AND TRAITORS BEWARE" (1975, 360).

These illustrative examples may serve to suggest that not only most of the terrible acts of violence but also a heightened degree of it occur in Farrell's 'historical' novels, a thing that ultimately enacts its narrative implications. These acts, in a certain sense, punctuate the mounting pressures of the difficult times. They are also narratively designed to suggest the conflicting loyalties of Farrell's characters and, emphatically, man's state at a precarious moment. The reluctance of the Major, who kills the wounded cats for mercy in *Troubles*, the idea that the premeditated killing in the book connects with the exponents of the British argument and with the brutal Auxiliary. Force, in particular, evoke these dissenting characters and also human predicament as disturbing realities.

The codic details may be seen on some intricate structural level [i.e. in terms of animal aggregations, and the puzzling nature of these aggregations] to suggest the tragic consequences of the human conflict. In a relevant sense, a striking feature of Farrell's 'historical' novels is the appearance of animal collections or what may be termed as *animal settlements* and the absence of this feature from his early books. Thus, in *A Man* and *A Girl* which are, in a sense, 'non-historical', only a single animal may be seen, a named dog, to be more specific. In *The Lung*, Sands, the central character, 'can't remember seeing anyone else the entire night besides the man with the black dog' (1965, 69). As suggested earlier, these animal collections which appear in Farrell's more mature

novels (i.e. the 'historical' ones) dramatise human strife as a dismal reality. Apropos, it is not coincidental, narratively speaking, that an implicit classification or division of animals obtains through Farrell's endeavor to label one collection of animals "A few yards ... away was another collection of dogs, uncivilized ones this time ..." (*Siege* 1975, 158). On a higher level, Farrell's gluttonous eye for details strives to emphasise, through animal division, the more disturbing issue of human incoexistence. Animal division, thus, usefully magnifies the irritating image of human discordance. This is precisely the narrative value of Farrell's projection of animal life in his novels.

Interestingly enough, Farrell's collective image of the pariah dogs seems, in a sense, to echo the despondent, lonely image of the pariah dog which the Consul of Lowry's *Under the Volcano* encounters at The Terminal Contina EL Bosque. There is a sense of 'shared misery' as man and animal survey each other. This is how Lowry, who distrusts intellectuality, realises the narrative episode:

A starving pariah dog with the appearance of having lately been skinned had squeezed itself in after the last man; it looked up at the Consul with beady, gentle eyes. Then, thrusting down its poor wrecked dinghy of a chest, from which raw withered breasts drooped, it began to bow and scrape before him. Ah, the ingress of the animal kingdom! Earlier, it had been the insects; now these were closing in upon him again, these animals, these people without ideas. (Lowry 1980, 231-232)

Intertextual instances, thus, impinge themselves on our minds. In "The Death of the Author", Barthes looks at the text as "a tissue of quotations":

We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning ... but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations, drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. (Barthes, *Image Musical Text* 1977, 146)

In Farrell, the collection of pariah dogs (and of the other scavengers in *The Siege*: jackals, vultures, etc.) is set in contrast with the collection of pet dogs which the Collector sees slumbering in the shadow of the church (*Siege* 1975, 158) or the hunting dogs which he, later, glimpses beside a well "used by gardeners in normal times":

He could recognise certain of these dogs from having seen them in the station bobbery pack on their way to hunt jackals with noisy, carefree young officers; they included mongrels and terriers of many shapes and sizes but also dogs of purer breed ... setters and spaniels among them Chloe; and even one or two lap-dogs. (*Siege* 1975, 193)

In *Troubles*, we see Edward's collection of pet dogs through the letters which the Major receives from Angela. This is how the Major traces the details of *animal life* at the Majestic:

There would be a list of Edward's dogs again, for example: Rover, Toby, Fritz, Haig, Woof, Puppy, Bran, Flash, Laddie, Foch and Collie. But where, he would wonder, is Spot? Where are you Spot? Why have you failed to answer the roll-call? And then he would remember, half amused and half concerned, that in an earlier letter the vet had been called because Spot had had 'a touch of distemper' but had pronounced it 'nothing serious.' (1975, 10)

In a relevant sense, unseen collections of dogs are realised through their fiendish barking at the Major as he surveys the hostile, lifeless Irish vicinity:

... as he climbed over a stile and made his way along the edge of a cornfield a dog started barking angrily; then another took up the cry, and another, and he imagined he could see a grim face staring at him from a window, and then, all around him, dragging on chains somewhere out of sight behind walls, beyond hedges, inside closed doors, a whole pack of dogs was fiendishly barking. (*Troubles* 1975, 72)

Farrell's language, here, testifies to the Barthesian concept of writing:

...writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject steps away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing. (Barthes, *Image Musical Text* 1977, 142)

