



J.G. Farrell in His Own Words: Selected Letters and Diaries

Lavinia Greacen

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The Siege of Krishnapur, the second of Farrell's Empire Trilogy, won the Booker Prize in 1973, and it was selected as one of only six previous winners to compete in the 2008 international Best of Booker competition. The strength of American interest in Farrell's books is underlined by the inclusion of all three Trilogy novels in the Classics imprint of the *New York Review of Books*. *Troubles* won the Lost Man Booker Prize in 2010.

Many of these selected letters are written to women whom Jim Farrell loved and whom he inadvertently hurt. His ambition to be a great writer in an age of minimal author's earnings ruled out the expense of marriage and fatherhood, so self-sufficiency was his answer. *Books Ireland* has astutely portrayed him as "a mystery wrapped in an enigma, a man who wanted solitude and yet did not want it, wanted love but feared commitment, reached out again and again but, possibly through fear of rejection, was always the first to cut the cord." But Farrell's kindness, deft humor and gift for friendship reached across rejection, which must account for why so many such letters were kept.

Funny, teasing, anxious and ambitious, these previously unpublished letters to a wide range of friends give the reader a glimpse of this private man. Ranging from childhood to the day before his death, Farrell's distinctive letters have the impact of autobiography.

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