We also see the horde of cats with which the Imperial Bar of the Majestic seethes. The narrative point here is that Farrell captures an evocative moment in human disintegration. Here is how the Major implicitly suggests a *collection of tame cats* by an overt reference to the wild ones while perceiving the harsh reality of a decaying world:

It was only when he had moved to the window to draw back the curtains that he realised that the room was boiling with cats. They were everywhere he looked, nervously patrolling the carpet in every direction; piled together in easy chairs to form random masses of fur; curled up individually on the bar stools. They picked their way daintily between the bottles and glasses. Pointed timorous heads peered out at him from beneath chairs, tables and any other object capable of giving refuge. There was even a massive marmalade animal crouching high above him, piloting the spreading antlers of a stag's head fixed to the wall ... He had a moment of revulsion at this furry multitude before the room abruptly dissolved in a shattering percussion of sneezes. A fine grey cascade of dust descended slowly around him. 'Well, I'll be damned; where the devil did this lot come from? All the cats in Kilnalough must be using the Majestic to breed in ... and not all of them are wild either'. (*Troubles* 1975, 135)

Later, Farrell's *theme* suggests itself through *animal disconnection* to voice an already recognisably operative human division. The scene which reveals the hopeless case of Edward's dogs and which the Major's point of view realises adroitly punctuates the tragic reality of man. We are made to glimpse Edward's frightened dogs being brought from the yard and quartered in the upper storeys of the Majestic to get rid of the cats:

But it had been a complete failure. The dogs had stood about uncomfortably in little groups, making little effort to chase the cats but defecating enormously on the carpets. At night they had howled like lost souls, keeping everyone awake. In the end the dogs had been returned to the yard, tails wagging with relief. It was not their sort of thing at all. (*Troubles* 1975, 299)

Farrell reiterates the idea of animal division to heighten the more disruptive issue of human incoexistence. This is how he suggests the plight of pet dogs:

The faithful creatures were daily sinking into a more desperate state. While jackals and pariah dogs grew fat, they grew thin; their soft and luxurious upbringing had not fitted them for this harsh reality. If they dared approach the carcass, what a sad spectacle they made! of a horse or bullock, or the fuming mountain of offal beside the croquet wall, orange eyes, bristling hair and snapping teeth would drive them away. (*Siege* 1975, 193)

The appearance of huge *animal carcasses* enunciates the tragic scene that captures a moving image of human disintegration at a disconnecting moment at which historical reality cuts across the narrative one. Thus, we see, through the Collector's eyes, a collapsed horse with its saddle still strapped to its remains and 'the carcass of a water buffalo [with] its eyes seething, its head and long neck looking as they had literally been run into the ground' (*Siege* 1975, 191).

The narrative design in Farrell may also unleash animals to evoke the Irish and Indian scenes as incompatible with that of the British. Man's closeness to animals is narratively shown as a feature of the anti-colonial code. Thus, the cows in Irish Kilnalough are seen straying about in the streets and in India the cows which low even from apartments adjoining those of Indian inhabitants are ironically suggested to be everywhere; 'Always in India, cow here, cow there, cow everywhere' (*Siege* 1975, 86). We also glimpse a peacock with its spread feathers 'revolving slowly on one of the dilapidated roof of one of the buildings' in the Maharajah's palace (*Siege* 1975, 84). Significantly enough, this feature which depicts the animals intermingling with people and which is seen by the British as manifesting Irish and Indian backwardness is well documented in Farrell's "Indian Diary":

In general, the smaller streets here all resemble farmyards. Pigs and hens wander about, the latter with broods of tiny chickens, not to mention cocks, bulls and cows. At night the hens seem to roost wherever they feel like, in shops and houses. (Farrell, "Indian Diary" 1981, 224)

With the Indian, Irish and Chinese realities, there is a sense in which the acquisitive impulse is not insisted upon as is the case with the British reality. Thus Edward's acquisitive sense. "My dogs,' Edward said with simplicity" (*Troubles* 1975, 44) –seems to contrast sharply with the absence of the owner in the Irish, Indian and Chinese case. Farrell, thus, professes in his "Indian Diary" that the majority of dogs "don't appear to belong to anyone: they appear to be tolerated in the same way as cows and tourists. With total equanimity" (Farrell, "Indian Diary" 1981, 193). This non-acquisitive, tolerant attitude towards animals is narratively elaborated in *The Siege*. Farrell seems to be Lowrian in abhorring possessive desires. Farrell's Matthew in *The Grip* is outspoken in his condemnation of the acquisitive tendencies. Concurrently, the Consul of Lowry's *Under the Volcano* dismisses possessiveness as 'the original sin': '...the original sin was to be an owner of property...' (Lowry 1980, 137)

There is also a sense in which Farrell's animals project the black comedy of his characters. The scene which shows the Major trying to disarm the absent -minded old Mrs. Rappaport, who arms herself with her departed husband's revolver has precisely that digengaging narrative value. A hideous marmalade cat leaps into the lady's lap and settles there "obscuring the buckle which the Major had been hoping to undo...and fixing him with a bitter hostile gaze" (*Troubles* 1975, 304).

On a higher level, Farrell's narrative is shown to movingly reveal man's relation to Nature. Farrell's cinematic portrayal thus aptly works in a subsequent scene that suggests an antagonistic world. Mrs. Rappaport's growing marmalade kitten is evoked contributing no less than half a dozen kittens which wobble blind and mew across the carpet with their mirth being silenced as they open their eyes to a hostile world:

...the cries of delight became muted when the kittens at last opened their eyes and six pairs of bitter green orbs were seen to be staring around with malice at the new world in which they suddenly found themselves (*Troubles* 1975, 352)

Farrell's narrative also tries to realise avague world beside our own, a world that has its own operative codes. The peacocks which rip the silence in *Troubles* could gesture at the unseen power that moves animals and that substantiates an existence less visible yet more prophetic than our own:

'The peacocks,' explained Edward. 'Normally they only cry at dusk or after nightfall. I wonder what's got into them. "Dr. Ryan said querulously: 'It's going to pour again any minute.'" (1975, 129)

Farrell's success as a writer may be measured by his narrative ability to mobilise and invest these well researched, suggestive details. That he manages to amass and then squeeze this large body of details into a literary form that concisely asserts its moral strength will ultimately testify to the depth and ebullience of his literary act.

Matthew Arnold in in "The Study of Poetry" speaks of 'the superior character of truth and seriousness in the matter and substance of the best poetry (270). Farrell's comic irony precisely becomes a vehicle for moral truth and moral seriousness which ultimately single out his literary message. It is this comic irony that carries and punctuates the scenic narration and that evokes, with respect to animals, a social act relevant only to humans. Some illustrative examples may testify to this technical reality that works out Farrell's theme. In that which ironically comicalises Edward, he is shown almost talking to an equal. "No, you don't,' Edward said, aiming a kick at a tall and rickety Afghan hound that was poking its long nose into one of the Majors's trouser pockets," (*Troubles* 1975, 46). Similarly, Inez speaks of her horse as if he were an unruly child: 'He 'll behave himself ...Won't you, Treacle?' (*A Girl* 177). Rover is revealed in Edward's absence as anxious as the Major himself to find out whoever it was they were looking for (*Troubles*

1975, 203). In *A Man*, Regan speaks of Sidney's 'anti-clerical tendencies' (1963, 50) and in *A Girl* Bonzo waits 'with vague apprehension' for his master (p. 128). In *The Grip*, the Major's trained dog is shown 'to recognise the moment when its services would be required' (p. 230).

At this point, we are apt to talk of Farrell's commitment to human concerns. It is Coleridge who in "Kubla Khan" prophesies the certainty of sorrow and destruction: "And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far /Ancestral voices prophesying war!" (Coleridge 545). Farrell, unlike Coleridge here, is a more optimistic writer whose vision suggests that one can escape historical inevitability by a freeing act of love and by sympathetic understanding of man's limitations and potentialities. This may explain why impotent animals become a forceful medium for his *vision*.

It is, of course, Philip Stevick, who maintains in "Scheherezade runs out of plots..." that "new fiction presents its texture as devoid as possible of aesthetic and philosophical depth" (212). Stevick's conclusion can hardly apply to Farrell for the latter's aesthetic and philosophical acts are those of a writer whose perfectionism works hard to evoke people who are dedicated to the cause of man. The narrative act which elaborates his liberal vision strives to formulate this humane commitment.

Farrell's extensive use of animals is explicable, therefore, in terms of his themes and vision. He must have realised that animals are, narratively speaking, quite effective in manipulating the tragic situation by virtue of their helplessness, their neutrality and their inability to protest or evade their fate. Thus the sight of the doomed creatures which the Major sees trapped in the burning city of Singapore unleashes, in its horrific details, these emotional effects that fascinate a writer who unfalteringly sanctifies the human endeavor. Their dismal fate does not only comment on man's fate but also manipulates it:

Mr. Wu's Buick ...was now on the road again and heading towards Wilkie Street where The Human Condition [=the Major's dog] was to be left at the vet's *en route* to Collyer's Quay. The dog sat on the front seat and stared out uneasily at the darkening streets. But when they reached Wilkie Street they found a large crowd Of harrowed—looking people grasping dogs, cats and birds of all shapes and sizes already waiting. It seemed that these doomed creatures had sensed the anguish of their owners, too, for they were setting up the most distressing din of shrieking, whining, miaouwing, barking and piping...The Hunan Condition, who had been staring with dismay at this frantic queue of fellow-victims, uttered a heart- rending groan (*Grip* 472)

Apropos, the sight of the charred creatures lying unburied on the rubble of the Majestic or, earlier, the sight of these cats as they leap out of the Majestic's burnt windows "on to the gutter ... and ... out into the darkness" or exploding "in mid-air ... as they hurtled through the great heat towards earth" (*Troubles* 1975, 408) actualises an inferno that ends an era of impossibilities. Rover may be any fated man getting older and weaker but the underlying fact that he cannot call for help accentuates the tragic reality of his case. In Farrell's first novel Sidney, Regan's dog, manipulates a horrific reality by being doomed by a verdict that is neither justifiable nor explicable: "I took him over to the grove and made him sit down while I loaded the gun and then I shot him" (*A Man*, 1963, 183). The Irish fiasco gains a deeper dimension by the 'demobilized' British officers being evoked to kill a neglected famined rabbit:

One day the Major picked up a dead rabbit on the edge of the lawn. Its body was riddled with bullets. This rabbit, as it happened, had been a favorite of the Major's. Old and fat, it had been partly tamed by the twins when they were small children. They had lost interest, of course, as they grew older, and no longer remembered to feed it. The rabbit, however, had not forgotten the halcyon days of carrots and dandelion leaves. Thinner and thinner as time went by, it had nevertheless continued to haunt the fringes of the wood like a forsaken lover. (*Troubles* 1975, 152)

Likewise, the mute sorrow of a peahen deprived of her mate deepens the sense of cathartic horror in Farrell's book "... a peahen cane in through the French windows with nervous steps, looking for the long-tailed blue-green magnificence that had been her

mate" (Ibid., 347). The immensely painful image of pet dogs growing thin while surfeited animals of prey i.e. the jackals which "could hardly drag themselves back to their lairs" (Siege 1975, 187) may expressively sum up the tragic consequences of human strife.

3. Conclusion

To recapture things, critics appear to be aware of this impressive phenomenon of animals in Farrell. Drabble usefully advances the case by suggesting the manipulative significance of these animals in connection with owners and setting. But this study likes to suggest that these animals have an operative, narrative function. Thus, on a level, the Hermeneutic Code realises animals as a constitutive element, establishing the vague realities of India, Ireland and Singapore. These are exotic realities, which, eventually, puzzle the sophisticated British mind. On another level, the Farrellian deconstructive, narrative act propels these animals to disclose an unstable social structure. It, consequently, realises disconnection as a thematic concern at the very heart of Farrell's 'historical' novels.

In a technical sense, it can easily be seen that, at narrative points of emotional intensity, Farrell's comic irony projects, through these animals, a social act proper only to humans.

Irritatingly, some revealing gestures suggest the grim aspects of *violence*, which turns from an individual narrative fact in *A Man* and *The Lung* into a collective act of destruction in Farrell's 'historical' novels. The appearance of animal collections in these novels and the implicit divisions, which these collections substantiate, are channelled to hint at man's tragic destiny at the relevant narrative points. Later, the appearance of huge carcasses is shown to accentuate the size of the tragedy of man at these disfiguring moments.

In a moving, intricate sense, Farrell's narrative act shows man's intimate attitude towards animals in India, Ireland and Singapore. This human interlock with animals as well as the absence of the acquisitive sense regarding these animals by the Indians, the Irish and the Chinese, are, ultimately, worked out to define a humane vision antithetic to that of the British. A propos, a terminating focal point is that the hermeneutic details in Farrell strive to effect an intriguing, vague world that has its own logic. They help to alert us to the relevance of this world to Farrell's vision and to us as beings organically interconnected with that world. Impinging their puzzling aspects on our mind, these hermeneutic details, eventually, inform Farrell's vision, a liberal humane one that elegantly isolates the precarious human situation for our own inspection. That the nuances of Farrell's text subtly work to refine these conclusions is a suggestive measure for his unique position among the writers of this arresting literary genre.

Notes

1. Barthes's codes are suggested in *S/Z*, p.17ff. and are fully explained in Scholes's *Structuralism in Literature*, pp.154-155. This is how The Hermeneutic Code is realised in Scholes's book:

The hermeneutic code, or code of puzzles. Like the code of actions, this is an aspect of narrative syntax. Whenever questions are raised (Who is that? What does this mean?) which the story will ultimately answer, we have an element of hermeneutic code. (1974, 25)

2. Farrell's "The Indian Diary" is included in his *The Hill Station*, an unfinished novel.

3. What may also substantiate this technical aspect of Farrell's animals is Farrell's metaphorical realisations. For Instance, Rover, which likes to walk at the Major's heels, is suggested to be 'like the major' (*Troubles* 1975, 257).

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